

Learning Culture In An Academic English Language Program:
Students' Perspectives

By

Joan E. Birrell-Bertrand

A Thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Manitoba
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Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	
A: Background	1
B: Rationale	6
C: Research question(s)	15
Chapter Two: Literature review	
A: Theoretical framework	
Language	18
Culture	21
Language and culture connection	27
Language and culture connections frameworks	29
Teaching and learning	34
Teaching and learning language and culture	37
B: Research	48
Chapter Three: Methodology	
A: Form of inquiry	50
B: The Study	
The site and participant selection	51
Negotiating entry and informed consent	53
C: Conducting the research	
A holistic approach	54
Data collection	54
Data analysis	59
Preparation of the research report	60
D: Research(er) considerations and concerns	62
Chapter Four: Introduction of the participants	
A: Introducing the participants	
Hazel	70
David	71

Sony	73
Robert	75
Nana	77
Jet	78
Jordan	80
Faze	82

Chapter Five: Results

A: Emergent theme analysis	86
In-class overt culture learning	88
In-class covert culture learning	104
Out-of-class overt culture learning	107
Out-of-class covert culture learning	120
Neither/Nor	123

Chapter Six: Discussion and implications

A: Discussion	
(Un)covering the themes: a deeper level	135
B: Implications and recommendations	
International students	137
ELP administrators and instructors	139
C: Further exploration of the language and culture connection	
Reflections	143
The questions	146
The challenge	148

References	150
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Appendices

A: Participant consent form	154
B: Research instrument	157

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Abstract

This collective case study explores international students' perspectives on learning culture within an academic English Language Program. A thematic analysis, of one-to-one interviews, reveals four main categories, in which culture learning occurred: in-class overt, in-class covert, out-of-class overt, and out-of-class covert. A fifth category examines the impact of travelling and experiences on the learning of culture, as well as, the participants' definitions of culture and Canadian culture. The participants' commentary spotlights the homestay program as providing opportunities for language socialisation. Promoting the homestay program, and increasing the resource materials available to English language instructors, are the key recommendations.

Chapter One - Introduction

The journey, not the destination, becomes a source of wonder. In the end, I wonder if one of the most important steps on our journey is the one in which we throw away the map. In jettisoning the grids and brambles of our own preconceptions, perhaps we are better able to find the real secrets of each place; to remember that we are all extensions of our collective history (McKennitt, 1997, The book of secrets).

Background

The journey begins

I believe that there is a relationship between language and culture. I am in agreement with Brown's (2000) suggestion that, "a language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (p. 177). However, my recognition of the strong link between language and culture was not always the case. Perhaps because language and culture were so neatly knit together when I was a child learning English (as my mother tongue) in a White, Anglo-Saxon, and yes, Protestant, middle-class, Canadian family, I never considered that the two might somehow be linked until I moved overseas. However, when I began living in a country in which Arabic was the mother tongue and the local culture was very different from *my* Canadian culture, I began to perceive the connection.

In 1992, I went to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) to teach math and computer courses in a foundation level program at the United Arab Emirates University (U.A.E.U.). During the seven years I lived and worked in the U.A.E., I experienced a culture that was fundamentally different from the Canadian culture in which I had grown up. Although the U.A.E. has been influenced by other

cultures, the local people maintain a close connection with the country's traditional ways. This may be in part due to the fact that the country is still in its infancy as a nation, with the seven states, or Emirates, only officially joining together in 1971 to form the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, while large-scale development, which is funded by the country's extensive oil reserves, has had an impact on the culture, the introduction of all things foreign has been monitored to protect the local culture and language, and therefore, has tended to only occur through official invitation from the highest governmental levels (Birrell, 2001a, pp. 10-11).

In my experience, the primary exception to this monitoring of foreign material is the real emphasis placed on the learning of English as a foreign language. This was clearly evident in the post secondary institution, the private school in which I worked, and, in the local public school system in the U.A.E. As a result of the overwhelming desire of both the local and expatriate speakers of languages other than English to practice and improve their English, there was no practical need for me to learn Arabic (or Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam, Tagalog, or any of the many other languages spoken by people residing in the U.A.E.) in order to function in my daily interactions. While it is most unfortunate that I did not learn Arabic, the local language, during my years there, I was fortunate to gain insights into the local culture. Through visiting ancient sites and modern museums, shopping in local street markets and Western style shopping malls, attending traditional weddings, and interacting with the female students I taught, the rich cultural heritage of the local people drew me in and captured my heart. Sadly, I

can only imagine how much richer my experience would have been if I had tasted the local culture with the flavour of the local language as well.

As I write this, five years have already passed since I returned to Canada from my overseas adventure, and while specific and noteworthy events and experiences are still clear in my mind, my memory of my exact feelings while I was there, and shortly upon my return, has lost its sharpness. So it is to my reflections scribed less than a year after I came back to Canada that I now turn.

In a paper for a graduate course I wrote that,

My experience of living in a very different culture changed the way I see and understand many things. During my time in the U.A.E., I developed close personal relationships with women and men of a multitude of nationalities. Through interaction and communication with them, I gained insight into, and some level of understanding of, their cultures. This, in turn, lead to a questioning of my own cultural beliefs and attitudes, which resulted in an opening of my mind, and a changing in my thinking. My openness to new ways of seeing, thinking, and being was the real starting point of my conscientization. (Birrell, 2000a, p. 1)

It seems to me that my experience of both the local U.A.E. culture, my interaction with friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who represented a wide variety of nationalities, and my travels to dozens of countries, lead me to a new place, one in which I could no longer blindly and uncritically accept *my* Canadian culture and all that it entailed, as being the only way to view, experience, and understand the world. While I was immersed in my overseas adventure I was able to recognise and enjoy the depth and growth of this new awareness.

My Canadian perspectives on, and attitudes towards, concepts, such as time, were altered by my exposure to, and involvement in, the local Emirati culture. For example, the West's emphasis, and value placed, on punctuality was

not a feature of the U.A.E. culture. Shortly after my arrival in the U.A.E., I attended a cultural awareness session for new (Western) instructors, which was intended to aid us in understanding and, thereby, adapting to the local culture. I recall the American woman, who led the session, telling us that the Emirati attitude towards time was very different from what we were used to in our home countries. She informed us that we needed to exercise patience when dealing with government officials, such as getting our driver's licences or sorting out visa problems, because they tended not to be very prompt in processing paperwork. I found it rather absurd, therefore, that the U.A.E.U. maintained an attendance/late policy for students that was not consistent with the local cultural attitude towards time. Needless to say, the Emirati students I taught often had a difficult time adjusting to the Western approach to attendance in class. The U.A.E.U.'s official attendance policy, which stipulated that students who came to class more than 10 minutes late were considered absent, did little to encourage punctuality among disinterested students, nor did it recognise the other life commitments of hard working, interested students.

For me, the greatest culture shock occurred when I decided to leave my adopted home and began living in Canada again. In my case, there is no doubt that the reverse culture shock I felt in the first year back in Canada was far more intense than the initial culture shock upon my arrival in the United Arab Emirates. To say that I changed in both subtle and definitive ways through my overseas experience is neither a lie, nor an exaggeration, for "my interest in trying to understand the Arab culture had caused me to question some of my ingrained

beliefs about Western culture” (Birrell, 2000b, pp. 9-10). This questioning of my cultural perspective led me to a deeper awareness of my cultural background, including its underlying values and attitudes. My new understanding of both Canadian culture, and my personal perspective on Canadian culture, has had an impact on my research. Since I am more cognizant of the multiple levels of culture, I was able to keep my ears open for indications of a similar awareness in the participants’ commentary. Moreover, by examining, questioning, and challenging my beliefs about my own culture, I have become more open to accepting cultural difference. I believe that this allowed me to enter into the research project with a greater degree of openness, and an increased ability to understanding the unique perspectives of the participants.

Recognising the link

While I have been influenced by the time I spent living in another culture, my graduate level studies, upon my return to Canada, have directed my attention towards, and sharpened my focus on, the connection between language and culture. Moreover, through my teaching of international students in an English Language Program (ELP) in Canada, I have become increasingly aware of the language and culture connection in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This growing awareness, in combination with reflection on my years overseas, aroused my curiosity about international students’ perceptions of the link between language and culture, and has me pondering a number of questions.

I wonder how the international students I have taught in an academic ELP

perceive the relationship between language and culture. Have they been like me, unable to see the relationship between language and culture until they left their native country, native language, and native culture? Now that they are in Canada studying English, what is their experience of the connection between language and culture? What do they think about the *Canadian culture* they are being taught in their English language classes? How do ELP activities, in particular, the weekly sociocultural activities and living with host families, affect their *cultural* experiences outside the classroom? Has living in a new cultural context challenged their perceptions of Canada and Canadians, of their classmates from other countries, or even their own self-identity? Interesting questions to consider, and perhaps discuss with colleagues, but are they pressing enough to be the mainstay of a Master's thesis? I believe that they are, and, in the following section, will present a rationale for exploring these questions, and will discuss why I think such questions need to be addressed within the context of ELPs.

Rationale

My Agenda

Research. When undertaking any research it is important for researchers to not only recognise that they have an agenda, but also to clearly articulate that agenda. Therefore, I must ask myself: Why am I interested in finding out about international students' perspectives on the language and culture connection? My answer to that question is twofold. First, my agenda is powered by my personal interest in, and desire to learn more about, the language and culture connection. Second, my agenda is centred in my concern that the *voice* of students be heard

(Sauvé, 2000). The vast majority of research into second (or third) language acquisition focuses on the *how* of teaching. While discussions of practical aspects of teaching and learning are a vital part of improving and advancing methodology and classroom practice, I believe valuable information can also be garnered through the exploration of experience, particularly that of the student. In fact though, research that has explored experience has tended to focus on the experiences of the teacher, rather than that of the student. My research was purposely aimed at exploring international students' experiences of learning culture in their academic ELP. If I had wanted to gain insight into what these students were being taught, I would have interviewed their English language instructors about what aspects of culture they were teaching the students. However, I believe that the students' learning experience is not only more dynamic because of the multiplicity of their cross-cultural interactions, both within and beyond the classroom, but also has the potential to create new understandings of the students' perspectives. As Freeman states in his introduction to Moran's (2001) Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice, "[Moran] points out quite rightly that rethinking language and culture in relation to one another is a process that engages the identities, values, and expectations of teachers and learners alike to reframe both subject matter and classroom pedagogy" (p. viii-ix). Based on this description of the *rethinking process*, I saw my research as an opportunity to initiate a cross-cultural dialogue in which identities, values, and expectations could be engaged, as the participants discussed their experiences of learning culture within their academic ELP

classes, and other aspects of the ELP. For these reasons, I believe my research to be a union of both my personal interest and my concerns about providing a forum in which student voice can be heard.

Writing. In terms of the written form of this study, I also have an agenda that cries out for its own explanation. As a graduate student, I was exposed to, became intrigued by, and now have embraced a style of writing that speaks of inclusivity, equality, and a true voice for all who participate in the research. Lather (1994) has named this type of writing an invitational text. In terms of my writing, it is my intention to venture down a road less travelled, and, in doing so, I hope to discover my own unique path.

Criteria for evaluating good research

Since I am conducting and reporting this research to prepare, and ultimately defend, a Master's thesis, I am aware of the expectation to adhere to certain standards. Traditionally, these standards have taken the positivistic form of validity, reliability, and generalizability. I feel that it is of critical importance that I am up front about my stance on the positivistic criteria for judging what constitutes *good* research and *good* research reporting. I believe that such criteria are inadequate, and inappropriate, means of evaluating qualitative forms of research, such as mine. On the other hand, I choose the criteria suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) for the assessment of narrative inquiry forms of research. Clandinin and Connelly speak of "good narrative as having an *explanatory, invitational quality*, as having *authenticity*, as having *adequacy* and *plausibility* [italics in original text]" (pp. 184-185).

Furthermore, in suggesting such criteria, Clandinin and Connelly open new possibilities for the reporting of research. As I have suggested in one of my graduate papers (Birrell, 2001b), I believe that their criteria are “not just a reformulation of positivistic criteria, but visionary criteria that begins to represent the true nature of both qualitative research, and the reporting of that research” (pp. 1-2). In my opinion, these criteria would serve as both an appropriate and a relevant measure of the significance and impact of my research. Therefore, I will be using these criteria to self-assess my research and the writing of my research report/thesis, and also hope that the reader(s) of my research report/thesis will do the same. Based on these criteria I would, therefore, expect my research report/thesis to be easy to read and understand, and invite the reader(s) to enter into the discussion. Additionally, the reader(s) of my research report/thesis should find the research to be authentic, and have a sense that the research and the analysis are both adequate and plausible.

In order to meet the criterion of adequacy, my research project, including the analysis and reporting of the data, should accomplish a couple of objectives. First, the research question should be suitable for a Master’s thesis research project. The research question should be relevant to the researcher, to the community, of which the researcher is a member, and to the intended audience. In the case of my research project, the research question most certainly had personal significance for me, and I believe it to have relevance for members of the community within the area of second language acquisition, as well as, the intended audience. Furthermore, the research question should be substantial

enough to warrant being researched. While I have begun to present a rationale for conducting this research, I will also add that I believe my research question was worthy of the time and effort I spent on this study. A second requirement of adequacy is that the main research question should be sufficiently explored, so that the reader(s) gain(s) a new understanding and increased awareness of the research topic. Within the context of my study, this objective should be met by presenting the reader(s) with a thorough exploration, and discussion, of the participants' perspectives of their experiences of learning culture.

To assess my research in terms of plausibility, the focus should be on the credibility of the research report, in that the information being presented should be believable to the reader(s). In addition, the reader(s) should be persuaded by the argument through the use of both appropriate citations to support the theoretical framework, and pertinent commentary from the participants. Looking specifically at my research project, plausibility is indicated and, therefore, should be appraised, according to the degree to which the participants' voices are deemed reliable in responding to the research questions. Since all of the participants experienced learning culture within an ELP, their commentary should be considered reliable. As a researcher, I have no reason to believe that any of the participants either made up stories, or lied, about their experiences. However, I do recognise that participants, for a variety of reasons, may have omitted or embellished aspects of their experiences. Finally, I also see the criterion of plausibility attending to issues of bias. Participant and researcher bias was considered, but not emphasised in my research. With a focus on international

students giving voice to their experiences of learning culture, I feel that it would be improper for me to address participant bias by editing their commentary. Instead I have attempted to encourage a high degree of openness, both throughout the interviews with the participants, and in the presentation of the participants' commentary.

Voice and positioning

Although my thesis presents a chorus of voices, those of the international students who participated in my research, my own voice is most certainly also present. My voice, like my role in the research, differs from those of the participants. Like fingerprints, which are particular to every individual, I believe that voices are distinctly unique. Our personalities, our life experiences, our inner qualities can be revealed when we sing with our real voices. While I have used my real voice, at times it has been very challenging to find the right balance. I can relate to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of the researcher's dilemma in composing the research text as a struggle "to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voice" (p. 147). Moreover, I recognise, as did Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the challenges of addressing not only how "to speak our research texts in our multiple voices" (p. 147), but also "our silences, both those we choose and those of which we are unaware" (p. 147). I can, therefore, only hope that both my voice and my silences work in harmony to create a melodious research text.

In addition to identifying my distinct voice, I also want to establish my position within the research project, that of a novice researcher, which has been molded by my experiences as a graduate student and as an English language instructor. During my graduate studies, I have enjoyed reading and learning about current research in the area of second language acquisition. In my teaching career, I have begun to develop a practical knowledge about second language acquisition within the context of EAP programs. Now undertaking my own research project has afforded me the opportunity to view research from a new perspective. As a novice researcher, this has been a time of steep learning curves, intense work, and feelings of frustration, satisfaction, and elation, often in quick succession.

As I consider my own growth and learning as a novice researcher, I know that I have gained confidence by moving through this process. My uncertainty about a variety of aspects of the research project dissolved, as I slowly tackled, and then completed, the research proposal, the ethics approval, the literature review, the interviews and transcriptions, the thematic analysis, and finally the first draft of the thesis. My confidence grew with the successful completion of each key component of the study, and while I am not ready to jump into a Ph.D. program, I feel an increased confidence in my knowledge about the process of undertaking research. In addition to my increased confidence, I believe that through the research I have gained a deeper awareness of the complexity of touching on cultural matters. In fact, the cross-cultural dialogues and interactions with the participants once again challenged my own cultural perspectives and

biases. This was a helpful reminder to me about other ways of viewing and understanding Canadian and global contexts.

Reasons for undertaking the study

Beyond my personal agenda for performing this study, I believe that there are a couple of critical reasons for undertaking such research. First of all, this research recognises that there are increasingly large numbers of international students enrolled in academic ELPs, both in Canada and the United States. According to Brown (2000), "In many countries, thousands of foreign students are enrolled in institutions of higher education and must study the language of the country in order to pursue their academic objectives" (p. 189). Since academic ELPs are designed to prepare students to enter, and hopefully succeed in, Canadian and American universities, additional research into the ways in which this preparation occurs has the potential to assist numerous international students. While the primary focus of academic ELPs is to ready students for the academic and linguistic challenges of their university courses, I would like to suggest that the cultural experiences, and insights into Canadian culture, that the students have in their academic ELPs may play a part in their eventual success, or lack of success, in the university environment. A foundational belief, upon which my research is built, is the significant impact of cultural learning going hand in hand with language/academic learning.

I see my research being of interest to two specific audiences, the international students studying in ELPs in Canada and the United States, and the instructors and administrators of these programs. In terms of the international

students, I am fully aware that the families who send their daughters and sons to Canada and the United States to study English pay large sums of money (and often make great sacrifices as a family to do so). Therefore, I believe that sharing the insights from the international students, who participated in my study, may provide useful information to future international students, and their families, that could enable these students to have a more positive and productive learning experience. Moreover, it is also my hope that this research will contribute to the body of knowledge about international students' English language and cultural preparation for entrance into universities and colleges, which will serve to inform both administrators and instructors of ELPs in their program planning and lesson preparation. This could lead to a more holistic approach to curriculum planning that considers and integrates cultural experience to a greater extent.

The second reason, for initially proposing, and then undertaking such research, has even more direct implications for curriculum development. In considering Applebee's (1996) notion of curricular conversation, with regards to "the *quality, quantity, relatedness* of the topics of conversation, and *manner* in which the conversation is carried forward [*italics in original text*]" (p. 53), I began to question who should be participating in these conversations. This new awareness was documented in one of my graduate course papers.

Asking these questions of myself has made me re-examine the way in which my personal philosophy has, at times, excluded ESL students from actively participating in curricular conversation. Therefore, in reconstructing my philosophy, I now see that the students not only need to be permitted, but also encouraged, to be participants in curricular conversation. Ultimately it is through their feedback about the curriculum as they experience it, that the quality, quantity, relatedness, and manner of the curriculum conversation is improved. (Birrell, 2001c, p. 15)

A deeper understanding of the students' perspectives, in which they are recognised as both key stakeholders, and participants, in curricular conversation, could certainly lead to a rethinking and a revision of current academic ELP curricula. The broader implications of this form of research could impact the way in which the cultural aspects of English language learning are addressed in academic ELPs across both Canada and the United States.

Research Question(s)

My research topic focuses on connections between learning language and learning culture. In the past twenty years there has been a significant amount of discussion about the connection between learning a second (or third) language and learning the *culture* of that language (Brown, 2000; Byram, 1989; Donahue & Parsons, 1982; Hofstede, 1986; Kramsch, 1995; McKay, 2000; Scovel, 1994; and many others). My study examines international students' perspectives on the place of culture, and cultural experiences, in learning English. In considering the connection between language and culture learning, my focus was on the classroom experiences of international students, but also includes their experiences with Canadian culture, outside the classroom, in planned program activities. In particular, my research focused on the question: What are the international students' perceptions of, and perspectives on, the connection between language and culture within their academic ELP? As a researcher, I was fully aware that my research agenda might not be the same as those of the international students participating in the study. It was important, therefore, that I remained open to the possibility of my inquiry changing as the research unfolded,

and themes emerged. The themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants are, in fact, the very essence of this thesis.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Gillham (2000a) suggests that, “when you are preparing to write, when you have reviewed your material, there comes a point where you have to make a start on getting it down on paper. There is a point of discomfort where you can’t contain it in your head any longer. In a sense, your mental grasp is no longer adequate” (p. 98). After months of interviewing, transcribing, reading, thinking, and questioning, I reached that saturation point and knew that I had to get down to the writing. The writing process demands a time of downloading information into a printed form in order to make sense of all that your head now contains. My exploration of the scholarly experts’ writing about language and culture will now be discussed and then translated into my own understanding of their theories, concepts, and ideas.

How then have scholars in relevant fields defined language and culture, and how do their definitions fit with my own understanding of language and culture? I will not be rigidly defining these key terms; however, a discussion of these and other important terms based on my examination of the literature is not only necessary, but also expected. While ultimately it is the connection between language and culture that is to be highlighted, these two will first be separated and treated individually. After they have been examined as independent entities, I will discuss their interconnection, and argue for the necessity of this relationship.

From the reading I have done it has become clear to me that there are a number of differing views about the connection between language and culture.

Scholars in fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, education, and cultural studies have all explored language and culture, which has led to a wide range of understanding about the connection between language and culture. While some common ground does exist, each field offers its own perspective. Some of these views of the language and culture connection support the theoretical framework of my research project; others, however, will be examined within this chapter because they are counter to my stance.

Theoretical Framework

Language

While any standard dictionary offers a definition of language, to express fully all the nuances of meaning encapsulated in the word language is not easily accomplished. For example, Brown (2000) has employed an eight point statement in order to describe language:

1. Language is systematic.
2. Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3. Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
4. These symbols have conventionalised meanings to which they refer.
5. Language is used for communication.
6. Language operates in a speech community or culture.
7. Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
8. Language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics. (pp. 5-6)

While Brown's description of language is comprehensive and outlines the basic practical aspects of language, it is, perhaps, a rather antiseptic conveyance, which lacks a sense of the living, breathing, and constantly evolving nature of language.

Another defining of language, which is offered by Byram (1989), focuses on the transfer of meaning inherent in language. He states that, "language cannot be used without carrying meaning and referring beyond itself" (p. 41) and that, "language is always about something else; one cannot speak the dialect, use the vocabulary, without referring to something else" (p. 41). This understanding of language presents language as something deeper than its surface would suggest. However, Byram's definition may be seen as a condensed version of a number of Brown's eight statements and, therefore, does not fully address the hidden depths of language any better than Brown's list.

Kouritzin (1997) offers a more holistic explanation in her exploration of Lambert's (1982) description of two concepts of language. Lambert's (1982) first concept, much like Brown's first two statements, presents language as a system comprised of linguistic elements. Lambert's (1982) second concept of language features language as a commodity. Kouritzin's deconstruction of these two perspectives of language points to a third conceptualisation, which she refers to as *language as embodiment* (class notes and discussion, January 2, 2001). Within the context of a research framework, Kouritzin's (1997) definition of language "as a constantly-metamorphosing intersection between linguistic elements, identity, culture, history, reality, information and communication" (p.

35), underlines her vision of language as more than just a system, or a commodity. In expressing language as *embodiment*, Kouritzin suggests that language might be recognised as a way of living in the world. Scrivener's (1994) simply stated description of language as, "the way we express our very being... the way we come to terms with the world... the way we make our understanding of life concrete [and]... the way we make contact with other human beings" (p. 200), in a similar way touches on the socio-emotional aspect of language.

Kouritzin's (2001) notion of language as embodiment certainly moves beyond a basic definition of language, to a conceptualisation, which acknowledges that language is political. Other scholars, such as Hanks (1993), provide support for this vision of language. In his discussion of language in relation to social orientation, Hanks (1993) recognises the pivotal role played by language when he states that, "people construct the social world using language; they deliberately and continually formulate reality through reference, description, and a variety of other speech functions" (p. 139). Hanks goes on to suggest that, "to speak is inevitably to situate one's self in the world, to take up a position, to engage with others in a process of production and exchange, to occupy a social space" (p. 139). In particular, it is Hanks notion of situating one's self and taking up a position that I see as clearly pointing to the political nature of language. Recognition, and acceptance, of the fact that language is political in nature allows us to challenge the way in which language has been used to, and continues to, dominate over, discriminate against, and deny the rights of many people around the globe. This understanding of language is a critical element of

my theoretical framework, and underlies all my discussions of language and culture.

Culture

The growing interest in culture, and the field of cultural studies, is a testimony to the need for more information about this topic. The rapid increase in global interaction, in the past twenty or thirty years, has brought with it an increase in cross-cultural interaction. In the world of international trade and business, a cultural faux pas can cost millions in lost business. However, the bottom line is that cultural domination tends to be the order of business in an increasingly global economy.

The literature on culture, like that on language, offers a variety of perspectives. Moran (2001), much like Brown's (2000) eight point definition of language, outlines seven conceptualisations of culture based on their view within different fields:

- 1) Culture as civilisation
- 2) Culture as communication
- 3) Culture as a general concept
- 4) Culture as a means of intercultural communication
- 5) Culture as space in which groups or communities interact
- 6) Culture as a dynamic construction between and among people
- 7) Culture as an aspect of biology or evolutionary psychology. (Moran, 2001, pp. 4-5)

As suggested in the final point of Moran's list, culture has a connection to the

natural sciences. In fact, the term *culture* originates from the natural sciences. In biology, a culture is defined as "to grow (microorganisms, tissues) in or on a controlled or defined medium" (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1996). In a similar vein, Kramsch (1998) goes back to the Latin roots of the word culture, in which it is expressed as "what has been grown and groomed (from the Latin *colere*: to cultivate)" (p. 4). While the natural sciences field was the starting place for *culture*, this word has grown and been groomed into use in numerous other fields.

Beyond the natural sciences, this term has multiple meanings. Kramsch (1995) specifically recognises the use of the term culture in two fields. First, culture has taken root and developed meaning in the humanities as "the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions (such as literature, art, etc.)" (p. 84). The second use of culture is within the social sciences. In the social sciences field, culture is described by Kramsch (1995) as, "the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community (Nostrand, 1989:51)" (p. 84). It is useful to take, at least, a little look at both the humanities and social sciences perspectives, in order to highlight their unique approaches to culture, as well as, to discover where similarities exist.

To gain a clearer understanding of the humanities approach to culture, I will turn to the exploration done in this area by Maculaitis and Scheraga (1989). In their attempts to bring some clarity to the term culture, Maculaitis and Scheraga (1989) have separated culture into three distinct categories: high

culture, folk culture, and deep culture. Although they provide detailed descriptions of each of the three components in the triad, I will encapsulate their ideas. The first two of these components are most certainly within the area of humanities, as expressed by Kramsch; however, the third appears to move into the social sciences field. High culture is what we traditionally think of as the arts, including literature, painting, drama and film, and most forms of music, dance, fashion design, and other art forms. According to Maculaitis and Scheraga (1989), high culture is created and /or performed by professionals, while folk culture, as its name suggests, covers the works of non-professionals, and encompasses "a wide variety of artifacts, rule-governed events, and explicit social expectations" (p. 6). Folk culture is rooted in the traditions of the people, including such aspects as, folk tales, folk dancing, traditional food and dress, rituals for behaviour, and religious practices. The third category of culture described by Maculaitis and Scheraga is that of deep culture, which seems to cross over into what Kramsch considers the social sciences. Much like Nostrand's (1989) definition of culture, Maculaitis and Scheraga consider this form of culture to be the largely intangible and out-of-awareness ways in which people from a given region think, feel, and behave in human interactions. The term "out-of-awareness" suggests that implicit and rarely examined assumptions and expectations govern most of what we do in our daily lives. Examples of deep culture include learning preferences, ideas about life stages, intimate relationships, and self-concepts, methods of problem-solving, nonverbal communication, and much more (p. 6).

With MacLaitis and Scheraga providing a bridge between the humanities approach to culture and that offered by the social sciences, I would like to move into an examination of the social sciences view of culture. In this field of study, culture, at its most basic, is defined in terms of a group of people. Geertz's (1975) work in anthropology is one of those at the core of this understanding of culture. Geertz and others, such as Triandis (1975), suggest that culture is the way in which a particular group of people think, behave, and act. According to Triandis (1975), a psychologist who has conducted research in the area of cross-cultural learning, a cultural group is "a group of individuals who speak a mutually understandable dialect. Such groups have unique ways of perceiving their social environment..." (p. 39). In the context of my research, in which the participants speak both a common language (English) and, in some cases, differing first languages, I recognise that such an understanding may be problematic. However, the participants may be viewed as a cultural group, since they are all young adult international students studying English in Canada. Although English is the common language shared by all of the participants, I would suggest that it is their perspectives of learning culture (their unique "perception of their new social environment") that more clearly defines them as a cultural group. While it is important to acknowledge the ways of perceiving that the different participants bring with them from their first cultures, it is their potential awareness of other ways of perceiving, experiencing, and being in relation to their social environment in a new culture that is the focus of my research.

Cultural Capital. In exploring culture, it seems useful and relevant to briefly

examine Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital. The notion of cultural capital is touched on by Calhoun (1993), "Bourdieu's key original insights are that there are immaterial form of capital - cultural, symbolic, and social - as well as a material or economic form and that with varying levels of difficulty it is possible to convert one of these forms into the other" (p. 69). As suggested by Calhoun, there is variation in the degree of difficulty through which one is able to transform an immaterial form of capital into a material one. In my own teaching of ESL, this fact has become so apparent to me that I have discussed it at length, in a graduate course paper.

ESL students initially have very little cultural capital [within the new culture], primarily, but not only, because they lack the linguistic skills required to negotiate their socialisation. Faced with gaining the language they need, and gaining entry into the culture, ESL teachers and students tend to focus on the language first. However, the acquisition of English competency does not necessarily provide the cultural capital needed to gain entry into the mainstream culture. My own leanings toward critical theory lead me to ask questions such as: What form of entry into the dominant culture do ESL students want?; What might ESL students be losing of their own culture by gaining entry?; and What power structures exist that prevent ESL students from gaining entry?" (Birrell, reading log #3, 2001e, pp. 2-3)

Furthermore, in considering the relevance of cultural capital to ESL, I recognise the inherently political nature of this form of capital. As I have previously commented,

Cultural capital becomes, perhaps, even more politicised in the context of ESL. This process of socialisation, or '[t]he internalization of differentiation' (Goodson, 1997, p. 164) highlights the imbalance of power between those who have cultural capital, and those who do not. My written response to Goodson's argument reflects my growing awareness of, and is indicative of my deep concern for, this issue. (Birrell, 2001c, pp. 16-17)

Placing this theory within the context of my research, I wonder about the effect

varying degrees of cultural capital might have on international students. For international students studying within the semi-sheltered environment of an ELP, acquiring cultural capital may not be a high priority; however, once they enter the regular university environment they may well be at a disadvantage because of their lack of cultural capital. While the consequences for some students may not be serious; others may find their inability to deal with culturally determined situations overwhelming, and ultimately undermine their academic progress.

Cultural Stereotyping. Said's (1978) critical work in the area of cultural stereotyping has made it abundantly transparent that viewing another culture, from one's own cultural perspective, is often wrought with misinterpretation, and gross stereotyping. Said revealed that Western stereotyping of *Orientalism*, (Said's terminology) into something exotic, mystical, and odd created an understanding of Near Eastern cultures that for many years misrepresented, and continues to misrepresent, their true nature. Moreover, the danger of this kind of stereotyping of cultures is not limited to Near Eastern cultures. Considering once again Maculaitis and Scheraga's notion of culture, high culture and folk culture may be relatively safe spaces; however, their concept of deep culture, as the semi-conscious knowledge of how to behave and think within a cultural environment, is subject to judgement by those from other cultures. Kramsch's (1995) discussion of the "naturalization of culture" in which, "one's own ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving seem as natural as breathing, and the other ways seem 'unnatural'" (p. 84), points to the way in which this judging of other cultures can too easily be rationalised. Because of the cultural differences in

socialisation, people from differing cultures may develop and maintain unfounded negative perception of the other culture.

Clearly, delving into the topic of culture is not simple and requires addressing a number of controversial issues. Therefore, there needs to be, at the very least, an open acknowledgement, like the acknowledgement of language being political, that culture continues to be an area in which misunderstanding exists, and that any exploration of culture needs to be approached carefully and with great sensitivity.

Language and Culture

In examining the terms language and culture, it has been challenging to completely separate culture from language, and language from culture. However, having discussed language and culture independent of each other, I will now move into a discussion in which the connection between the two will be explored. This discussion will allow for an exploration of their relation to one another, and will make explicit the relationship that exists between them.

Whether language is viewed as a tool for the exploration of a particular culture, as is the case in anthropology, or culture is seen as a important component of language, as it is in the field of linguistics, there can be no doubt that language and culture are bound together. While my study is focused on a language learning (linguistic) perspective, I think that it is worthwhile to briefly explore both of these fields' understanding of the language and culture connection.

In the field of cultural anthropology understanding the culture of a people

is the final objective, with language being just one of any number of aids used to reach this objective. While there is a connection between language and culture, the connection is very much limited by the usefulness of language in serving the purpose of providing access to, and knowledge about, a given culture.

This is in direct contrast with the view of the language and culture connection in the fields of linguistics and second language acquisition. In these areas, not only has the strong connection between language and culture been firmly established for some time, the relationship between language and culture is seen very differently. The history of the relationship between language and culture begins with the work of Lado in the late 1950s. In his seminal work Linguistics Across Cultures, Lado (1957) identifies the interconnection of language and culture. Since then the abundance of literature written about this link is a testimony to the significance of the relationship between language and culture. As Scovel (1994) states, "all languages are proper subsets of all cultures, and since languages are a part of culture, it is easy to understand why some people might perceive the two as indistinguishable" (p. 205).

While scholars have different ways of defining culture, in the context of second language acquisition, the link between language and culture is clearly recognised. Although I see Scovel's (1994) point when he notes that, "culture and language are so frequently linked together that they are often used as virtual synonyms" (p. 205), I disagree with Scovel's (1994) suggestion that, "it is necessary for us to maintain the anthropological distinction between these two pervasive terms of culture and language if we are to glean any useful insights

about the role of culture in second language pedagogy” (p. 206). Considering the role of language in anthropology, Scovel’s recommendation seems excessively divisive. While it may be useful to have a clear understanding of language and culture independent of one another, I do not accept his argument that this is necessary in order to discover more about the nature of culture within the context of second language learning.

The nature of the relationship between language and culture, I feel, is best described as symbiotic. While some scholars in the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, linguistics, and education have alternatively placed language within culture, culture within language, or pulled them completely apart from each other, I prefer to view language and culture as completely interdependent, with neither superseding the other. This is also the stance taken by Brown (1994), “a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p. 165). Rather in their interdependence, changes in one will result in changes in the other. With this understanding of the connection between language and culture as a basic foundation for my theoretical framework, I will next examine other scholars’ frameworks for language and culture connections.

Language and Cultural Connections Frameworks

In my review of the relevant literature, I discovered three scholars who developed frameworks that explore the connection between language and culture. It is, therefore, to the work of Scovel (1994), Byram (1989), and James (2000), in

creating theoretical frameworks, that I now turn. An exploration of their frameworks will help to establish some of the key concepts, factors, and issues that come into play when examining the connection between language and culture. Moreover, my discussion of each of their frameworks will identify the ways in which their theories offer support for my own theoretical framework.

Scovel (1994) introduces and discusses his organisational framework for the relationship between second language acquisition (SLA) and culture. He uses the acronym PLACE to represent the five central elements of his framework. The first two letters, the "P" and the "L" which stand for people and language respectively, indicate the external factors. Scovel suggests that these external factors connect to nature or the environment. The last two letters in Scovel's framework, the "C" and the "E" which represent cognition and emotion, are internal factors. In contrast to the external factors, Scovel believes that these factors are contained within the individual learner and connect to the concept of nature. Finally, the middle letter "A" in Scovel's framework deals with attention. Scovel views attention as being the pivot point for the other four factors, and acting as the centre of the communication (pp. 206 - 207). Scovel's identification of these five factors involved in the acquisition of a second language and culture certainly offers one starting *place* for exploring the connection between language and culture. I agree with Scovel that these five factors play a part in the learning of a second (or third) language and the corresponding culture; however, his framework alone does not provide sufficient support for my research. Therefore, I find it necessary to examine Byram's framework.

While Scovel's framework considers the major factors involved in the acquisition of a second language and culture, Byram's (1989) model focuses on four components of language and culture teaching. In his discussion of language and culture, Byram does not separate teaching from learning, rather they are viewed together as one process. The four components of Byram's (1989) model work together in an integrated fashion to provide a strong foundation for the teaching/learning of a new culture in conjunction with the teaching/learning of a new language. Byram (1989) lists language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness, and cultural experience as the key components to include when teaching language and culture (p. 138). Although the language components of Byram's model are essential elements, and thereby of great value, it is the cultural components I want to focus on and examine more closely, as they are more pertinent to my research. Byram (1989) suggests that in the teaching of cultural awareness it is necessary to,

involve both viewpoints, making learners both ethnographer and informant, allowing them to gain a perspective through comparison which is neither one nor the other. In the process of comparison from two viewpoints there lies the possibility of attaining an archimedean leverage on both cultures, and thereby acquiring new schemata and an intercultural competence. (p. 143)

It appears then that through an exploration and comparison of their own culture (C1) and the new culture (C2), learners have the opportunity to arrive at a new understanding of both cultures (C3), and possibly develop a new worldview based on this new understanding. Byram's (1989) discussion of cultural experience, as a fourth aspect of his model, indicates the importance of experiencing the new culture directly and personally. Byram (1989) reveals the

value of the cultural experience, and provides a clue to his definition of the relationship between language and culture, when he states that, "this fourth component introduces another kind of learning, through direct experience, of the relationship between language and culture, of the way in which language is part of culture and also embodies the whole" (pp. 144-145). For the purpose of my own research, there is much of Byram's framework that is worthy of consideration. In particular, Byram's inclusion of, and emphasis on, the cultural experience, which speaks about the necessity of experiencing culture in order to more fully learn the new language (L2) and achieve a deeper comprehension of the new culture (C2), lends a great deal of support to my theoretical framework.

A third, and the most recent, framework to theoretically explore the relationship between language and culture was developed by James (2000). Before James reveals his three part framework, he identifies the context in which, and for which, he devised his framework, that of adult ESL in Canada. Within this discussion, James (2000) recognises the vast diversity of adult ESL students and the complexity that can accompany this degree of diversity, when he suggests that, "in some cases as many different cultures may be represented in a classroom as there are students. Dealing with culture in this context can be complicated" (p. 36). Moreover, James points out the fact that differences, in cultural background not only exist between the students, are also likely to exist between the students and the teacher. Furthermore, he recognises that outside of the classroom environment students experience cultural differences between the culture of their home country and the Canadian society in which they are now

living and learning. Finally, in explaining the context of his framework James indicates his full awareness of the challenge of trying to define culture, more specifically Canadian culture.

It is in light of this awareness that James proposes his three-part framework for analysing the role of culture in the context of adult ESL programs. James (2000) outlines the three components of his framework as being: (a) balancing a focus on the learners' cultures with a focus on the L2 culture, (b) developing cultural awareness, and (c) empowering learners. The first two components of James' framework, while of critical importance, are not new. They appear to me to be very similar, if not identical, to Byram's (1989) component of cultural awareness.

However, James' third component, that of empowering learners, recognises that the classroom itself is, "a microcosm of broader society, representing both its ideology and its power structure" (p. 40). By uncovering, and exploring, the cultural information that is regularly transmitted through both direct and indirect means within the classroom environment, James moves into a discussion of the politics of language. His references to Auerbach's (1995) research, into power issues within ESL classrooms, confirm that this component of his framework deals with a much more controversial aspect of teaching language and culture than the other two components. James' inclusion of empowering learners as a component of his framework may be indicative of his own understanding of the connection between language and culture. With respect to my theoretical framework, empowering learners, through what is

included and what is excluded in the curriculum, is not of primary importance, but does have a place.

Teaching and learning

Although my study focuses on the learning of culture, as experienced and perceived by international students within the contexts of their academic ELP, I think that the relationship between teaching and learning makes an exploration of the teaching of language and culture a necessary component of my literature review. In the context of my research project, the teaching of language, and thereby culture, refers to the preparation and delivery of a lesson (from a teacher's experience). Within the field of education, the connection between teaching and learning is commonly accepted, and is often made explicit.

So what does it mean to teach, and alternatively, what does it mean to learn? In what ways do they differ and how are they the same? First, to be certified to teach in the public/private school system in this country requires a number of years of specialised training. Specifically, this involves at least four years of university study, during which time theories about teaching are studied and then put into practice in classrooms. Teaching in most formal settings, therefore, involves the knowledgeable planning, preparation, and presentation of appropriate lessons. The teacher is usually expected/required to possess some expert knowledge in the area being taught. For this reason, the role of the teacher has also traditionally been seen as the one who imparts knowledge about the subject matter being studied.

Learning, on the other hand, requires no formal or specialised training.

Furthermore, the learner is generally expected to have little or no knowledge of the subject matter being studied; hence the reason for learning. The role of the learner is to comprehend, understand, commit to memory, internalise, or in some other way come to a deeper awareness of the subject being taught.

This understanding of both teaching and learning, and the roles of teacher and learner can be problematic. The primary problem with this dualistic conceptualisation is that it may lead to the misconception that if something has been taught, that it has by necessity been learned. It is wrong to automatically assume that once something has been taught it must also have been learned. A teacher can develop and deliver a lesson that, for any number of reasons, is not learnt by the students. Moreover, the bifurcation of the roles of teacher and learner create a situation in which it is only the teacher who has something to teach, and the learner is the only one with the potential to learn. This is indeed a rather simplistic understanding of teacher and learner, as these roles can be, should be, and on occasion are, reversed.

There are a number of key terms related to teaching and learning that I feel are important to contextualise for my research. First, I want to differentiate between the curriculum as planned, enacted, and experienced. Marsh (1999) makes these distinctions transparent when he states that, "many different people may create the planned curriculum, and teachers may enact variations of it, but the students experience it in their own ways" (p. 206). Naturally, the original "planned" curriculum will undergo a number of changes as different teachers "enact" their own visions of it, and each individual student will, ultimately, have

his/her own unique "experience". The three phases of curriculum, and the corresponding persons involved with each phase, say a great deal about the perceived roles of the teacher and of the learner. Breaking Marsh's statement down even more, I believe that the students' experience of the curriculum is the most critical element of the three phases, and yet, the one that seems to be the least considered.

Another concept that is relevant to my discussion of teaching/learning language and culture is that of the hidden curriculum. In Widdowson's (1987) discussion of the role of the teacher and the learner, he offers descriptions of both the overt and the hidden curriculum. The overt curriculum, which Widdowson describes as having a "transactional purpose" (p. 84) within the classroom environment, deals with, "a particular subject... for developing specified knowledge and skills, for meeting the demands of the examination" (p. 84). The overt curriculum is in direct contrast to the "interactional engagement" (p. 84) of the hidden curriculum. As Widdowson explains,

The norms and expectations defining appropriate behaviour here will be very such a matter of social attitude and educational ideology. This kind of engagement is a microcosmic version of the macrocosm of social life and reflects the way educationists believe that pupils should be socialised. It services the hidden curriculum of acculturation and the promotion of established values. (p. 84)

In the context of my research, it is interesting to consider in what ways the fact that the students already know, and are literate in, their first language, and have cultural capital in their first culture might impact on their awareness of, and reaction to, "the hidden curriculum of acculturation" within the new culture.

Teaching language and culture involves a mixture of both the hidden and

overt curriculum. In ELPs, teaching the linguistic/academic skills are, for the most part, the overt curriculum, which as Widdowson (1987) describes prepares the learners for their examination. In the case of these international students, the examination tends to be either the TOFEL or the CAN test, which is the ticket to entrance into the regular university program. With intense pressure from, and on, students to move quickly into the university courses, it is not surprising that the academic ELPs place a tremendous emphasis on the overt curriculum. However, the teaching, and thereby, the learning of culture involves the hidden curriculum to a much greater degree. While there may be explicit discussions of culture in the classroom, the majority of teaching of culture is not made explicit. For example, the expected norms of student behaviour are usually not spelled out, rather are indirectly, or covertly, transmitted through the teacher's own behaviours and reactions. Only in extreme situations, such as students displaying violent or excessively disruptive behaviour, are these hidden rules and expectations made explicit. Moreover, since the classroom is considered by some in the field of education to be a culture in and of itself, an understanding of classroom culture tends to remain hidden.

Keeping in mind all that has been discussed about both the connection between language and culture, and teaching and learning, what then does it mean to teach/learn language and culture? In the next section, I will explore the intersection of these four concepts, and discuss their interaction.

Teaching/Learning Language and Culture

The reality of the theoretical connection between language and culture comes to

light when it is put into practice. Through their extensive research into the area of second language teaching and learning several scholars have identified a variety of issues and concerns related to the language and culture connection. The actual connection, in practice, between learning a new language and learning the corresponding culture is frequently a point of discussion in the literature.

While numerous scholars mention, describe, discuss, or expound on the practical implications of the connection between language and culture, Brown (2000) is particularly transparent in his explanation. His statements that, "learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into the new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting" (p. 1) and "the acquisition of a second language ... is also the acquisition of a second culture" (pp. 177 -178), point to a deep interconnection. Both Byram's (1989) comment, "language teaching inevitably involves the teaching of culture" (p. 43) and Sauv e's (2000) insight that, "learners learn so much more from being in the classroom than simply the subject of instruction -- in this case the English language and/or literacy. They are also absorbing the new cultural values and ways of being of in the new country" (pp. 110-111) recognise the inseparability of learning culture when learning language. Finally, in exploring the history of the link between language and culture, Freeman, in his introduction to Moran's (2001) Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice, states that,

It is now widely accepted that to teach a second language, the teacher and the learners must work with the culture or cultures associated with that language and its communities. This position has evolved over the last century from a claim, rooted in the traditions of the liberal arts, that a

principal aim in studying foreign (usually European) languages was intimately linked to reading their associated literature and appreciating their fine arts. More recently arguments about the interrelation of language and culture as systems of meaning-making have come from anthropology and ethnography; these arguments hold that in order to master a language, learners need to understand and become functional within its culture. Current assertions drawn from critical theory and postmodernism see language and culture serving as lenses of identity and mechanisms for social participation. (p. viii)

My own thoughts on the language and culture connection have remained relatively unchanged in the past couple of years. "Since language is culturally embedded [and since cultural messages are transmitted through both oral and body language], it is virtually impossible to separate learning a language and learning a culture. In second language teaching and learning, learning a language therefore, necessarily involves learning something of that culture" (Birrell, 2001c, p. 10).

Language learning and language socialisation. As children learning our mother tongue, we are taught not only how to communicate and interpret that language, but also the cultural norms that accompany that language. Jupp, Roberts, and Cook-Gumperez, (1982) offer this precise definition of language socialisation as, "the learning of speaking practices which construct and guide social interaction within specific social contexts" (p. 244). A closer examination of language socialisation is necessary when we consider that, "the research in first language development has recognised that, as children learn a language, they learn to be socialised into the particular culture in which they are brought up (Halliday, 1975)" (Gumperez, 1982, p. 244). In addition, as Taylor (1993) suggests,

children are inducted into a culture, are taught the meaning which constitutes it, partly through inculcation of the appropriate habitus. We

learn how to hold ourselves, how to defer to others, how to be a presence for others, all largely through taking on different styles of bodily comportment. Through these modes of deference and presentation, the subtle nuances of social position, of sources of prestige, and hence of what is valuable and good are encoded. (p. 58)

When considering the language socialisation of children in their first language and the language socialisation of adults in a second language, it is of critical importance to note the difference between these two experiences. In their detailed study in this area, Jupp, Roberts, and Cook-Gumperez (1982) were highly cognisant of the difference. They offer this simple description of childrens' socialisation, "parents assume that children are being socialised through language into their particular shared cultural group. This process includes the explicit teaching and correcting and the creation of social contexts in which learning will naturally take place" (p. 246). However, unlike children being socialised in their first language, adult second language learners are often not afforded the same opportunities for learning. "They [adults] are expected to learn and behave appropriately without any of the conditions offered to children" (p. 246).

Moreover, adults who were language socialised in their first language, may not be able to successfully transfer that knowledge to their language socialisation in a second language. Unfortunately, adults who have learned English in their home countries often do not have the *proper* language socialisation to interact with the dominant cultural group in the new English language speaking country to which they have immigrated. According to the research done by Jupp, Roberts, and Cook-Gumperez (1982) with South Asians

within workplace environments in Britain, "South Asian workers who have learnt English before coming to Britain and have used it previously for academic or professional purposes also lack the appropriate social contexts for language socialisation with the white majority groups" (p. 246). Awareness of the difficulties in language socialisation faced by adult second language learners, and clearly, even adults who have learned non-standard forms of English, is only a starting place in the process of addressing this issue. In many cases, it becomes the responsibility of the second language instructor to find ways of assisting the second language students in their language socialisation through teaching the new culture.

Awareness of the teachers' role in teaching culture. In terms of the second language teachers' role in the teaching of culture, it is important to acknowledge that there are various levels of awareness on the part of second language teachers about the link between language and culture. Scovel's (1994) research reveals some useful information about second language instructors' level of awareness, when he states that, "second language teachers frequently mention how language teaching also involves, to varying degrees, the teaching of culture" (p. 205). In addition, Scovel suggests that this may be the reason that language teachers have a tendency to connect language and culture. "Consequently, it is probably not surprising that the concepts, culture and language, are intermingled by teachers of second or foreign languages" (p. 205).

While second language teachers are likely to be aware of the connection between language and culture, they may be far less aware of the cultural nature

of the materials and teaching methods they employ in their classrooms. Based on their research, Duff and Uchida (1997) state that, "whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are very much involved in the transmission of culture, and each selection of videos, newspaper clippings, seating plans, activities, and so on has social, cultural, and educational significance" (pp. 475-476). It seems then, that while many aspects of language teaching involve the *transmission of culture*, much of this may remain hidden, even to the instructors themselves.

Many textbooks used in second language classes introduce and discuss some aspect of culture, and it is not uncommon for textbooks, that focus on the teaching of reading skills, to contain a section on cultural difference. While the inclusion of cultural information may be viewed, by second language instructors, as useful, beneficial, and interesting, Scovel (1994) examines the cultural content of textbooks from a different perspective and reminds us that, "people in our profession [second language instruction] tend to have a humanities background with training in literature, foreign languages, history, or related subjects. Because of this, the materials we write, the topics we select for conversation and composition, and the very way we construct the culture of our classrooms reflect a humanities bias" (p. 210). While this may serve the interests of English language instructors, as Scovel suggests it may not be of any great interest to the international student population. In addition, the fact that second language teachers may not recognise that the very method of teaching she or he is employing is culturally biased may, as Scovel (1994) suggests, contrast with the learning needs of large numbers of international students studying English.

Humanism, as Stevick (1990) has so carefully defined and described, pervades language teaching. But the majority of the EIL [English as an International language] learners around the world are studying the language not for "humanistic" reasons but for the instrumental goal of technology transfer, and this technological bias does not predominate only in EFL [English as a foreign language] situations; I think it represents most ESL [English as a second language] students in English-speaking countries, especially at the post -secondary level. (p. 210)

Although they focus on different aspects, the research done by both Scovel (1994), and Duff and Uchida (1997), ultimately acknowledges the connection between language and culture. Furthermore, both sets of research certainly recognise the important role played by the second language instructor in the learning of culture, as well as, language.

However, this does not cover all the cultural bases within the classroom environment. As is often the case in ESL, academic ELP classes have students from a number of different countries, creating an environment in which a variety of linguistic backgrounds exist, each connected to their own unique culture. Moreover, international students, as learners of a second (third, or fourth) language, may also have varying degrees of awareness of the culture embedded in the curricular materials, teaching methods, and personal teaching style of the instructor. Moving beyond these considerations, to an awareness, and to an understanding of the necessity of students to consider and discuss their own needs for cultural learning, as a part of their linguistic learning, is directly connected to my interest in conducting research into this topic.

A question of questions. Once a language instructor has recognised his/her role in the teaching of culture, the next step is to figure out how to act upon this within the context of the classroom environment. In my own teaching, as my awareness

of my role increased, I found myself pondering this very question. This prompted me to record the following commentary, "since teaching a language involves teaching a culture, it is crucial that ESL teachers reflect upon the socio-cultural aspects of language teaching and learning. At the very least, questions about how, and what aspects of Canadian culture will be represented need to be considered" (Birrell, reading log #2, 2001d, p. 2). Examining these questions in greater detail can lead to what seems like an unending list of questions. For example, what is the best way to teach culture in the language classroom? What culture should be taught? How should the teacher approach cultural difference? What is the teacher's attitude towards cultural difference? What are the students' attitudes towards the cultural differences between themselves and the teacher, and themselves and their classmates from other countries? How do these attitudes influence the learning of culture, as it connects to learning language? And the question, posed by Donahue and Parsons (1982) in their statement, "if we ascribe to Brown's theory (1980) that learning a second culture is part of learning a second language, then we must ask: "How can we teach them [the students] the subtiles of culture?" (p. 359) adds still another dimension. However, perhaps before concerning ourselves with the subtiles, or even the subtleties, of introducing a new culture it is worth considering the different contexts in which language and culture learning can occur.

Different contexts for language and culture learning. A learner's need for culture learning is apt to depend upon a number of factors, the major one being the context of their language learning. Taking the historical route, Kramsch (1995)

describes three distinct contexts of language, and therefore, culture learning. The first is what she terms the “universal”, which is based on the previously held idea that studying Latin was “the best entrance ticket to the universal culture of the European educated elite” (p. 86). For me, the concept of Latin as a universal, immediately poses the question: How does learning English as a foreign language equate to this now? The second context for language learning Kramersch names the “national”. In this context, the teaching of language and the teaching of culture are separated, with the view that “language acquisition became the acquisition of skills, of automatic verbal behaviour that were perceived as having no cultural value in themselves...” (p. 87). As Kramersch explains this approach to language teaching is problematic since, “the separation has kept language teaching within the strict structural or functional bounds, with culture often considered to be a fifth skill, after speaking, listening, reading and writing” (p. 87). This differs from the third context, “local links”, in which language and culture are connected through an emphasis on the teaching of real everyday language. According to Kramersch, “the cultural component of language teaching came to be seen as the pragmatic functions and notions expressed through language in everyday ways of speaking and acting” (p. 88). Although the learning context of the international students participating in the study is closest to “local links”, the focus on preparation for university switches the emphasis from pragmatics to academic skills.

Moran (2001) recognises that, “there are many potential outcomes for culture learning, depending on the culture that is presented” (p. 6). He identifies a

number of outcomes, which include, "cultural understanding, cultural awareness, cultural adaptation, assimilation, integration, social change, communicative competence, identity transformation, and language proficiency" (p. 6). It is highly unlikely that any learner will have need for all of these potential outcomes at any given time, rather he/she is more likely to require a few of these at most.

Although over an extended period of language and culture learning, all of these may well be priority outcomes at one time or another. For international students studying in academic ELPs the highest priority is likely to be language proficiency, with a focus on the development of the skills of academic reading and writing. In addition to language proficiency, and to varying degrees, cultural understanding, cultural awareness, and communicative competence may also be highlighted in the academic ELP classroom.

In the context of foreign language learning, cultural elements may serve as mere compliments to the language learning. Byram's (1989) teacher interviews in this area revealed that, "cultural information is seen as a pedagogic device for capturing the interest of pupils, contextualising their language learning, giving light relief or filling in lessons where language learning is believed to be limited" (p. 128). Clearly, cultural learning within the context of foreign language learning can be limited to the transmission of cultural information at best. Within the context of academic ELP, the transmission of cultural information may also be limited; however, this should not preclude the importance of cultural learning for international students.

A couple of suggestions, based on studies specific to culture learning,

may provide second language teachers with some basic guidelines to follow. Donahue and Parsons (1982) offer a recommendation when they suggest that, “teachers offer students a safe, secure learning environment for testing their observations about English and U.S. culture, then they will acquire both the language and the cultural subtiles necessary for appropriate social behaviour” (p. 359). While Guthrie (1975) comments that, “we may be able to deduce a few suggestions of ways in which culture learning can be enhanced. Again, we assume that language instruction is emphasised” (p. 112). Although neither of these suggestions is highly detailed, they do emphasize a number of key considerations. First, the teaching and learning of culture must not be at the expense of language teaching and learning. Rather the two should be combined in a mutually supportive way. Secondly, as Donahue and Parsons point out the environment plays an important role in the learning of culture. As I have already indicated, culture and cultural topics need to be approached with a heightened awareness and sensitivity on the part of the instructor, due to the personal connection each student has to his or her own culture.

Cultural Experience. Since I have emphasised the value of Moran’s (2001) list of potential outcomes of culture learning, it is also likely of significance to explore his concept of cultural experience, which is based on Lewin’s (in Kolb, 1984) model of experiential learning. Moran (2001) describes what he terms the *cultural experience* as, “any encounter between learners and another way of life, be it first through direct involvement with people in another culture or indirectly through learning materials in the language classroom” (p. 8). While exposure to

language and cultural material in the classroom environment are valuable, it is real experiences within the new culture, perhaps unlike anything else, that afford the most meaningful learning of culture. As Moran (2001) aptly points out, “whatever the circumstances, at the heart of the culture learning experience is the encounter with difference. Learners tend to view this difference through the lens of their own cultures. As a result, they tend to react to the ‘difference’ using what they already know - their own culture, their own view of the world” (p. 8). It seems then that it is the *encounter with difference* that has the potential to bring about a new awareness of, and understanding of, both the culture connected with the second language and the native culture associated with the first language. Byram’s (1989) commentary on the experiencing of the foreign culture suggests a reason for the power such an experience(s) has/have to impact on the learner. His explanation is worth quoting at length,

If learners are to understand aspects of the foreign culture in the tradition of social anthropology, i.e. as participant observers, then the aim must be to participate in it, and experience it from within, as well as observe it and understand it from without. Any other perspective would be insignificant because it would leave learners firmly planted in their own culture, judging the foreign culture from a tourist viewpoint and failing to apprehend the nature of the intimate relationship between the language they are learning and the culture it embodies. Furthermore, part of the contribution to a learner’s personal education from language learning is to offer them a perspective on their own language and culture, a viewpoint from which to perceive their own experiences and selves as social beings, to relativise and contextualise their own culture by experience of another. (Byram, 1989, p. 49)

Research

While there has been a great deal of theoretical discussion about the connection between language and culture, actual research into this area is much less

complete. Does this mean that I have identified that all-important *gap* in the research that I can begin to fill? Perhaps, or maybe I just need to do further searching to find research reports within, or related to, my research topic.

Even though I have yet to find studies done in this, or closely related, areas, I have found a couple of encouraging signs that there truly is a need for more research in this area. Watkins-Goffman (2001) suggests that, “more research and primarily case studies are needed to shed light on a complicated cultural phenomena that influences the learner’s progress in the second language classroom” (p. 10). Additionally, in James’ (2000) discussion of the further research implications of his framework for analysing culture in ESL, he poses the question, “In what other instructional contexts [apart from adult ESL] might this framework be applicable?” (p. 46). These invitations for future research do not specifically have my name on them; however, they do suggest to me that the need for further research into the relationship between language and culture in the context of ESL, and more specifically within ELPs, does exist. To me this presents an open door that does not require a personal invitation to enter.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Form of Inquiry

Since one of my stated reasons for undertaking this study is to provide an opportunity for the often unheard student voice to be heard, I decided to employ qualitative research methods. I feel I was justified in choosing a qualitative approach, for as Behar-Horenstein and Morgan (1995) have stated, "many of these qualitative methods developed out of interest in the lives and perspectives of people who had little or no voice in society" (p. 141). Within the realm of qualitative research methods, I used the case study method. More specifically, I used the collective case study method (e.g., Stake, 1995) to gain insight into international students' experiences of learning culture, as a part of learning English for academic purposes. Stake (1995) identifies a case study as the study of "one among others" (p. 2) and suggests that, "the cases of interest in education and social programs are people and programs" (p. 1). Collective case study research, which involves the study of a number of individual cases together; therefore, is an appropriate form of inquiry for my research. While each participant is a case, examining the experiences of several international students fits the description for collective case study. Moreover, as it was my intention to both gather and present students' perceptions of their experiences with the cultural aspects of their academic ELP, I saw the collective case study research method as a means of *exploring* rather than *answering* my research question. I make this distinction because of the positivistic implication of one correct answer that is attached to answering a research question, and due to the nature of my research it was never my intention to find one definitive answer to my research question. In addition, while the collective case study was my chosen form of inquiry, my strong affinity with narrative inquiry most certainly influenced the way I approached conducting the research project.

The Study

The Site and Participant Selection

The site of my research was an English Language Program (ELP), within the Division of Continuing Education, at a Canadian university. The participants in my study came from the student population enrolled in the academic stream of the ELP. I drew from the perspectives of eight participants, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is a sufficient number of participants to interview in order to have results that paint an accurate picture of the situation being studied. Participant attrition that resulted from illness, movement out of the ELP, and time constraints necessitated the interviewing of additional participants to maintain eight participants. In most cases, this only involved participants undergoing the initial interview before they withdrew from the study. Participation in my study was on a voluntary basis, and in no way influenced either the students' progress, or their grades, in the ELP. To ensure that I was not in a position of influence with the participants, I had proposed that none of the students in my class participate in the study. In fact, by the time I started interviewing participants I was not teaching within this ELP, so this issue was no longer a concern. It was necessary for me to approach my former colleagues to seek approval to speak to their students about my study. My former colleagues not only allowed me to take time from their teaching to talk with their students about my research project, but in some cases, they also assisted me in identifying students who might be interested in being potential participants.

Before I met with the academic classes in the ELP to explain my study and ask for volunteer participants, I had been concerned that I might not have an adequate response from the students for my request for participants. My fears were most definitely unfounded, as I had an overwhelming response. In a number of classes a large majority of the students indicated that they were

interested in participating, and in one class ALL the students put their names down as potential participants. Since I only needed to interview eight to ten students, the fifty plus names I received as potential participants allowed me to address most of my proposed criteria for the selection of participants.

The selection of participants for this study involved a number of factors. First, the participants were selected to be representative of the different nationalities of students in the academic ELP. The students in the academic ELP tend to be primarily from Japan, Korea, The People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Mexico. While it was not possible to represent every nationality, I did attempt to be widely representative, and was able to include students from Korea, Japan, The People's Republic of China, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. Another important factor to consider in selecting participants was gender; both females and males were included as participants. I was able to seek gender balance so that the participants represented the larger student population. A final factor was the participant's communicative competency in English. I decided at the proposal phase of my study that I would not exclude students with low levels of oral and aural proficiency from participating, although I realised that this decision meant that I might face some problems in communication. My own concerns regarding this factor, and possible solutions will be examined and discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

While ideally the participants should be completely representative of the academic ELP student population in all aspects, in reality this did not occur. The selection of participants based on nationality and gender was fairly easily accomplished, due to the large number of students who volunteered to participate. However, I encountered some difficulty in being fully representative of students at all levels of the academic ELP. Since the data collection phase took longer to complete than I had anticipated, three of the students were no longer in

the level they were in when I first started interviewing them. One student who had been in the highest level in the ELP had completed that level and was studying in the university by the time I was able to do his third interview. The other two students had moved up levels within the ELP between the time of their initial interviews, and the second and third interviews. In one case, the student moved up from level three to level five, and in the other, the student had moved up from level one to level four. So while these two students had at the beginning of my data collection represented an intermediate and beginner level of communicative competency, by the time I completed interviewing them their level of competency had increased substantially.

Negotiating Entry and Informed Consent

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that negotiating entry into the research site does not end once approval has been granted and informed consent forms have been signed. Prior to beginning my data collection, I also considered negotiating entry into the site to be a critical and ongoing element of my research, and this continued to be the case throughout the duration of my study. Therefore, negotiating the participant-researcher relationship required careful consideration. Moreover, before I was able to begin collecting data, I needed to negotiate approval to conduct my research with the Division of Continuing Education administration, in particular, with the ELP program director. The support and encouragement of the administration, program director, and my former colleagues was vital in order for me to undertake this research. Happily, permission to undertake my research in this site was granted by the program director, and I was well received by my former colleagues during their class time, and always felt welcome in the building when I was working on data collection.

Students who indicated an interest in participating in my study were contacted and an initial meeting was arranged. All the students who participated

in my study will remain anonymous, and for this reason they chose pseudonyms to be used in the reporting of the study. In addition, all the participants in my study were eighteen years old or more, and as a result did not require parental consent. In order to receive ethics approval, it was essential to have the participants' informed consent; however, it is unfortunate the informed consent forms they were required to sign potentially restricted the exploratory nature of my research.

Conducting the research

A Holistic Approach

My research study included the standard phases of data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the written report (thesis). However, since it was my wish to approach my study holistically, I did not necessarily see myself separating these components into three distinct phases during the course of my research. Rather, I anticipated all three of them blending into one another indistinguishably. In truth, this happened to an even greater degree than I thought it would. Due to delays in completing the data collection, I began introductory data analysis of the interview transcripts on the completed interviews before all of the interviews had been done. At the same time I was also working on writing small chunks of my literature review. When I was once again able to devote time to completing the interviews with the remaining participants, I had a brief period of interviews combined with intense transcribing sessions. This overlapping and integrating of phases of my research project allowed me to work on what I could within the constraints of my personal and professional life. Moreover, I was pleased to be able to remain true to my vision of a holistic approach to this research project. However, for the sake of clarity and to adhere to the traditional structure of a thesis, I will now describe each component of the research project separately.

Data Collection

Within (collective) case study research, Stake (1995) describes four means of data collection: observation, description of context, interviews, and document review. Based on the nature of my research question, I decided to employ two of these forms of data collection in my study, participant interviews and description of context, through reflective journal writing. I view both of these as integral components of my study. The interview component involved a series of three interviews with each participant. Following Gillham's (2000b) suggestion that, "[the semi-structured interview] is the most important form of interviewing in case study research" (p. 65), I employed this form of interview in my study. The one-to-one semi-structured interviews I conducted with each of the eight international students studying in the academic ELP varied in length from only a few minutes to approximately one hour, and were recorded on audio cassettes for transcription purposes.

One-to-one interviews. The purpose of the first interview was twofold: first, to gather background information about the participants, and second, to begin to negotiate the participant-researcher relationship. In terms of gathering background information, I needed to ask the participants about such things as their nationality, first language, age, education, goals within the ELP, and future plans. Gathering background information was essential, as it provided necessary information about the participants for anyone interested in either replicating, or further analysing my study. As the second purpose of this initial interview was to begin to negotiate the participant-researcher relationship, it was during this interview that the informed consent letter (see Appendix A) was explained to the

participants, and their signature of that letter was obtained.

My experience of discussing the informed consent letter with the participants was varied. Two of the participants had previously completed Master's research of their own and were familiar with the concept of informed consent, so they required little explanation. At the other end of the spectrum were students who had a very difficult time even reading the informed consent letter, and needed me to walk them through every paragraph, line by line. It was essential that all the participants had a clear understanding of what the letter contained and what they were agreeing to as participants in the research project. I had anticipated the length of time for this interview to be slightly shorter than the other two interviews, possibly only about 30 minutes. This estimate was very close to the actual length of time for this interview, as I generally spent at least half an hour with each participant.

In the second interview I began to explore each participant's experience of learning culture in the academic ELP. In interviewing each participant, I limited my primary interview questions to four open-ended description questions (Pedersen & Ivey, 1993, p. 142) (see Appendix B for the research instrument containing the specific questions). During this interview with each participant, I also used prompts to clarify the question for the participant, and used probes to gain a clearer understanding of, to follow up on, or to delve deeper into, comments made by the participant (see Appendix B for the research instrument outlining the use of prompts and probes). In addition to these two interview questioning strategies, there were times when I also had to rephrase or simplify

questions for some participants. I believe that my decision to use semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed the participants greater flexibility in responding than if I had used a more formal and more highly structured form of interview. Since my aim was to report my research from an emic perspective, that is from the students' perspective, I feel that the semi-structured interview was the most appropriate for my study.

The third interview with each participant allowed us to revisit any part of the previous interview, and provided the participants with an opportunity to add any new thoughts or comments. The direction these interviews took was determined by the content of each participant's earlier interviews. Shortly after the first and second interviews, each participant was given a verbatim transcript of the interview, and at the following interview, time was given to discuss any changes or corrections to the transcript. These member checks served as an important means of confirming that the participants' words had been correctly transcribed, and that their intended meaning was properly revealed. In addition, the member checks were used to follow up on any items that had arisen from the previous interview(s).

Reflective journals. While it had been my intention to write a reflective journal entry pertaining to that interview, immediately following each interview, I was not able to accomplish this very successfully. I had thought that I would remain in the place of the interview, reflect on the interview, and then jot down a few things before leaving the site. This turned out to be impossible in the first couple of interviews, and then not having established the pattern it was difficult to do in

subsequent interviews. So rather than journaling immediately following each interview, what tended to happen was the creation of a journal entry at the time of transcribing the interview. Although this did not conform to my initial plan, I still see my journal notes as an important element in my data collection. My journal notes include such information as: how I felt about my part in the interview, my reaction(s) to a particular answer, any concerns I had about the interview, any specific information about the participant that was relevant to the content or context of the interview.

Reflective journals seem to be becoming more commonplace as a medium for expressing personal thoughts and feelings. It is even possible to anonymously (or semi-anonymously) record ones innermost thoughts in online journals (blogs), which then can be read by millions of people all over the world. Whether this phenomenon is commentary on the pervasive, and invasive, nature of the Net, or on human behaviour, I am not sure. Either way, my intention in employing reflective journal entries as a means of data collection is neither to be some kind of a research exhibitionist, nor is it intended to serve someone else's voyeuristic tendencies. At any rate, such uses within the context of academic research would certainly never receive ethics approval. For the purpose of my research, I view these journal notes as being beneficial in assisting me to recall the context of each particular interview. My journal notes, as a record of my own thoughts about and insights into each interview, were, therefore, essential companions to the interview transcripts both in data analysis, and in writing the research report.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, I anticipated that the three components of my study would meld together. Preliminary data analysis did coincide with data collection through the transcription of the audio recordings of the interviews, and the initial reading of my journal notes. Furthermore, the analysing and reviewing of data continued even after I began the task of writing my research report. In keeping with the nature of my research, the data analysis component involved the exploration of themes.

In my study, the participants' interviews about their experience of culture, in relation to learning English in an academic ELP, produced some ideas that needed clarification and elaboration. They also raised questions for me about common themes. These common themes were closely examined, and then were used as appropriate in my research report. This involved binding sub-themes together into larger and cohesive units, as well as, exploring each sub-theme separately. The form of data analysis that I employed was a form of thematic analysis introduced by Labov (1977). This method has been described as an "analytical process [that] distinguishes those parts of the interview that contain narrative accounts from those parts that do not" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 164). The participants' interviews did contain both narrative accounts that were relevant to the research, and other commentary that was not relevant. Labov's approach to thematic analysis proved to be a useful tool to examine the interview transcripts for emergent themes, to separate the themes, and to organise those themes into thematic categories. As I worked on the thematic analysis, it became

transparent that, while specific details varied from participant to participant, there were several broad thematic categories that repeatedly emerged. In particular, themes around cultural learning in the classroom, and outside the classroom, (both overt and hidden) emerged and will be discussed in full detail in chapter five.

Preparation of the research report

I am interested in exploring unorthodox forms of writing (for this thesis and beyond) and I believe the inclusion of reflective journal entries to be an appropriate, but non-standard, form. Following Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) recommendation for the use of differing forms of writing, I hope to gently stretch the boundaries of what is considered to be acceptable academic writing. I consider the use of reflective journalling to be a way of expressing the context of each interview, which will enrich the presentation of data. Much like Geertz's (1973) notion of "thick description", I expect these journal entries to provide readers with a clearer picture of each interview. Ultimately, the journal entries should enable readers to have a sense of the finer details and a deeper understanding of each participant's comments. Furthermore, from the perspective of good research, my reflective journal entries will provide anyone reading my thesis with more contextual information about the interviews. Since I expect the reporting of my research (this thesis and any future reporting of this research project) to be highly readable, and because I want to extend an invitation to readers to enter into the dialogue, the more accessible my writing is the closer I have come to achieving my goal of producing an invitational text.

Therefore, the more detail that I am able to provide about the interview contexts the more easily or completely someone interested in exploring this area of research will be able to interpret my study and its implications.

I also see a benefit to myself, as a novice researcher, to writing reflective journal entries. The opportunity to reflect on the process while still in the process intrigued me. In the early stages of the research project, I wondered if purposefully stopping to reflect and journal my thoughts would make me a more careful researcher. I have come to realise that while the carefulness had the potential to be reflected in attention to detail, another, and more important, result was a more caring approach to the interviews with the participants. Because I see this research project as an experience, one in which I was able to learn and grow as a researcher, I hoped that through this experience I would developed my research skills in ways that would enable me to become a more caring researcher and individual. Although some might say that my initial thoughts and hopes, in this regard, were that of an idealistic novice researcher, I do believe that to a significant degree this did occur. I have no doubt that my interviewing techniques improved, in part, because of reflection on the first few interviews. Beyond the technical aspects of questioning participants, I believe that I also became a more sensitive and aware listener, and, therefore, better able to respond appropriately to the participants' comments. Furthermore, the insights I have had as a developing researcher into the process of conducting research, that was not only approved by the ethics review board but also served my deep desire to conduct research that meet my own criteria for good research, have

given me a new appreciation for all the intricacies of a research project.

Research(er) Considerations and Concerns

In any research study, regardless of the topic or research method, there are always potential problems that need to be considered before the research is undertaken. While consideration of such problems prior to beginning the study offers no guarantee that problems will be completely avoided, it does offer an opportunity to minimise them. Through reflection upon my research project at the proposal stage, I identified a number of considerations and concerns that needed to be addressed.

My concerns were primarily centred around the participants, especially in terms of the language and cultural differences between the international students, as participants, and myself, as researcher. I did not want to limit participation to students with a high level of English language proficiency. It was necessary, therefore, for me to expect and anticipate difficulties in communicating with some participants. Furthermore, I chose not to use a translator, mainly because I felt that too much of the meaning would be lost in the translation. I preferred to simplify my questions, so they could be understood by students with lower levels of English language proficiency. At the proposal stage of the research, being aware of the problem, and being willing to make adjustments, as necessary, appeared to offer the best solution to this concern. When the interviews began my choice to communicate directly with the participants, rather than through a translator, seemed to pay off. While there were occasions when it was necessary for me to restate/reword a question, or

provide a simplified explanation, for the most part the students were able to understand me, and I was usually able to understand them. Moreover, I feel that the fact that there was no intermediary assisted in the development of good participant-researcher relationships.

Another concern I identified early on, that is specifically related to the cultural differences, was the issue of negotiating my relationship with the participants. I recognised an issue raised by Ellsworth (1989) regarding, “student empowerment and dialogue [which] give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher[(researcher)]/student[(participant)] relationship intact” (p. 306). The fact that I had been an instructor in the ELP, and was a researcher, put me in a position of authority, which had the potential to create an unequal power relationship between the participants and myself. I did not want just an “illusion of equity”, so I wanted do everything I could to foster and maintain equitable relationships with the participants. This was sometimes fairly easy to achieve, and other times almost impossible to achieve. While I believe that I treated all of the participants fairly, and with respect, I think the creation and maintenance of equitable relationships, with the participants, was influenced to a tremendous degree by the participants themselves. Although I have no substantive evidence to back it up, I suspect that factors such as age, level of education, English language competency, and personality impacted on the level of comfort individual participants had with entering into an equitable relationship with me.

Closely connected to my concern about the inequality of the relationship

between researcher and participant was my concern about participant openness. I had to consider what I would do if some participants felt uncomfortable about openly sharing their thoughts and experiences with me. One way that I hoped to minimise this potential problem was to create a warm and an inviting atmosphere for the interviews. As a teacher, I recognised the importance of creating a positive environment for learning, so I knew, as a researcher, that such an environment was also key for the interviews. For this reason, I thought that it would be preferable to conduct the interviews outside of the classroom environment. However, I decided to leave the choice of the interview location up to each participant. In actuality, most of the participants ended up being interviewed in their classrooms following the conclusion of their afternoon classes because of the convenience of not having to take a bus somewhere to meet up with me. Considering the bulk of the interviews took place in the frigid winter months this was not only understandable, but also very wise. As a researcher, I also found this arrangement helpful since it meant that I generally did not have to wait for participants to arrive, nor did I have to endure waiting for a participant who never showed up. There were a few instances in which interviews took place elsewhere, at the request of the participant. Twice I met one participant at her homestay, which in her case turned out to be a wonderful location for the interviews. Another interview was conducted in a coffee shop, and although the interview went fine, translating it was slightly more challenging because of the amount of background noise. While I initially had concerns about the appropriate location for the interviews, this ended up not being a real issue.

Furthermore, I recognised the importance of being attuned to each participant's comfort zone, and also the need to adapt to each of their individual styles of communicating. In their work in the area of cross-cultural studies and language, Gumprez and Cook-Gumprez (1982) have addressed this problem of face-to-face interaction between speakers of different ethnic backgrounds. I will quote their writing at length as it clearly expresses both the problem and a suggestion for a solution.

The real problem is that whatever the situation, whether a formal interview or an informal meeting, the need in all communication for all people who are relative strangers to each other is to achieve a *communicative flexibility*, an ability to adapt strategies to the audience and to the signs, both direct and indirect, so that the participants are able to monitor and understand at least some of each other's meaning. Meaning in any face-to-face encounter is always negotiable; it is discovering *the grounds* for negotiation that requires the participants' skill... The ability to expose enough of the implicit meaning to make for a satisfactory encounter between strangers or culturally different speakers requires communicative flexibility [italics in the original text]. (p. 14)

As a novice researcher, part of the learning process was to achieve communicative flexibility in my face-to-face interviews with the participants in my study. I feel that my experience as an English language instructor with international students may have helped me to reach and maintain this flexibility.

This leads directly into my next concern. Since it was my aim to discover and reveal the students' perspectives, it was vital that all of the participants be permitted and encouraged to freely discuss the topic in terms of what was important to them. As I mentioned in the research question section of this thesis, this could result in a movement away from my research question, which had the potential to create a dilemma. If I did not allow the participants the freedom to

discuss the topic on their terms, would I in some way be violating the equality of the participant-researcher relationship? In addition, would I then in some way be determining the direction of the interviews? On the other hand, if allowing participants complete freedom resulted in a change in the focus of my study, would I still be able to respond to my research question, and would I have successfully completed my thesis? The solution seemed to rest in a very delicate balance of control between the students, as participants, and myself, as researcher. As the interviews progressed, I was, for the most part, able to negotiate with each participant to find the right balance. With some participants I found it necessary to be more direct in my questioning, and with other participants I stepped back and gave them free rein to run with my broad questions. In the end, as with some of the other concerns I had before I began the interview phase, I came to realise that an individualised approach to each participant was the best.

My final concern relates to the idea of giving the participants something in return for their involvement in the study, as I feel strongly about not taking from them without giving back. I have given considerable thought to this concern, and believe that one way that I can offer the participants something of value is by recognising them as key stakeholders in the curriculum. As I stated in my rationale for proposing this research, this study may impact future curriculum development in academic ELPs. While changes to academic ELP curricula based on information gleaned from the participants in my study will likely come too late to benefit them, it is my hope that their input will influence academic ELP

programming and curriculum development in ways that are beneficial for future international students.

Finally, as it is the students' experiences that I have explored and validated, I hope that participants feel that their contribution to my study has been worthwhile. As I examined the transcripts for the thematic analysis, I happily discovered comments that indicated to me that at least one participant did get something out of participating in the study. At the end of the third interview with Jet, when I thanked him for his time and his comments, Jet expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to practice his English.

Joan: Mhmm. Ok. Well thank you very much again for doing these three interviews. It has been a pleasure to talk to you and to hear your ideas. So thank you very much.

Jet: And I want to thank you. This interview for me is a very good chance for express my speaking.

Joan: Oh good!

Jet: I, I, uh, very like that (laughing). (June 4, 2003)

Furthermore, during interviews with Jordan and Hazel, they each made comments that suggested that they wanted to make sure that what they had told me would help my research. When I reassured them that their commentary was useful, they seemed to be pleased.

Joan: So, well if that's all you want to add for today then we'll stop here. There are some interesting things you just said now. Yah, it's good.

Jordan: I hope it is useful...

Joan: Yah, it's very useful.

Jordan: For you to do something.

Joan: Yah, definitely. Yah, it is. Yah, it's good.

Jordan: That's fine. (June 5, 2003)

Joan... but I won't have any new questions next time, so it will just be kind of a review of this one.

Hazel: Yah, yah. Oh, is that enough too?

Joan: Yah, that's great.

Hazel: Oh... (laughing)

Joan: Yah, yah, for sure. No, this is good. And then also if you are thinking about it then maybe if you think of anything to add to the next one, then that's fine. (December 4, 2003)

Moreover, Faze recognised that his storytelling may have moved away from answering my questions, and he apologised for what he saw as a lack of focus on culture. Although not everything he had spoken about connected to his experience of culture, I was aware that his stories contained comments that were relevant to my research.

Faze: But I am sorry because you want to focus about to culture, and talking and telling you stories. (laughing)

Joan: (laughing)

Faze: Because it's difficult to me telling you I remember in one hour all what I said.

Joan: No, no. You know what it's ok. We, I can listen to the tape, and I can pull out bits that are... .You know, it's ok. Even in the stories, there are things I am thinking already - it's like, yah, this is good.

Faze: Yah. I try to talk to you, but I don't think so you need all what I say.

Joan: No, no. I don't use everything you say.

Faze: I understand, but I don't want to, yah.

Joan: No, that's ok.

Faze: I hope to remember and wrote notes, and it's help to remind me, like about culture. Focus about culture is important.

Joan: Yah, yah. But this is fine. There are many, many good things.

Faze: I hope.

Joan: Oh, for sure. (July 15, 2003)

These comments seem to reflect a desire on the part of these participants to assist me. I hope that this is also an indication of a feeling, on the part of these participants, that they have made a worthwhile contribution.

Chapter Four – Introduction of the participants

In the introductory chapter to his book Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice, Moran (2001) very eloquently expresses his thoughts about learning culture. Moran's commentary speaks directly to the reason for including an individual snapshot of each participant in this research project, and I will quote him at length so as not to interrupt the flow of his ideas.

I want to emphasise that culture learning, whether it occurs in a foreign language or a second language context, inside or outside of the classroom, with or without teachers, through books or through people, is best seen as lived experience, as a personal encounter with another way of life. This encounter, when all said and done is unique to every learner. Every learner has a distinct story to tell, and teaching culture is about constructing and hearing these stories. Finally, I want to stress that, as language teachers, we too have stories of learning language and culture. The way we teach culture springs from our histories as language and culture learners and our understanding of ourselves. Bringing our own stories to light can help us to see how to foster culture learning in the students in our language classes. (p.3)

Following along Moran's line of thinking, I believe that it is important, for a more complete understanding of my research, to introduce, in some detail, all who played a central part in the creation of this research. Without this additional personal introduction, it is likely that the participants will be lumped together as "the subjects" of my research, and will not be fully understood as individuals with their own unique cultural experiences. Therefore, the eight participants in my study will be introduced, in turn, using the information gathered during my initial interview with each of them. Within each participant's introduction, I will also provide information about the contexts of the interviews, based on the notes from my reflective journal entries. I have chosen to integrate my reflective journal entry comments into these introductions in order to present a multi-dimensional vision

of each participant. In keeping with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) criteria for good research reporting, which I have recommended to be the measuring stick for this thesis, this contextualising of the interviews should give the reader(s) a clearer picture of the interview, of my thoughts about the interviews, and a greater familiarity with the participants.

Introducing the participants

Hazel

Korean born, Hazel had been in Canada for two and a half months when she first began participating in my research study. At the age of 26, she did not see herself as the usual student in the Continuing Education ELP. In her own words, Hazel described herself as, "a very special case... in ESL class." (interview with Hazel, November 11, 2002). Educated in her Korean homeland, Hazel had just completed a Master's degree in Pharmacy before coming to Canada. During our discussions, Hazel indicated that she had not completely decided whether she would return to Korea to look for a job or begin a Ph.D. in the United States at the end of her year here, although she seemed to be leaning more towards continuing her studies. Hazel's long-term goals clearly reflected her hopes for something more for her life than what most Korean women have. "In Korea, most job girl, like my friends, couldn't work after they get married... I don't want to be only housewife... I would like my job, and my life...that's why I choose pharmacy, and my parents want to me a pharmacist." (interview with Hazel, November 11, 2002).

Hazel was a delight to interact with from the very first time I meet with her.

My reflective journal entry for my first interview with Hazel reflects my thoughts and feeling very accurately.

I arrived at the participant's homestay house a few minutes late because of confusion about the location. Although I arrived late, I was very warmly welcomed by both the participant and her host family. I appreciated being able to conduct the interview in a quiet and comfortable environment.

(Journal entry for Hazel, November 11, 2002)

I meet with Hazel once in the classroom after her class, and then again with her in her homestay. Regardless of the interview environment, Hazel was always as helpful as she could possibly be, and tried to provide as much information as she could. In reference to Hazel, I noted in my reflective journal that, "[she] was very easy to talk with and very co-operative" (Journal entry for Hazel, November 2002).

As I learned more about Hazel, I was charmed by her natural warmth and impressed by her desire and courage to follow her dreams rather than adhere to the traditional way of life for Korean women. I am very thankful for Hazel's unique contribution to the research, which provided me with an opportunity to learn by offering me a new perspective on Korean women.

David

David, who came from Mexico, was 32 years old when I first interviewed him. Like Hazel, David was an older student, who had also already completed a Master's degree in his home country before coming to Canada to study in the ELP. However, he was the only student from Latin America to participate in my

study. There are very few non-Asian students in the academic ELP, with the vast majority of students coming from China, Korea, and Japan. It is for this reason that David was the only Mexican to participate in my research study. David had spent a couple of months travelling around Canada before the term started, so he had been in Canada for approximately four months when he began participating in the study. His decision to take time to explore Canada and get to know something about Canadians before beginning his English language studies turned out to have a tremendous impact on his responses to many of my questions. While I had no knowledge of his motivation behind coming to Canada to study when he volunteered to participate, nor when I selected him as a participant, he indicated this in a very direct way in his initial interview. "Number one, the reason number one I want to know the culture of Canada that's why I came..." (Interview with David, November 11, 2002).

I deliberately selected David as the first participant to interview. Knowing that David was a Mexican student, and an older student, lead me to believe that he might be easier to interview. During my phone conversation with him to set up the initial interview, I learned that David had completed a Master's degree and he seemed like someone who would have a great deal to talk about. My journal notes indicate a slight nervousness on my part,

Okay, so I've started - interview number one with the first participant is now done. How am I feeling about this? I think that I made things easier for myself by choosing as my first participant a very interesting person and someone who has completed a Masters degree himself. Considering it was my first interview I feel that it went all right. I would like to (and I am sure that I will) refine my interviewing techniques. I think that my participant was more relaxed than I was, and that he felt very comfortable in responding to the questions. (Journal entry for David, November 11,

2002)

I met David in a local coffee shop. I recall being concerned about the coffee shop being too noisy to have a clear recording of the interview. "I was concerned about the level of background noise in the very busy and noisy coffee shop interfering with the recording of the interview, but I think that the quality of the recording is good enough to transcribe without too much difficulty" (Journal entry for David, November 11, 2002). In actuality, the quality of the recording was generally okay, although there were a few times that David lowered his voice and this made some words difficult to hear during the transcription process.

Due to David's knowledge and understanding of the purpose and process of informed consent, I did not have to explain anything to him about the informed consent letter. He read the letter through and I offered to answer questions about it, but he did not have any questions. Finally, my reflective journal entry for this initial interview with David shows my interest in further interviews with this participant. "I am looking forward to the second interview with this participant and to hearing what he has to say about his experience of learning about Canadian culture in the ELP" (Journal entry for David, November 11, 2002).

Sony

Sony was one of four Chinese students to participate in the research project. She was a 19 year-old student who had just completed high school a month before coming to Canada. In my initial interview with her, Sony spoke about how her own dreams for her future differed from what her parents wanted her to do. She mentioned that her parents were encouraging her to study for a degree in

business; while Sony's own interest lay in becoming a photographer. Sony's comment, "I just want to take some pictures to touch somebody's mind" (Interview with Sony, November 13, 2002) expressed to me the depth of her desire to become a photographer. However, she recognised that she would not be able to pursue her dream when she told me, "but my parents don't allow, so I have no idea" (Interview with Sony, November 13, 2002). When I asked Sony if combining her parents' wishes for her with her own dream would be a possibility, she responded, "maybe if I really got a lot of money, I can do anything, anything" (Interview with Sony, November 13, 2002).

Sony had the potential to offer some personal insights into culture and cultural differences, beyond those of an international student studying in an ELP in Canada, as her father is Chinese and her mother is Japanese. One of Sony's English language instructors mentioned this to me when Sony volunteered to participate in the research project. Then in the initial interview, Sony revealed this fact when she clearly identified herself as speaking two languages, Chinese and Japanese.

Joan: And do you speak any other languages?

Sony: I speak Japanese

Joan: Ah, Japanese also, ok. So how did you learn Japanese?

Sony: Uh, cause my mother is Japanese. (Interview with Sony, November 13, 2002)

While Sony had the potential to offer some additional personal insight, I sensed that she was not comfortable talking about her family or her personal life in

China.

Sony was one of the least talkative participants. As I noted in my reflective journal, "she did not appear to have the same level of interest or enthusiasm as the two previous participants [Hazel and David]" (Journal entry, November 2002). At first I wondered if this might be a result of her age or the fact that her level of English was lower than the other two participants. I also wondered if she was a little nervous about doing the interview. However, over time I came to believe that Sony's lack of inclination to talk about her experiences of learning culture in an academic ELP, was primarily influenced by Sony's battle with culture shock. Through many of her comments and some of her actions, it became obvious that Sony was very unhappy living in Canada. I felt that Sony was often depressed and uncertain how best to cope with living in an unfamiliar environment far away from her family and friends. As a researcher, I hoped that having someone to talk to about her experiences might provide her with a means of expressing some of her feelings. As a compassionate woman, I was concerned about her and wondered what I might be able to do to help her. Unfortunately, neither of my roles provided instances for a satisfactory solution, and the last time I saw Sony (when meeting another participant for an interview) I came away with the impression that she was still struggling.

Robert

Robert was another Chinese student who participated in the study. Robert was 20 years old when I first interviewed him in November 2002. Before coming to Canada he had completed high school and had studied administration for three

months at a university in Beijing. Robert came to Canada to study in January of 2002, so he had been in the English language program for almost a year. In his ten months in the ELP, during which time he had studied in both the General and academic streams, his goals had changed. "Before that my goal is how to improve my English... But now my goal is how to finish my university" (Interview with Robert, November 13, 2002).

Robert's goals for the next five years were clearly focused on his studies. He stated that, "after this term...that is the main goal... I just like to begin my university and be a student in Canada" (Interview with Robert, November 13, 2002). Robert's long term plans, like those of many students from China who come to study in Canada, included the possibility of settling permanently in Canada, which he indicated when he said, "I want to finish my Master's degree in Canada, and then that's it. If I can immigrate to Canada that's better" (Interview with Robert, November 13, 2002).

Robert was fully embracing his Canadian experience. He was very fortunate to have a good relationship with his host family, in particular his host father whom he had come to depend on and trust to teach him about life in Canada. Robert had reached a place where he was able to recognise and discuss the cultural differences between life in China and life in Canada without being judgmental. Looking back at my reflective journal for my impressions of Robert, I found that I had written that, "he was very easy to talk to and his speaking is very clear. Robert seems to be a very confident young man and he has a clear picture of where he is headed" (Journal entry, November 2002).

Moreover, Robert was open to trying new things in Canada that he had never done in China (such as going to a yoga class with his host mother). Robert's willingness to be open to the challenges and rewards of his Canadian experience also spilled over into his willingness to be open as a participant.

Nana

The only Japanese student to participate in my study was 27 year-old Nana from Osaka. In Osaka she had completed a two-year college degree in Child Education. Nana had been in Canada a year and a half at the time of her first interview, which made her the participant who had been in Canada the longest. While she had spent a lengthy amount of time in Canada, it was only her second term studying in the ELP. Nana's short term plans included continuing her English language studies at another language school, and then taking a course that focused on TOFEL preparation. She then hoped to study criminology at one of the larger universities in Western Canada. However, she did not necessarily intend to use a degree in criminology when she returned to Japan. Although Nana commented that, "maybe I will go back to Japan and I will get a job with the education" (Interview with Nana, November 14, 2002) she seemed uncertain as to exactly what she would do in the future.

For me as a novice researcher, Nana turned out to be the most challenging participant of all the participants in the study. Although she volunteered to participate by putting her name down on the list, she seemed to lose interest in participating as the interview process progressed. During the first interview with Nana, I encountered a technical problem with the tape recorder,

which required us to redo the whole half hour interview. She did not complain about having to answer the same questions all over again, and, in fact, we joked about it at the time. However, when I met with Nana for the second interview she did not have much to say in response to my questions. Furthermore, she declined to check over the transcript for that interview and to meet for the final interview. In spite of this, I have decided to include Nana's limited commentary in the results chapter. I am still not certain why our participant-researcher relationship broke down, but I am most disappointed that I was not able to maintain it through out Nana's entire interview phase. Since negotiating and maintaining the participant-researcher relationship with all the participants was very important to me, I definitely feel that I failed in this regard with Nana.

Jet

Jet, who is from the north-eastern part of China, was 19 years old when he first started participating in the study. He decided to chose his pseudonym after the famous Chinese movie star Jet Li. Prior to entering the ELP, Jet had studied in a Canadian secondary school in another province for one year. Even though he had been accepted into a Chinese university, his parents decided that it would be better for Jet to come to Canada to study. Although he did not suggest the reason, perhaps they hoped that he would be able to enter a Canadian university directly upon completion of his secondary school courses. While he found the math and science courses to be much easier than what he was used to in China, he mentioned that he often had difficulty understanding his teachers. Moreover, the ESL and English courses were challenging, and in Jet's experience it was

particularly hard for him to improve his spoken English due to the large majority of Chinese students studying at a school that only accepted international students. As Jet explained,

Jet: And I lived in the house with some Chinese students, and when I go to the... go shopping or go to cinema, uhh, there is lots of Chinese.

Joan: It's always with Chinese, other Chinese students.

Jet: Yah, all Chinese.

Joan: That means what happens?

Jet: That's means I can't improve my English very quickly... because in my life I needn't speak English (laughing). (Interview with Jet, November 20, 2002)

Jet's experience was familiar to me, in that it was very similar to what I experienced living in the U.A.E..

In the three months since he had started studying in the ELP, he noticed an improvement in his academic reading and writing skills. Jet also noted that his new learning environment was more conducive to learning English, in fact he felt that the environment "in this program, I think it's perfect" (Interview with Jet, November 20, 2002). Jet expressed his desire to meet his short-term goal within the ELP when he said that, "In fact, I want to go university more quickly" (Interview with Jet, November 20, 2002). After getting the necessary TOEFL or CAN test score, Jet's hope was to be accepted at McMaster University. Although McMaster was his first choice, he was open to applying to, and studying at, other universities in Canada. Jet's primary interest was in the area of environmental studies. In the long term, he planned to complete his university studies and return to China and find a job related to his field. Jet seemed very optimistic about his job prospects in China, due to the fact that China is such a large country. As Jet mentioned, the fact that environmental studies is just beginning to develop in

China would likely also make it easier for him to find employment.

During the course of the series of three interviews with Jet, I had a growing awareness of, and a deepening appreciation of, Jet's ability to think critically and make a connection between two seemingly unconnected ideas. Jet's mental gymnastics with concepts was certainly impressive and indicated to me the degree to which he had been changed by his experience of Canadian culture. As Jet stated when I raised this with him, "I think from this things, uh, I think, uh, Canadian people, in the, uh, Canadian culture will make people open mind. Well, but in China, Chinese people, hmm, Chinese people don't open minded like this" (Interview with Jet, May 28, 2003). This new way of thinking about, and approaching, the world is very likely to serve him well in his future studies here in Canada. While it is possibly unfair of me to speculate about his return to China, I do wonder how Jet will cope with the reverse culture shock when he returns to China after completing his university studies in Canada. It remains to be seen whether or not his open mindedness will help him readjust to his native Chinese culture.

Jordan

Jordan is from Zhengzhou, which is located in the centre of China. He was 22 years old when he began participating in the research project. An avid basketball player, he decided to use the pseudonym Jordan, after Michael Jordan his favourite basketball player. Prior to coming to study English in Canada, he studied at a college in China for two years. His major was Chinese, which he explained involved studying, "writing and some, like ancient Chinese" (Interview

with Jordan, November 25, 2002). He told me that it has become common for people to study English in China.

Jordan: Yah. Too many people study English. Now English in China is very popular.

Joan: Very popular.

Jordan: Yah. So many people to learn. . .

Joan: Right, yah, yah.

Jordan: Young and old. (Interview with Jordan, November 25, 2002)

However, Jordan had only studied English for one year, which he described as being “not so much” (Interview with Jordan, November 25, 2002).

Jordan had been in Canada for three months, and was studying in the first level of an academic ELP when we meet for the initial interview. At that time his short-term goal was very simple - to learn more English. He mentioned that he wanted to improve his academic reading, writing, and listening skills, which he felt were the most important for success in university. Jordan wanted to move up through the higher levels of the academic ELP, and when he was ready he planned to enter a Canadian university. Even though Jordan had not completely decided what he would study at university, he was considering business or medicine. Lengthy delays in completing the interview process with Jordan meant that it was six months before I was able to meet Jordan again for his second and third interviews. During that time he had moved up a number of levels within the academic ELP, and his oral and aural English had noticeably improved. This improvement certainly made it easier for Jordan to express his thoughts and

comments about his experiences, but the passage of time also provided an opportunity for him to experience more of both the ELP and his homestay.

In fact, in our third interview, Jordan offered some amazing insights into his homestay experience, and what he had learned about Canadian culture through the time he spent with his host family. He was able to articulate his thoughts on the importance of learning how to get along with foreign people, which he learned by living with a Canadian host family. Jordan took this awareness one step further, and told me that he believed that what he learned about Canadian people through his homestay experience would help him in other situations because, "if you have the ability to deal with your homestay people, like homestay son, daughter, uh, or some other people, homestay friends, also I think you have the ability to deal with your classmate, including a lot of foreign people, a variety, a variety of people" (Interview with Jordan, June 5, 2003). I was impressed with Jordan's attitude towards people with different ideas, and the way he wanted to try to get along with all people he encountered. I hope that Jordan's desire to gain a better understanding of Canadians and "foreign people" helps ease his transition from the shelter of the ELP into his university studies.

Faze

Faze, who is from the city of Medena in the western region of Saudi Arabia, was the only Middle Easterner to participate in the research project. He was 26 years old when we meet for the first interview. In his home country, Faze studied a combination of Arabic law and international law for two and a half years before coming to Canada. He initially came to Canada two years previous when his

sister asked him if he would accompany her while she continuing her studies in the field of medicine. Faze had been studying in the academic ELP for just over a month and a half when he first began participating. Prior to studying in the academic ELP, he studied in another ELP.

In the short term, Faze saw his goal within the academic ELP as being improving his academic skills, in particular his writing skills. He hoped to complete a second term in the academic ELP, and then enter university. Although Faze studied law in Saudi Arabia, he was seriously considering changing his field of study to computer engineering. Faze's confidence that a degree in computer engineering, coupled with fluency in both Arabic and English, would greatly improve his long term career opportunities became obvious when he commented that, "if I speak English and speak Arabic I found great job, I will found a great job in my country. Plus like finish studying computer, but computer is good. It's perfect" (Interview with Faze, June 30, 2003). As Faze pointed out, "I prefer that because if I can work everywhere, like I can work here in Canada, or in my country, or any other countries"(Interview with Faze, June 30, 2003).

Faze had a tendency to digress from answering questions into stories that, while undeniably fascinating and far more interesting, did not necessarily relate to my original question. I found it almost impossible to stop Faze's storytelling, mainly because I wanted to hear the story being told. Nevertheless, when I transcribed Faze's interviews and began analysing them I realised that a good number of his stories connected in one way or another with his experience of learning about Canadian culture, albeit, outside of his academic ELP.

While most of the other participants were warm, interesting, and a delight to converse with, Faze charmed me more than any other. For me, a large part of his charm was his voice and mannerisms. His pronunciation, intonation, word stress, body language and gestures were a strong reminder of the students I had taught and grown so fond of during my time in the U.A.E. Moreover, Faze's love of his adopted home, Canada, shone through in much the same way as my love of my adopted home, the U.A.E., did for me. Perhaps also, my knowledge of, and understanding of, Arabian Gulf life strengthened and deepened the connection between Faze and myself.

While each of the eight participants offered her or his special perspective of learning culture in an ELP, the commentary and insights that they provided as a group was immeasurable. As representatives of the larger population of international students, these participants' provided valuable information about the cultural learning experiences of international students studying in ELPs. Generally, the participants exceeded my expectations, in terms of their responses to the four open-ended questions. Moreover, as a group, voluntarily participating in my research project, they were reliable, generous with their time, and courteous. Overall, my interaction with the participants was both a pleasurable and rewarding experience for me.

As a researcher, I was required to protect the participants' identities; however, many of the participants came to know which other international students were participating in the study. In two cases, a participant was in the same class in the ELP as a co-participant. In spite of this connection as

classmates, there did not seem to be a significant amount of discussion between the participants about the research project.

In addition to the eight participants, who participated directly in my research project through the one-to-one interviews, I would also like to comment on those who participated indirectly. During the course of their interviews, the participants regularly identified their ELP instructors and homestay families as important figures in their cultural learning. As with the eight international students, confidentiality was maintained for the ELP instructors and homestay families by omitting their names, and in some cases, by not revealing their gender. Although the ELP instructors and homestay family members remained anonymous, and were not heard from directly, their influence on the cultural learning of the international students needs to be acknowledged. Both the instructors in the ELP classrooms and the members of the homestay families were instrumental in creating opportunities for cultural learning, raising cultural awareness, and helping the international students experience the local culture.

Chapter Five - Results

Take me with you on this journey
where the boundaries of time are now tossed
in cathedrals of the forest
in the words of the tongues now lost

Find the answers, ask the questions
find the roots of an ancient tree
take me dancing, take me singing
I'll ride on till the moon meets the sea (McKennitt, 1997, "Night ride across the
Caucasus")

Emergent Theme Analysis

Using the approach to thematic analysis described in the methodology chapter, I completed an emergent theme analysis, which involved the careful examination of the interview transcripts for the repetition of common themes. What came to the surface can be divided into four main categories. The four main thematic categories are: (a) what the participants learned directly about culture within the classroom, (b) what the participants learned indirectly about culture within the classroom, (c) what the participants learned directly about culture outside of the classroom, and (d) what the participants learned indirectly about culture outside of the classroom. In addition to these four clearly delineated categories, a fifth category emerged. Although the boundaries of this fifth category are not as transparent, this category provides a necessary glimpse into other ways in which the participants learned about culture. Furthermore, within each of these broad thematic categories, there are a number of sub-themes. After carefully exploring and establishing the major thematic categories, I dove deeper to grasp the essence of the participants' experience. In the interest of clarity, I will discuss the sub-themes within each of the larger thematic categories. Finally, my

commentary on the deeper level of meaning, which can be drawn from this examination of the participants' comments, will be contained in the final discussion and implications chapter.

In examining the participants' perceptions and perspectives, it is useful to connect them with the theoretical framework explored and mapped out in the literature review of chapter two. In some instances, these connections are very easily made. Most participants spoke of in-class and out-of-class events and experiences that were perfect examples of Maculaitis and Scheraga's (1989) high culture and folk culture. A much smaller number of participants connected their own experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, to new and different ways of thinking and behaving, which is clearly linked to the notion of deep culture. Furthermore, discussions by Byram (1989), James (2000), and Moran (2001) of cultural awareness and cultural experience were not directly mentioned or discussed by any of the participants; however, the idea of gaining an increased awareness of both the participants' first culture and Canadian culture, and the notion of experiencing Canadian culture were mentioned several times by participants. While these connections are transparent and require little explanation, other connections with the theoretical framework are incomplete, or impossible to make at all.

Furthermore, I have attempted to maintain as much of the context of these dialogues as possible in order for the reader to have a clear picture. In some cases, I have removed parts of the interview, which do not impact on the comprehension of the dialogue, and which do not connect to the thematic

narrative. In other instances, I have presented the discussions in their complete and, often lengthy, form, so that the flow of the cross-cultural dialogues is not interrupted. In addition, the commentary offered before each interview is aimed at providing contextual information. It is my hope that these editorial choices will aid the reader in feeling connected to these cross-cultural dialogues.

Finally, it is important to note that, as a researcher looking to learn about, and from, the perspectives of these international students, I did not offer the participants any definitions or explanations of either *culture* or *Canadian culture*. Rather I left it to the participants to define the term *culture*, and to operationalise *Canadian culture*, for themselves. Since each participant self-defined *culture* and *Canadian culture* there are numerous definitions of *culture*, and a wide range of notions of what constitutes *Canadian culture*. Although these definitions might differ from those you or I might create, it is absolutely critical to the emic perspective of my research that these understandings of *culture* and *Canadian culture* not only be recorded in the interview, but also be given a voice in the reporting of this research.

In-Class Overt Culture Learning

The curriculum for the academic stream of the ELP includes components that overtly address aspects of Canadian culture, and, therefore, it is not surprising that the participants were generally able to clearly articulate the ways in which they were overtly learning about culture. Within their academic ELP classrooms, the participants learned in direct ways about Canadian culture through their everyday classroom learning tasks and activities. In particular, they spoke of

learning about Canadian culture in their academic English language classes in class discussions, as well as, through reading and writing tasks. In some instances, they also mentioned special lectures or guest speakers that specifically addressed cultural issues. In exploring the participants' overt learning of culture, the main thematic category has, therefore, been broken down into the sub-themes of reading, writing, class discussions, and special lectures and guest speakers. Beginning with the skill of reading, I will present the participants' commentary about overt ways in which they learned about culture within their classroom environments.

Reading. In the participants' discussions about their experiences of learning culture, they identified reading as a source of cultural learning. The material the participants were reading, such as articles and selections from textbooks, was sometimes related to Canadian culture. In my second interview with David, he explained how what he was reading in his academic English language class was connected to Canadian culture.

David: So all the readings we are learning about the ... culture of Canada, the people from Canada, the history. So thus, I think that's the way I learn more about the history. I know, now I know more about the history of the Aboriginal people. I know... the problems they had, and the problems they still have now. That's the only thing I learned here new, from the books...

Joan: So, but you said also from these readings that you have done in class you got a new awareness of that...

David: Yah.

Joan: ... of that, of those problems...

David: Yah! Because the readings they tell us like what kind of problems they [Aboriginal people] had, the way they lived before, how they changed their life, what kind of problems like drugs, like, uh, the people die because they don't have a lot of health, they don't have enough food.... (November 20, 2002)

While David was able to remember and discuss specific examples of

readings that he felt related to learning more about Canadian culture, some of the other participants were either unable to recall specific readings, or were less certain about how the readings connected to Canadian culture. Hazel thought that she had been given some reading passages that dealt with Canadian culture, but could not remember exactly because there were not many such passages, and any she had been given to read were very short. "Probably I have some kind, some readings about Canadian culture, Canadian culture, but I couldn't remember when because it is only one or two pieces of paper" (Interview with Hazel, December 4, 2002).

Sony spoke about how her teacher used readings to explain to the class about Canadian holidays, specifically Thanksgiving and Halloween.

Sony: Well, the teacher print us a paper... let us read it ... and then explain... and uh, and we ask some questions and (s)he gives us answer.
 Joan: Right, right. So, like you said (s)he printed out a paper and you read it, so was it kind of like part of a reading lesson then?
 Sony: Yah, kind of...
 Joan: Reading and vocabulary? Or...
 Sony: Just tell us a story, but maybe (s)he cannot read it cause... maybe we cannot understand what (s)he reads, so (s)he prints us.
 Joan: Oh, ok... and that was for Thanksgiving or Halloween?
 Sony: Both. (December 2, 2002)

Robert recalled that in his academic English language class there was generally a strong focus on reading, but the passages tended to be more about Canadian history than Canadian culture. He also noted that, within the ELP, the general stream classes presented more information about Canadian culture than the academic stream classes.

Robert: Because my academic class is just talking about reading something like.
 Joan: Were, like, any of the readings sort of connected to Canadian

culture in any way?

Robert: Canadian culture. Yah, some of the reading connect, but most of them is history, about something, about like how is Canada's history.

Joan: The history of Canada, yah.

Robert: I think the general class we have a lot more culture stuff. (January 17, 2003)

Faze provided a similar response to my question about academic reading (and writing) by describing one of the books used in his academic ELP, in which the ten provinces were discussed. Although he did not explain how the book's focus on the provinces connected with his learning of Canadian culture, he appeared to see such a connection.

Joan: You are studying in the academic program, right? So you do things like academic reading and writing. Is there anything in those things that have to do with Canadian culture, or learning about Canadian culture in any way?

Faze: Yah, yah. We have one book talking about all the priveness?

Joan: Provinces?

Faze: Provinces, provinces. And this book it has like every provinces or talking about one city inside the province. Ah, what they have, about story happen in this city...

Joan: Mhmm.

Faze: ... and about like Aboriginal people, and about the French and English fighting in Quebec. And what we call like the priveness?

Joan: Uh, the provinces?

Faze: Province. Oh sorry, I forget that.

Joan: That's ok. Yah, yah.

Faze: In the middle of Canada they call it like, um, prairie provinces.

Joan: The prairie provinces, mhmm.

Faze: And in the east they call it like... I don't remember.

Joan: Maritime?

Faze: Maritime provinces. Yah, they have a lot of names. And in the north they call it, uh, not provinces, like...

Joan: Territories?

Faze: Territories, yah, sorry. (July 15, 2003)

Both Jet and Jordan briefly mentioned reading as a connection to learning about Canadian culture. Jet did not elaborate on what aspect of Canadian culture was discussed in the articles he read when he stated, "about the culture, mhmm,

I will touch some Canadian culture in what I read, the articles...” (Interview with Jet, May 28, 2003). However, Jordan voiced his opinion that reading is not the best way to learn about culture. “I cannot learn so much from the book because you know the book is never talking about as much about those thing” (Interview with Jordan, May 29, 2003).

The participants’ comments about reading indicate that although the material the participants read did provide some basic information about Canadian culture (and Canadian history and Canadian geography), generally, it did not offer any significant insights into the deeper levels of culture. Furthermore, reading, as a significant part of the overt curriculum, was primarily viewed as focusing on improving academic reading skills, rather than as a medium for introducing cultural information about Canada, or for the exploration of cross-cultural issues.

Writing. Since the skill of academic writing is such a key element of the overt curriculum in the academic stream of the ELP, I was curious to discover the participants’ insights into writing, and to see if, in their eyes, it connected with learning about Canadian culture. A number of participants had very little, or nothing at all, to say about writing as it related to learning about Canadian culture. Faze, for example, felt that, at the point he was at in his studies in an academic ELP, there was no connection between writing and culture.

Joan: Um, anything in the writing?

Faze: In the writing. I don’t feel like too much different or have something special, like culture, really, uh, I don’t feel they have something special by writing.

Joan: Ok, ok.

Faze: If I go another place, they speak English, I think the same when

they wrote or something like that.

Joan: Mhmm.

Faze: Maybe later I will feel it - not yet. (July 15, 2003)

However, David, Hazel, Nana, and Jordan, in one way or another, mentioned that the topics of their writing assignments related to Canadian culture. David viewed writing as connecting with learning about Canadian culture only so far as the writing connected with the reading and discussion he did in his class.

Joan: So, umm, is... do you think by... in the writing there is any learning about Canadian culture?

David: In writing? Yah, we learn the same because we write about the readings.

Joan: Right.

David: So we still learn about that.

Joan: Right, ok. Just because it is connected to the readings.

David: Yah, because it's connected to the readings. (November 20, 2002)

Jordan expressed a similar perspective. "I discuss the [cultural] topic and write an essay (laughing)" (May 29, 2003).

Both Hazel and Nana recalled that the topics of their research papers were related to some aspect of Canadian culture.

Joan: Is there anything else, like that, you have done in the afternoon or morning class?

Hazel: There is nothing learned about Canadian culture. Ah, but, ah, I wrote my essay about the immigrants in Canada. Yah, research paper, the research paper that helped me to understand Canada much better than... and ...

Joan: Yah. So is this what? Was it like this discussion and the lecture that you mentioned before that made you interested to do that for your research paper, or were you interested before already in this topic?

Hazel: Uh, uh, mhmm... after I have lecture, probably the same time but when I heard about Canada culture, which I didn't know about that before I came here ... Yah, it was interested for me, and there was some, several choice to write essay, Aboriginal person, or Canada history, or immigrant history, something like those, so I choose that topic. (December 4, 2002)

Joan: If, mmm... in your class, at some point, like, there has been any... maybe discussion about something about Canadian culture, or if, like, you've read something about Canadian culture...

Nana: Uhh... maybe in my essay... the research paper ... I researched about homosexuals. Yah. And uh, I learned about homosexuals in Canada. Also we don't have a right of homosexual [in Japan], I think. But here, I think some of provinces have a right.... (December 5, 2002)

Two participants, Robert and Jet, did perceive a connection between academic writing and culture that went beyond the topic of the writing assignment, and, in speaking at length about the cultural nature of writing, provided some fascinating commentary. Robert explained the difficulty he had at first with learning how to write a research paper because of the way it differed from the academic writing he was used to doing in China. Robert's recognition and understanding of the cultural nature of writing seemed to help him battle his frustration, and persevere until he was able to achieve a level of comfort with the process of writing a research paper - *Canadian style*.

Robert: For example, the biggest issue for me is writing research paper because that is my, a lot of, kind of, requires my reading and, uh, the way I am typing things. You know this is my academic [level] five morning class. [The teacher] told us a lot about that.

Joan: Mhmm, about the reading skills and the writing...

Robert: ... especially when we are making the...

Joan: ... to do a research paper.

Robert: Yah. That's really, really tough for me to learn the first time because in China we, yah, we used to go the library to research some things, but in my mind I don't remember we have research paper (laughing). And if we have some research paper we don't usually like to go to library to make some researches, something like that. I don't know what they are doing there because I just keep in the university in China for three months. But I hear my friend didn't do that.

Joan: They didn't, ok.

Robert: Yah. But I don't know how they just write that. But for here I have to go to the library, to check something, and to make notes... and books is not only about that, I have to find magazines, journals, interview, video (laughing).

Joan: Yah, yah, exactly. Probably look on the Internet or something.

Robert: Yah, yah, yah. It takes me like two weeks to finish that.

Joan: Yah, just gathering the information.

Robert: Yah, yah, yah. That's really tough for me. Yah, so I ask my teacher why we have to do that. I mean, it's kind of a culture or something. But [the teacher] told me yes in Canada if you want to do research that's kind of the culture. I mean, [the teacher] means, it's kind of the way we are doing it here.

Joan: Yes. It is the way [we] are doing it.

Robert: So this is, yah, it's brand new, like subject to me because if I want to reading, if I want to find some books I have to them read first and I have to pick up the information in it and write down my [idea]. Also, if I want to finish the paper a lot of like format and I have to notice that.

Joan: Right. Right, the formatting and everything.

Robert: So it's, yah, it's culture. But now it's ok. I feel better. (January 17, 2003)

Jet, like Robert, was able to clearly articulate the differences between writing an essay in Canada and writing one in China. Moreover, I was actually rather amazed when Jet began discussing Kaplan's (1966) theory of contrastive rhetoric, although he did not refer directly to Kaplan. Whether or not he learned something about Kaplan's theory from one of his instructors I do not know, and would rather not speculate.

Jet: Mmm, I feel, mmm, I am not sure if it's the culture difference about writing, writing method.

Joan: Mhmm, tell me about that.

Jet: Yah. Uh, because I always studied the how to write an essay, and, uh, this method just, what you want to show some idea you must state it first, it's your topic, and then give more supporting, uh, give more, uh, such as examples and support your topic, uh, support your idea.

Joan: Right, right, the supporting details.

Jet: Yah, like this. Uh, maybe, I can say that in the Canadian the writing should be step-by-step. And, but in China we never write the essay like that. Uh, if I want to, uh, state some idea, first of all, it must come first I talk about other's. Sometimes you can, uh, got some, uh, relationship between your topic and you talk about first, sometimes you can got it.

Joan: Okay, so you talk about somebody else's ideas and then...

Jet: Yah, always, always talk about other's.

Joan: ... somebody else's ideas and then connect it to your ideas.

Jet: Yah, yah, connect it, mmm, uh, like that if I write in Chinese I see, for example if, what you, uh, your idea is this point you must write like this,

and a circle, circle... at last you got your idea.

Joan: You come to your idea, yah, yah.

Jet: So, sometimes, uh, it's like people different, uh, uh, how to say, Chinese people always, always hide their emotion. Uh, sometimes you don't like [know] if Chinese people is happy or sad, off his face...

Joan: Mhmm. You can't tell.

Jet: Yah, you can't, but sometimes you can feel Canadian people's emotion very easily, just as the writing method is very different. (May 28, 2003)

The participants' commentary about the skill of academic writing and its connection with culture was certainly varied. Considering the difficulty facing these international students to apply the rules of grammar, to grasp the complexities of style and form, and often for the first time, to express their own opinions in writing, I feel that it was quite understandable for the participants to be limited in the connections they were able to make between academic writing and culture. However, a couple of participants moved far beyond a surface treatment, into deep insights about the cultural nature of writing. I was both fascinated by, and impressed with, the level of reflection, and critical thinking, achieved by these participants.

Discussions. Another aspect of the ELP curriculum that the participants mentioned provided them with information about Canadian culture was in-class discussions. It became apparent, as the participants and I spoke with each other, that these discussions took the form of both formal and planned discussions, as well as, casual and spontaneous discussions. Many of the spontaneous discussions, that took place when something suddenly presents itself in class (often out of a student's question), appear to have little connection to the overt or planned curriculum. Therefore, these discussions will be presented within the

section on the hidden or covert curriculum. The formal and planned discussions; however, were generally closely connected to the overt curriculum. In fact, the participants, who were studying in the highest level of the ELP, had afternoon classes that focused specifically on speaking and listening for academic purposes. These classes involved a great deal of discussion of a variety of topics in order to give the students opportunities to practice and develop their academic speaking and listening skills.

Hazel, who was studying in this level at the time of her participation in my research, explained how the afternoon sessions sometimes involved discussion of the differences between Asian cultures and Canadian culture.

Hazel: Ah, in the afternoon class sometimes we talk about Aboriginal person, and what is different from Korean, Asian, culture compared to Canada.

Joan: Ok, right, ok. So that's like just mainly a discussion?

Hazel: Yah, discussion (December 4, 2002).

Sony, who was not in the same level as Hazel, recalled how her instructor had told her class about football and hockey, which were not familiar to the Chinese students in the class. "(S)he tell us about football ... and hockey ... because Chinese, they don't play football" (Interview with Sony, December 2, 2002).

Discussions about the lives of Aboriginal peoples were often mentioned by participants as being one way that they learned about Canadian culture. Hazel recalled in-class discussions about Aboriginal peoples, which she connected with Canadian culture.

Hazel: Oh, we discussed about why the Canada government make government accept Aboriginal persons... we talk about...

Joan: So... why the government accepts them, or...

Hazel: Why the government push out Aboriginal persons...

Joan: Oh, ok. So doesn't accept them...

Hazel: Yah, yah, yah.

Joan: Ok, right. So...

Hazel: So just discuss about that, and my teacher gave us some information, and sometimes [the teacher] told me, (s)he sometimes [the teacher] felt sorry to Aboriginal person is, are living in reservation?

(December 4, 2002)

Nana also provided a detailed account of a discussion in her class about Aboriginal peoples. She was able to connect part of what was discussed in her class with her own growing awareness of, and experience with, Aboriginal people since she came to Canada.

Joan: Did you have any kinds of discussions about maybe...

Nana: Native people. Yah. I learned about Native people. Also I heard from Native people about the lifestyle, now and old lifestyle. Uh, I didn't know that, of course, about Native. I saw lots of Native people here, but I didn't know why they have long hair. And also I learn about ... their hair have a ... uh, how can I say... heart ... not heart ...

Joan: Their ... umm, I'm trying to think what it might be. It's, it's ... what's it to do with?

Nana: Death? ... Uh, I need dictionary.

Joan: Oh, you need your ... do you have it there? We'll maybe just pause the tape recorder for a minute. [recording paused]

Nana: Their hair have a soul.

Joan: Oh, ok. So that's why they don't cut their hair, because their hair has a soul and if they cut their hair, it kills the soul.

Nana: Yah, kills soul. Also, if they cut the hair they bring, they picked hair and, uh, maybe ... something special burn... I don't know ... special ... special ceremony or something

Joan: Right, right. Like they burn the grass, it's like a piece of rope almost, sweetgrass.

Nana: Also, marriage is very different. Because all people, all Native people, uh, believe marriage is forever. Even if husband or wife dies, after died we have to connect the husband or wife.

Joan: Right, right. So it's like the connection is with the two souls.

Nana: Yes. I learned about that in my class. (December 5, 2002)

During the course of one interview with David, he spoke of the role of

class discussions in learning about culture in his academic English class. He reported that these discussions were closely linked with the topics of the academic essays he had to write. In addition, according to David, the teacher would sometimes generate whole class discussions about Canadian culture and the differences between the cultures represented within the class.

David: Yah. We have discussions, we write essays about that [cultural topics], and we have to look for information about that [culture]. Yah. Also sometimes we talk with [the teacher] about the culture, so they explain how the people are in Canada, so I think it's the other way that we learn about that. Because [the teacher] explain how the people are, or, how ... what's the difference between the Canadians and [the teacher] was living 19... and sometimes in China, and different parts of the world, and then mentioned about what was the difference. So, yah, I learned also about that with [the teacher] ... So I think the other way we learn. (November 20, 2002)

Opportunities for increasing cultural awareness were present during class discussions, as evidenced by the comments made by three Chinese participants. During the course of their interviews, Robert, Jet, and Jordan mentioned different ways in which in-class discussions were focused on the differences between some aspect of Canadian culture and the same aspect of their own Chinese culture. Robert's commentary centred around the differences between studying in Canada and in China. "Ah, let me think about it. One time we talk about how to study in Canada. I mean, you think study is also kind of the culture? Yah. The way we are study in Canada is different then when we are in China. So that's kind of the culture, I feel, like ... different culture" (Interview with Robert, January 17, 2003).

Jet recalled having had many in-class discussions related to different cultures in the previous term. He remembered and explained in detail one in

particular, which focused on cultural differences regarding standards of beauty. His commentary about the different notions of beauty in China, and in Canada, was fascinating, and challenged me to think about my own cultural biases.

Jet: The Canadian culture? I remember last term we talk about, uh, we talk about, much about different cultures... and, uh, different cultures in, about beauty.

Joan: About beauty, okay.

Jet: About beauty, and, I think, uh, it can show that about Canadian culture because we have the different standard about beauty... and, uh, I think in the China, in China, for female, and people always, how to say, think female, woman not should be fat, and should be, uh, how to say, looks nature...

Joan: Uh, natural.

Jet: Yah, natural, I mean don't put many things on the face.

Joan: Right, not too much make-up.

Jet: Yah, not much make-up. And, uh, but in Canadian culture, they stand beauty just like *Barbie*, *Barbie* doll.

Joan: (laughing) Like *Barbie*. Okay. Well, maybe not as bad as in the US.

Jet: Yah, US, but I think it's very similar.

Joan: Very similar. Yah, okay, interesting. Mhmm, so, uh, this is not in the class, but just in your experience of living in Winnipeg, uh, do you think that, that is a true thing, that most women like to, or that women should look like a *Barbie* doll, or something?

Jet: Yah. I think so because in the newspaper, in the magazine, there's some advertisement, the model...

Joan: Right.

Jet: Yah, their looks like a *Barbie* doll, so this is beauty.

Joan: Yah, yah. That's true. Interesting. And that's different, of course, to the way it is in China.

Jet: Uh, yah, it's different. But, uh, I think recently, mmm, Chinese people's mind will, uh, is changing. Some people like the Canadian view, and, uh, like the *Barbie* doll (laughing). (May 28, 2003)

For Jordan, his instructor was instrumental not only in leading the class in discussions, but also telling the students about Canadian culture. "Yah, um, um. I learned some Canadian culture from the teacher. Like now my teacher... always talking how about, how about Canadian people, thinking something, why is it, why we take different, uh, different, uh, behaviour when we meet same thing?"

(Interview with Jordan, May 29, 2003). He also points to the openness of Canadians, which his instructor(s) had exhibited, as an attribute that opens the door to the discussion of any topic.

Jordan: So, but I feel they, Canadian people, are, is more open mind, can talk anything.

Joan: Right. So is that just with this, in this class, or was it also your experience in the other classes?

Jordan: Yah, also in other, but this class is very, very strong about this kind of topic, so...

Joan: So even more, even more?

Jordan: Even more, yes. (May 29, 2003)

Clearly in-class discussions were agents for the introduction of cultural topics, and cultural issues, and for developing an awareness of cultural differences. Most of the participants mentioned making comparisons between their native culture and Canadian culture during in-class discussions. Although many participants made cross-cultural comparisons in their interviews, the depth of these comparisons varied significantly among the participants. While it is not within the mandate of my research project to explore the impact factors, such as, each participant's level of communication skill in English, her or his own ability to analyse and make connections, the length of time she or he had been in Canada, or her or his individual teacher's interest in discussions and the choice of discussion topics, had on the participants' comments regarding in-class discussions, these factors appear to have influenced the participants' commentary. In-class discussion, more than any other aspect of the overt curriculum, offers the greatest opportunity for cultural learning. This is, perhaps, because the participants have a more direct experience with cultural differences, between their own culture and the target Canadian culture, than they do when

the lesson focuses on academic reading or writing.

Lectures and guest speakers. While almost all of the participants spoke about in-class discussions as a means of learning about Canadian culture, only two students mentioned guest speakers or special lectures as offering information about Canadian culture. Interestingly, both David and Hazel learned something about the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in their respective classes. In David's case, an Aboriginal man and an Aboriginal woman visited his class as guest speakers to talk about their traditional way of life compared to that of modern day life. "And also one of the Aboriginal peoples who talked about the traditions - he came... and explained us about his traditions - two, one man and another girl. So they explained the way they live, how they changed..."(Interview with David, November 20, 2002).

As Hazel and I discussed her experience of learning about Canadian culture in her academic ELP, it became apparent to me that a series of lectures presented by one of the ELP instructors had made quite an impression on her. In particular, a lecture about the Aboriginal peoples of Canada not only provided her with information she was not previously aware of, but it also seemed to have a powerful impact on her feelings about, and attitudes towards, Canadian Aboriginal peoples.

Hazel: Mhmm, Canadian culture? Ah, I have a lecture in my afternoon class, you know [the teacher]... [the teacher] prepared the lecture for academic [level] five students, [the teacher] gave us more, much information, like the Canadian Aboriginal person, and the problems about Canada, like obesity ... obesity, and the history of Canada. Yah. We had four lectures. One is about Canada history, include the Aboriginal person. The second one is obesity, yah, something like that ...

Joan: Good. So you had that, so that was kind of... if it was a lecture it was

sort of for what, listening ...

Hazel: listening and notetaking... And about Aboriginal persons, oh, I was surprised when I heard the lecture from [the teacher]. I didn't know they lived ... they are living in the north of Canada in very poor conditions. There is no running water; there is no enough food. (December 4, 2002)

Hazel went on to describe her growing awareness of Canadian cultural issues, which she had become aware of through a series of lectures.

Hazel: I think even I live in Canada only three months I know two problems in Canada now - first is Quebec, second is Aboriginal persons. In my opinion, I learned lots of things in the lecture.

Joan: Right. Yes, that sounds like that was the real, the main thing.

Hazel: Yah, yah. Cause [the teacher] gave us objective information, sometimes a little subjective, [the teacher] opinion. So [the teacher] gave us, some, how can I say, something we can have an opinion about Canada.

Joan: Well, good. I am glad that you had that experience of that lecture then. It sounds like it gave you a lot of information. (December 4, 2002)

Since only two participants mentioned learning about Canadian culture through guest speakers or lectures, I am led to believe that it was uncommon for guest speakers or special lectures to be organised for the international students in the ELP. While bringing in guest speakers or arranging for students to sit in on special lectures could easily be misused by using as time fillers, or by not doing the necessary pre and post classwork with the students, I believe that if they are properly implemented they have a great deal of potential as a means of raising and discussing cultural topics and issues, and of developing cultural awareness.

In examining the participants' commentary, on their in-class overt learning about culture, through an overview, a couple of critical issues are revealed. First, the participants frequently mentioned in-class tasks and activities that focused on the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In fact, the participants described reading material, in-class discussions, special lectures, and guest speakers that

presented information about Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Since the participants were free to discuss any aspect of their in-class experience of learning about culture, the fact that the topic of Canadian Aboriginal peoples was repeatedly mentioned is noteworthy. This may suggest that this topic received greater attention than other culture related topics, which becomes problematic when a second revelation is considered. A disproportionate amount of participants' discussion centered on the less than positive facets of Canadian culture, particularly in relation to Aboriginal Canadians. While it is impossible to clearly identify the exact reasons for the participants' commentary, without undertaking further study, their comments cannot be disregarded.

In-Class Covert Culture Learning

Unlike the overt aspects of the ELP curriculum that the participants were easily able to identify, and discuss, as addressing culture, the covert learning about culture was much harder to pinpoint. In fact, only two participants mentioned the covert learning of culture. Since the hidden elements of the curriculum were not touched on, by the participants, to the same degree as the overt ones, there are fewer categories to be examined. Although there was the potential for participants to discuss the connection between culture and the covert curriculum, in relation to all of the skill areas, the participants only made connections between their in-class discussions and covert learning about culture. Therefore, this section of the thematic analysis will only examine in-class discussions for the covert learning of culture. In commenting about their in-class discussions, the participants indicated that these discussions tended to be spontaneous and

informal, often shooting off from the actual lesson being taught.

Discussions. Robert and Faze were the only participants to provide commentary on instances where covert learning about culture occurred in their classroom environments. To clarify the distinction between the overt and the covert curriculum, I refer back to Widdowson's (1987) notion that the overt curriculum pertains to the "development of knowledge and skills, and preparation for the examination", while the covert curriculum relates to "socialization and the promotion of established values". This subtle, but strategic, means of acculturation introduces deep culture, or the norms of behaviour, for that particular cultural environment. Robert and Faze's comments suggest that they were not fully aware of the covert curriculum they were experiencing, although clearly they were able to recognize the ways in which the hidden curriculum had impacted and influenced their own behaviours and attitudes.

Robert identified "free talking", or the ability of Canadians to talk freely about any topic of their choosing, as something related to culture that he learned within his academic ELP class.

Robert: And another thing is like kind of the free talk. And you can talk whatever you want, and you can talk [to Canadians]...basically, I mean, this is really impressed for me.

Joan: It's really impressed you, yah.

Robert: Maybe we talk another, but maybe I use to the way I live here, so maybe I forgot something (laughing). (January 17, 2003)

Robert also mentioned polite manner behaviours, specifically saying, "Excuse me" when we sneeze, as part of Canadian culture. Since both "free talking" and culture specific manners are part of cultural socialization, they fall within the range of the covert curriculum.

Robert: And in my academic class is just one thing I remember because like if we, uh, how can I say it, like achoo...

Joan: like sneeze?

Robert: Sneeze, yah, yah, yah, sneeze. We are meant to say sorry. And if we do something like, you know, it's not too bad for another people we have to say sorry about that.

Joan: Right. Sorry, or, maybe, excuse me.

Robert: Yah, excuse me. Uh, I think, I know, I mean this is good because it's manners. But in China, ok, for example, like we are friends, right, we don't need to say that (laughing).

Joan: Right, right. It's just natural.

Robert: But here if we don't say, like wow! I think if we said it, it's better. (January 17, 2003)

Faze spoke about learning to call his teachers by their first names, which was a change from what he used to do in his home country. According to Faze, this new behaviour, that indicates a level of informality, and represents the cultural importance of equality, made him feel more comfortable in his classroom environment.

Faze: Uh, in my class I learned, like, I didn't call my teacher, like, teacher. I called by her name or by his name.

Joan: Mhmm.

Faze: Like Joanne, it's Joanne, not like I didn't say teacher, teacher, if I want to ask.

Joan: Mhmm.

Faze: And that's make me more comfortable. (July 15, 2003)

During another part of our interview, Faze recognized the efforts of his ELP instructors to increase the comfort level of the students in their classes. He suggested that his ELP instructors might make more of an effort to develop a rapport with the students because the students were international students. Faze's identification of, and naming of, his ELP instructors' behaviours, which differed from those of his instructors in his native Saudi Arabia, indicates his awareness of his ELP instructors' hidden agenda. "About my class, my... I

learned like I feel more comfortable with teacher because they are more friendly. I am not sure because we are international students. They have to take care for us, like, more sometime because we have different cultures” (Interview with Faze, July 15, 2003). While Faze may not completely realise the implications of his instructors’ attitudes and actions, his experience of this covert aspect of the “enacted curriculum” appears to be a positive one.

Whether the hidden curriculum remains hidden from view, is glimpsed at by the students, or is revealed by the instructor, its basic purpose, that of cultural socialisation, is not altered. In my research, the hidden curriculum of the ELP was clearly not transparent to a majority of the participants. While the specific behaviours and values being targeted, and the intensity at which they are delivered, likely varies from instructor to instructor, covert elements of the curriculum remain a vital component of the total curriculum. The two participants, who saw and understood some of the covert curriculum, appear to appreciate the *cultural capital* of the information they received.

Out-of-Class Overt Culture Learning

The ELP has two major non-curricular programs it extends to international students enrolled in the program, the homestay program and the sociocultural activities. The first of these, the homestay program, is essentially a hosting program, in which international students, who wish to participate, are placed with a host Canadian family. The international student lives with a host family while she or he is studying in the ELP. The other program offered to the international students in the ELP is the sociocultural activities; otherwise known as the Friday

activities because they tend to be planned for Friday afternoon or Friday evening. The sociocultural activities cover a vast array of activities and outings depending on the season. In the summer term, sociocultural activities often include: a day trip to the beach, a baseball game, a night of karaoke, and a cruise on a river boat. During the winter term, the international students might have the opportunity to take in a hockey game, go skating or tobogganing, or participate in a sleigh ride while visiting a local farm. Participation in the sociocultural activities is always optional. However, as a rule, the students take part, since the activities are generally fun and involve little or no extra expense for the students.

In addition to the homestay program and the sociocultural activities, the ELP also ran a lunch hour program that specifically explored different aspects of Canadian culture. This program was open to all students studying in the ELP, both those in the general stream and those in the academic stream. The Canadian culture club, which met once a week, presented cultural information and focused on different aspects of Canadian culture at each meeting. For example, in one session, the instructor in charge of the club might explain the history and the meaning behind the Canadian national anthem. In another session, the club leader might talk about Canadian pop culture.

All three of the ELP's special programs, the homestay program, the sociocultural activities, and the Canadian culture club will be examined within the main thematic category of overt learning of culture outside of the classroom. Since the homestay program elicited the greatest response from the participants, I will begin this section with this component of the ELP.

Homestay. Students in the ELP have the option of staying with a host family during the course of their studies. While the ELP's homestay program can be a valuable source of cultural learning for international students, not all students choose this option. Half of the participants in my study stayed with host families, with the others choosing to live in apartments with other international students, or family members, or on their own in an apartment. Hazel, Robert, and Jordan, were three of the four participants who chose to live with a host family from the outset. When the interview with each of them turned to their experience of learning culture within their homestay, all three of them spoke at length, and with great fondness, of their homestay experiences.

Hazel was so happy in her homestay that she leapt into a discussion about her host family before I even had a chance to ask her about her homestay experiences. She described her host parents as warm and very welcoming people. Living with them in their home, Hazel was a witness to their open expressions of love for one another, which she found challenged her traditional Korean concepts of marriage and love.

Hazel: And in home I wanted to say my host parents they are very, very lovely people... lovely couple. In Korea, not most, many of parents like my father's age, they don't know how to express their feelings to their wife, even though they love their wife, they love their husband. But I'm learning how to express my emotional feeling to my love through my...

Joan: Wow. Ok. This actually connects to my next question then. Let's go into that. Let me give the question and then you can explain a little bit more of that. So it's just: describe your experience of learning Canadian culture in the socio-cultural activities and the homestay.

Hazel: Yah, yah.

Joan: So this connects with the homestay. So you're learning about that.

Hazel: Yah. My host father sent card to my host mum, so I asked my host mum which day is it special day or special card, no nothing just love card. They are sixty years old!

Hazel: Oh, they have 42, 43 years...

Joan: ... of marriage?

Hazel: Yah, 43 anniversary, next year... next week.

Joan: Wow, wow, that's wonderful.

Hazel: Yah, they still love each other.

Joan: Yah, yah. And they like express it, like...

Hazel: Yah, yah, in front ... oh, sometimes when we have the dinner in the table my host father kiss to my host mum, but it's very lovely. It's totally different in Asia culture.

Joan: Yah, yah. Will that be difficult for you to...

Hazel: No, I envy them.

Joan: Yah, yah, but when you go back?

Hazel: Yah, it's difficult. It's not easy cause it's not common in Korea.

Probably most Korean people will think about me ... it's too strange, too impolite. (December 4, 2002)

Through Hazel's experience of real Canadian families, specifically that of her host family; she was also able to dispel a stereotype she had about North American family life.

Hazel: And, uh, in Korea people usually get together in special days, like Thanksgiving Day or Happy New Year, um, or the weekend we usually have dinner together, even though we live separate. But when I was in Korea, through the movie or something like that, I thought about the Canadian or American. They are very independent from family even though they live in the same city; they have different house. Yah, so I don't think they have very similarity or they don't have familiar with family just I thought about that, but it's totally wrong in my host family. They usually have dinner with together around ten people. Yah. That made me I have wrong stereotype to Canadian or Western people (laughing). (December 4, 2002)

The openly loving interaction between Hazel's host mother and father seemed to have impacted Hazel to such a degree that her beliefs about marriage and the nature of romantic relationships were not only being challenged, but had begun to change. Although Hazel may have come to a new understanding, she may have a difficult time matching her behaviour to her new beliefs when she returns home to Korea.

Like Hazel, Robert had a very good rapport with his host family. Robert's host parents were themselves immigrants to Canada, and had only been in Canada five or six years. Robert expressed that the knowledge passed on to him by his host father about adapting to Canadian living was extremely useful. Robert seemed to feel that he would not have received as much cultural information from a *Canadian* family. Robert discussed the need for international students, like himself, to take an open-minded approach to the new culture. He then went on to provide specific examples of the cultural differences between Canada and China that he had experienced.

Joan: So the next [question] then is just to, for you to describe your experience of learning Canadian culture, um, in like the sociocultural activities, in your homestay.

Robert: Ok, homestay...

Joan: So things connected to the program, to the English language program, but like homestay or sociocultural activities.

Robert: Uh, homestay like the activities I go with my host family.

Joan: Yah, sure anything to do with homestay is fine.

Robert: You mean outside of the class?

Joan: Yes, outside the class.

Robert: This I can talk about more.

Joan: Yah, yah, go for it then.

Robert: Uh, basically for me it's kind of, uh, how can I say that, I think that first we have to go there, open our mind I mean because Canada for us is brand new. So we have to first open our mind to accept a lot of things, yet maybe it's something bad, something good and then we have to decide which one we can accept that and which one we have to get rid of. But first we have to open our mind. For me, I think I'm kind of lucky because my host father he's in Continuing, he's work in Continuing, he works in here.

Joan: Oh, he works here!

Robert: He's in charge of the homestay program.

Joan: Oh, that's your homestay father. Ok. Yes, you are very lucky then.

Robert: Yah. Of course, he also comes from another country. So he knows something I have to face. Maybe for them the idea was like Canadian family...

Joan: Yes.

Robert: Well, yah it's ok, but maybe they don't know the situation I have

because they've never been to another country. But for my host father, he also came here five years ago, maybe six years ago. So he knows some problems, something I will face in my future, so he just told me, well [Robert] do that, do that.

Joan: Yes.

Robert: And, uh, yah, the culture, you know. I live with him almost one year.

Joan: Wow!

Robert: Yah, so basically in the beginning it's the culture shock; it's a lot. I mean (laughing), how can I say, the way we are eating, like we have to use a plate here, but in China we don't, we use a bowl. And we have to use a knife, spoon, forks; we don't we use chopsticks. And, you know, the food here and some ways, like, for example, take a shower. Usually we take a shower in the morning, but in China usually we take a shower in evening. And what else? You know, I always, like first I came here, I move here, go shopping. You know go shopping; it's, well, that's really different. I mean it's, we have Superstore and Safeway here. Yah, in China we have that, but most of the people they don't go there.

Joan: Right.

Robert: We have like, it's open markets.

Joan: Open markets, yah.

Robert: Yah, it's just outside, the street you can buy it. (January 17, 2003)

While Robert was very fortunate to have a supportive and culturally sensitive host family, his own attitude towards experiencing the target Canadian culture certainly helps him to move through the difficult phases of culture shock to the level of tolerance, and, for some aspects of this new culture, acceptance.

Jordan was originally placed with an Argentinean-Canadian family, but unlike Robert, he did not feel that being with an *immigrant* host family was to his benefit. Jordan requested to be moved to a different host family, and he was accommodated the next term.

Joan: Yah, it's so different because before my homestay is Argentina-Canadian. Now homestay is *ordinary Canadian*.

Joan: Ordinary, yah. What was the first one again?

Joan: Argentina-Canadian.

Joan: Argentinean-Canadian. Oh!

Joan: It's immigration. They have different food, and also have different family, have different thinking, have different topic... in the home. They

[the Argentinean-Canadian family] talking about so many about how to living better, but in their [the new host family] home I feel talking more about how to make happy. (May 29, 2003)

Jordan explained that he was learning a great deal from the two people in his host family, a grandmother, and her young adult grandson. From listening to, observing, and interacting with the grandson, Jordan felt that he had come to know more about the behaviour of young Canadians. When I asked Jordan what he thought he had learned about Canadian culture from the grandmother, he answered, without hesitation, that he had learned respect.

Jordan: It's one person with his grandmother, two people. And they be, they have a job, the young people, they like to dating, to play some games. ... I listen many conversation about they talking about young people. I know the young people behaviour. I watch. It's good.

Joan: Yah, yah, for sure. You said that with the, uh, the grandson you learned something, but what do you think you are learning about Canadian culture from the grandmother, from the host mother I guess she is?

Jordan: Respect. It's respect. This person very respect, uh, student. If you do something don't tell you, you are wrong. And also tell you very friendly if you have some wrong. So I think it's more respect. If you don't do something, it's do something not so nice for the house. The people almost friendly, friendly tell you what you do. What you should do ...

Joan: to do it the right way

Jordan: ... or they didn't tell you, they help you to do it. Something you didn't know about. (May 29, 2003)

In his third interview, Jordan added more to his thoughts on living with a host family. Jordan's experience in his homestay was providing him with insights into the behaviours of Canadian people, which he found to be useful information.

Jordan: I think it is most useful that a newcomer, like a new student, live in homestay.

Joan: Mhmm. Why, why is that so important do you think?

Jordan: First, special way to understand how Canadian people life is.

Joan: Mhmm. Why is that important for an international student?

Jordan: It can give me some general information. Who, mmm, how to understand foreign people, especially English and Canadian people, how

to work, how to talking, how to do their behaviour, when they was happy or unhappy. And also we can know how to explain their mood.

Joan: Mhmm. And it's important for you to have information about that. So, so why? What, why do you need to have that information? Or why do you want to have that information about the Canadian people?

Jordan: Mhmm, why. Because, uh, we can from there know, learn more English, because for example, if you talking with some your homestay, some, some topic maybe your homestay didn't like, but you talking with him or her, but it's not useful, maybe you become [back] because you and your homestay. (June 5, 2003)

Sony was the fourth participant who chose to stay in homestay. However, unlike Hazel, Robert, and Jordan, she did not have a great deal to say about her homestay experience. I sensed her disappointment, and perhaps sadness, about her relationship with her host mother, whom according to Sony was often too busy to sit down and chat with her.

Joan: And the homestay? Do you think there is anything that you have learned about Canadian culture from living at the homestay?

Sony: I went with my homestay to the church ... once. And she, uh, works in the church and she's so busy and we always have supper at ... after 8 o'clock. We didn't have enough chance to talk with each other.

Joan: Oh, ok. Right, right. So that makes it difficult then.

Sony: But I don't, uh, uh, care about this.

Joan: Yah, yah. No, no, no, but still it's...

Sony: Yah. (December 2, 2002)

As a postscript to Sony's homestay experience, during my third meeting with her for her final interview, she mentioned that she had made arrangements to leave her homestay, and to move into an apartment with another international student. Although she seemed to be looking forward to living with her Chinese friend, unfortunately, she had experienced some difficulty with sorting out the rental agreement with the landlord.

A fifth participant, Jet, chose to move into a homestay halfway through the term. During my second interview with Jet, he indicated to me that he had initially

chosen to live in an apartment with another Chinese student rather than live in a homestay, although he recognised that he and the other Chinese student spoke Chinese with each other all the time. "Yes, I didn't live in the homestay, uh, so I think I have, I don't have many experience like that... And, uh, I live in an apartment, apartment with another Chinese student (laughing). And obviously, we always speak Chinese" (Interview with Jet, May 28, 2003). When Jet spoke with me in his third interview just a week or so later, he mentioned that he was planning to move into a homestay because he felt that it would provide him with greater opportunities to practice and improve his spoken English, and to learn more about Canadian culture.

Jet: Yah. I think like that, and I want to understand more about the culture. So right now I found a homestay. I will move in at the end of June, at the end of this month.

Joan: Oh! Ok, just so that you can have this experience and more contact with Canadians.

Jet: Yah, more contact with Canadian people, and get more, uh, learn more, uh, understand more about Canadian situation, Canadian culture, Canadian society. And another purpose is for practice my English, my speaking. And I found something that, uh, that many international students, uh, they can, how to say, in the school they can study very well. They can read, they can write, but they can't speak. And I have many people here that, also international students but they stay here for a long time, and they prepare for find a job. When they give the, uh, resume, it's very good, the mark is very high, but in the interview...

Joan: Right, right, and on paper everything is good. They have the experience, maybe the qualification, the degree or whatever.

Jet: But in the, when they go to interview it's bad. Maybe they can understand what did the, uh, what did the Canadian people said, what they mean, but the Canadian people can't understand you.

Joan: Right, right. They can't communicate, uh...

Jet: Yah. They can't communicate very well because as international students they always talk about with, uh, how to say, with other international students. They never can touch the standard English. I mean they will talk about the, uh, Canadian people. The way they express, the way they communicate is different. Maybe they can listen, they can understand what they say, but if they express it's strange. (June 4, 2003)

Based on the commentary of the four participants, who lived with host families, it seems that the homestay program has the potential to extend the international students exposure to both the English language and Canadian culture, outside of the ELP classroom. This can be a tremendous learning opportunity for these students. However, as the participants' comments suggest, in order for the experience to be beneficial, the students need to be placed with warm and friendly host families, who are willing to take the time to talk to, and interact with, the international student living in their home. When the students felt comfortable in their homestays, perhaps even like a real member of the family, they were not short on words to express their appreciation of, and genuine affection for, their host families.

Sociocultural Activities. While some participants mentioned that they did not attend particular sociocultural activities, only one participant, Nana, told me that she did not attend these activities at all. Moreover, Nana did not disclose how she chose to spend her time outside of class. Since Nana did not live in a homestay either, she had very little to say beyond her in-class experience.

Joan: You didn't have a language partner. Ok, so then for you it's only the sociocultural activities.

Nana: And also I don't know ... I didn't go to social activities.... (December 5, 2002)

A few participants mentioned attending sporting events, as sociocultural activities, that introduced them to an aspect of Canadian culture that differed from their own culture. David linked going to see a hockey game with Canadian

culture, since it is not a common sport in his home country of Mexico.

Joan: So anything else you can think about the sociocultural activities and, uh, the way some kind of cultural information is introduced.

David: Yah. Because like when we went to watch the, uh, ... Moose game, or hockey game, it's also the culture of Canada ... because we don't play hockey in Mexico. Maybe in Monterey we have one gym for play hockey, but we don't use. Maybe just the rich people or some people who go from Canada, or United States, or different parts of the world, because it's not common in Mexico. So it's another way to know the culture, to watch the game. It's a little bit different. (November 20, 2002)

Similarly, Sony suggested that going to a football game was one sociocultural activity that presented Canadian culture, although she did not attend a game. "And what else, maybe they go to watch the football game, but I didn't go." (Interview with Sony, December 2, 2002)

Finally, Jet's perspective, in typical Jet fashion, moved to a deeper level of reflection upon, and awareness of, cultural differences. Not only did Jet recognise North American's preferences for sports, but he also provided an explanation for this preference. Even more importantly, he expressed his understanding of the purpose of the sociocultural activities, as a means of understanding Canadian culture through actively experiencing aspects of the culture.

Jet: I think the activities should be a kind of message for international students to understand the society, to understand the culture. For example, this Friday our activity is a baseball game. We will watch a baseball game. Uh, I noticed that in Canada or in the whole America, most people like the hockey, baseball, football. It's very different from other areas. Uh, even different from the Europe. Even mostly the Europeans like soccer. But here, uh, few people like soccer. Uh, so I think if I watch the baseball game or the hockey game, uh, yah, last term I watch the hockey game in the activity. Uh, I feel it's very exciting, (laughs) because in the game it's different from watching the TV. We can feel that. And, uh, I, I although I really don't know why the, uh, American people like it very, very much, but I can feel something. Because in that game I can feel the

exciting. And I think this should be a different, sports should be a kind of a special culture. And, uh, so this activity will taught us, will, I mean the activity is a very good way for understand the society.

Joan: Right, right. Ok.

Jet: Because the activity we can, mhmm, will experience that. But in the class we just talk about, think about all, from some information from the book, books. (June 4, 2003)

Even though the sociocultural activities provided the international students with many different activities, the participants only connected sports with the overt learning of culture. In addition, although attending local sporting events, as a way of learning about Canadian culture, was a point of discussion, it was not mentioned by all of the participants. Considering the relative importance of hockey, football, and baseball in Canada and the United States, it came as something of a surprise that these sports were not emphasised more. However, these popular North American sports are generally outside of the participants' cultures, and therefore, the cultural importance of these sports is not obvious to them. Another possible explanation for the limited commentary on sports might be that although hockey, football, and baseball do not fall into Maculaitis and Scheraga's (1989) category of deep culture, the socially accepted rules that surround being a spectator of these sports can be defined as deep culture. Without a deep-seated understanding of these sports, the participants might be reluctant to connect the sporting events they attended with deeper levels of culture.

Canadian Culture Club. Only two participants studying in the ELP, David and Nana, mentioned the Canadian culture club, and neither of them attended the sessions on a regular basis. David was the first participant to mention the

Canadian culture club, when he talked about one of the topics covered during a session he attended. Although David had an expressed interest in learning about Canadian culture, he did not seem particularly enthusiastic about going to the Canadian culture club.

David: And also we have a Canadian culture - it's one hour each Wednesday...

Joan: Ahh... Yah, tell me more about that.

David: It's just if you want to go. So, it's they explain everything about Canada, like what the meaning of the flag, how they can get the flag ... why they have different flags in different states...

Joan: in the different provinces?

David: ... province of Canada. And they explain about, like, how Canada become a ... it's country?

David: And how many states the first time ... which one was the first, and everything like that. But, I went there only like three times, because it's during the break time, and...

Joan: Right. Is that like at lunch time?

David: At lunch time, so you can go and eat, and eat lunch at the same time. But sometimes I don't want it, sometimes I have to do something... so ... It's difficult to attract the people for this to learn about the culture of Canada. (November 20, 2002)

Nana explained that she only attended the Canadian culture club once, when the topic of the session was Remembrance Day. As a Japanese national, Nana was neither familiar with Remembrance Day, nor with the symbolism of wearing a poppy on this special day, so she felt that she learned something new.

Nana: And maybe I attend Canadian culture [club] in here...

Joan: Right.

Nana: ... I think just one time.

Joan: Ok.

Nana: But I learned some culture...

Joan: Right.

Nana: ... and ... uh ... I 'm not sure ... How can I say that? ... Remembrance Day?

Joan: Right, right.

Nana: I didn't know that...

Joan: About the poppy?

Nana: Yah, about poppy. Also, I don't know the ... of Remembrance.

Joan: Ok, right.

Nana: But I learned about Remembrance Day. (December 5, 2002)

Since only two participants mentioned attending the Canadian culture club, and even they were not in regular attendance at the sessions, I am lead to believe that the Canadian culture club did not draw a large number of international students. Perhaps, as David commented, the fact that it was held during the lunch break did not encourage students to attend.

Out-of-Class Covert Culture Learning

The participants' commentary did not focus on the covert learning of culture, either within their homestays, or through the sociocultural activities. In terms of the homestay program, only one participant recognised that culturally appropriate behaviour was being introduced indirectly in his homestay. Although a few participants mentioned the sociocultural activities, the discussion was centered on the fact that these activities did not lend themselves to learning about culture.

Homestay. Jordan's careful observation of subtle clues, like changes in facial expression, helped him to learn from his host family the appropriateness, of his actions.

Jordan: Uh, the homestay they eating something, how they have some certain behaviour, they like do something, or don't like do something. Sometimes they don't tell about it, but I, but we can figure from the people, how to saying, uh, action, from people action, and know something is right. How to eat the food like that way, if you do stranger maybe the people will look to you. If you, if you do something not so good, the people will maybe have a different face, different face, so.... (May 29, 2003)

Since Jordan was able to read the faces of his homestay family members, he was able to indirectly determine the appropriateness of certain behaviours in the target culture. He learned that in some situations it is not culturally acceptable to

perform certain actions; while other actions are expected to be displayed.

Moreover, Jordan learned that body language and facial expressions can be used to communicate important cultural messages. Therefore, through the covert actions of his host family, Jordan was able to gain an increased awareness of the target culture.

Sociocultural Activities. While participants mentioned a number of different sociocultural activities that they had participated in, Hazel, David, and Sony's comments indicated they did not actually learn about Canadian culture through these activities. The emphasis it seems was on the *social*, rather than on the *cultural*.

Hazel very clearly expressed her perspective on learning culture through the sociocultural activities. She felt that getting together with other international students from the same country during the activities prevented her from learning about Canadian culture.

Joan: Yah, yah. So anything else, so what about the sociocultural activities?

Anything that you have... your experience of learning culture in the sociocultural activities.

Hazel: Mhmm... in the school, at the school?

Joan: Yah, in the program.

Hazel: I don't think I learned culture in social activities... Cause there were too many, cause there were all of international students, even though from different countries we usually get together the same country people, the same country's students. So I don't think I learned the culture in the social activities. But I don't think so I learned about culture in social activities. In my opinion, I learned lots of things in the lecture. (December 4, 2002)

Sony's comments indicate that her perspective was similar to Hazel's.

Sony specifies two activities that she felt focused on having fun, rather than on learning about Canadian culture.

Joan: So the corn maze and the boat cruise, like how does this connect with Canadian culture?

Sony: I don't think they connecting with Canadian culture.

Joan: So, umm... hmm... yah. So going back to this, you said the corn maze and the river you don't think it's really connect to ... it's just to have fun...

Sony: I think so cause they didn't tell us something about ... they just let us go there and have fun there. (December 2, 2002)

David also mentioned one activity, making jack-o-lanterns, that did not provide him with really any information about Canadian culture.

Joan:.. for example, the Halloween one, so you said that you don't have that in Mexico, so this is something new that you experienced here, and it's ... what, what kind of information did it give you about Canadian culture?

David: Mhmm...

Joan: Or not that much, maybe?

David: Not that much, yah. They just explained how the Canadians celebrate Halloween, by making faces with pumpkins. (November 20, 2002)

Faze's comments suggest that the sociocultural activities do not demand the same degree of focus as in-class tasks, and therefore, a different form of learning occurs. Faze seems to see the sociocultural activities as a showcase for Canadian culture, which, although different from his own culture, he respects.

Joan: The last one [question] is, how the Canadian culture is being taught in the activities.

Faze: What is being taught?

Joan: Taught. Well, how does it teach you? How do the activities teach you something about Canadian culture? Or do they teach you something about Canadian culture?

Faze: How they teach me?

Joan: Yah.

Faze: They didn't like focus to me, like I have to learn that, but they show me it's, it's what they have. And I understand I have to respect that. (July 15, 2003)

The participants neither found, nor made, any major connections between the sociocultural activities and the covert learning of culture. Although the

participants expressed their pleasure with, and enjoyment of, the sociocultural activities, they did not see the activities as transmitting hidden cultural information.

Neither/Nor

Large portions of the cross-cultural dialogues between the participants and myself did not fit nicely into the in-class, out-of-class, overt, or covert categories. Yet, many of these comments were closely related to the participants' experiences of Canadian culture, and their personal perspectives on being an international student in Canada. In particular, the participants described their experiences of, and with, Canadian culture. One thread of the participants' commentary focused on their definitions of culture and Canadian culture. Since I chose to research international students' perspectives and perceptions, and have stressed the necessity of permitting the participants' voices to be heard, I believe that these themes are essential to the discussion. Therefore, these comments, that are neither in-class nor out-of-class components of program planning, that are neither overt nor covert elements of the curriculum, will not be excluded. Instead, they will appear under the headings: *Learning about Canadian culture through experiences and travelling*, and *Defining culture and Canadian culture*. *Learning about Canadian culture through experiences and travelling*. Sony's comments about experiencing Canadian culture were in the context of a discussion about the sociocultural activities. She suggested that international students are not really learning about Canadian culture when they participate in the sociocultural activities, but they will recall that they had a fun time.

Joan: Right, yah. So, if they had told you something, like explained how this is ...

Sony: Well, maybe we are not hear something, but we just see something. Maybe just see the Canadian culture, but not hear something about Canadian culture.

Joan: Right, right. Do you think you can learn something that way, from just seeing it, or like, uh, being there ... instead of hearing something about it.

Sony: Learn something?

Joan: Yah.

Sony: Maybe just experience.

Joan: Experience? Yah, yah. Ok.

Sony: You can go anywhere and you... you cannot say, I learn something here or there, but you just remember.

Joan: Yah, so like remember the experience of it?

Sony: Remember, I go there and I had fun. (December 2, 2002)

Robert identified cultural experiences outside of the classroom

environment as being vital components for learning about Canadian culture. He was aware of the need to live in the new culture, and to experience it first hand, in order to understand it. "Because I think if we really want to know the culture not from the class, I mean we have to go out" (Interview with Robert, January 17, 2003).

Furthermore, in my final interview with Robert, a trip to Banff seemed to have challenged his perspective of his Chinese cultural background, as he compared it with his experience of Canadian culture. Robert spoke at length, but carefully, about his growing awareness of racism within his Chinese culture.

Robert: Another is something about, like, uh, for me I've noticed in Canada because in April I have ten days for a holiday, so I went to Banff. So, uh, okay, in Canada we have like British, the British, [British Columbia] and we have Alberta, Manitoba, uh, like, Ontario, right. So, uh, people from, uh, different parts, like okay when I went to Alberta, so people they just say okay, no problem, like you can do, you just come from Manitoba, right. It's kind of like, uh, how we say, you are fine (laughing). You know. Okay, if I were in, coming in Ontario, like, uh, Toronto, some place, yah, you just from Manitoba, nothing like to change.

Joan: Right.

Robert: Yah. But the funny thing is in China sometimes like, uh, I don't know if it's racism or what, like, uh, some people they come from countryside, uh, so they went to big, huge city. Like most of the people they were okay, but some people they treat that kind of people they looks like, okay where are you from? I say, okay I come from blah, blah, blah, a small place, okay (laughing).

Joan: And they get treated differently because...

Robert: It's not differently, just treated the same, but the way they are thinking, okay, you know (laughing), so sometimes it's kind of, like it was so simple cause, uh, because in China we have different accents.

Joan: Right. Mhmm.

Robert: Yah. So, okay, for example in Beijing, Beijing if some people come from another city, or another small place, like a countryside, okay they were asking for road, like how can I get there and how can I get there. Yah. And, uh, some people are really nice, okay, yah, you just go that way, go that way, but some people they were thinking like I don't want to talk to you, you know (laughing).

Joan: Hmm, hmm. And they can tell because of the accent is different ...

Robert: Yah.

Joan: ... that this person is from somewhere else.

Robert: So, sometimes it's kind of, but not everybody, just part of, yah. So sometimes I just feel in China some, um, some people they have kind of like stereotype. They are just thinking like, okay people coming from some places it's not really, they cannot, you know, come by our culture and come [a few words here were not clear] the city. So, uh, they, this kind of feeling not very good. But in Canada I noticed that okay whatever you come from you are Canadian. Like when we were in Alberta, we went to a restaurant, like the owner saw our car, like okay [name of province removed], yah, good, yah (laughing). It's kind of like just the different.
(June 3, 2003)

David was unique in that he decided to come to Canada a couple of months before he started to study in the ELP so he could travel around the country. As he explained to me, his main purpose of this travelling time was to learn about Canadian culture.

Joan: Right, right. I know that this really isn't one of my questions, maybe technically I'm not suppose to ask this... but were you expecting to know more, like to learn more about Canadian culture, or were you thinking I'm just going to come and focus on learning English, and getting this, you know, this TOFEL score that I need?

David: I came before, two months before I start my course because I want

to know the Canadian culture. So that's why I came before, but I was travelling... and I think it's the best way to learn about the Canadian culture. So, when I started my English course I didn't expect to learn more about the Canadian culture... because I know my objective, or my task, it was different. But at the same time I know I am going to learn a little bit about that [Canadian culture]. (November 20, 2002)

During the course of the second and third interviews with Jet, he described a number of his experiences of Canadian culture, and theorised about the impact of actually experiencing the culture, as a means learning about the target culture. Jet expressed his belief in the necessity of experiencing Canadian culture through contact with Canadians, outside of the ELP. Perhaps, he realised that it through was his encounter with differences between his Chinese culture and Canadian culture that he was able to learn more about both cultures.

Jet: Uh, one more thing I want to talk about is about how the international students learn more about the culture, in another word, that's how the international students will receive the society, enjoy the, the society... receive or experience different culture. I think if you want to learn more about the culture, you must touch the people, the Aboriginal people, I mean the, uh, Canadian people, you must touch them. I think the homestay is a good idea, but I don't live in homestay (laughing). Uh, I think you must, if you want to know something you must real experience that. If you just, uh, look for, or find something in books, or some others told to you, that's not directly experienced. (June 4, 2003)

Hazel recalled the shock of seeing panhandlers on the street, and being asked by them for money, for the first time. Although her experience shocked her, it also increased her awareness of Canadian culture.

Hazel: And in my classes, oh, even I totally didn't know about Aboriginal people is living in Canada. Yah, so at first time I was... I felt Aboriginal person in the street, it's kind of a culture shock... and the, how can I say it, the people on the street give me the money. Yah, that's kind of culture shock for me. (December 4, 2002)

One of Faze's many compelling stories was about the first time he saw

protesters marching in the street. Since protest marches are not permitted in his native Saudi Arabia, this experience made quite an impression on him. Faze's commentary indicates that for him seeing a protest march in real life was much more powerful than viewing one on TV.

Faze: Uh, you need power. You need something, but here, here more easy.

Joan: So are you saying that here you feel like the students have...

Faze: ... have

Joan:... have some power, that their, their concerns are taken seriously?

Faze: Mhmm. The students, they have power. And, uh, like more than other countries. Uh, and that means give it I think, uh, students like good feeling to have good personal, strong personality in fighting about your life with a nice way. Yah. And I don't know what I can call this. I forgot, like when people, they don't like it, uh, something, they go out on the street with big signs?

Joan: Oh, like a protest.

Faze: Protest. Yah. We don't have that. We don't have that, ok. And here I saw it many times. And first time I saw it, oh my God! Like, I am so excited. Like I feel like, just I saw it in TV, now I saw it in front of me. And, uh, I think people here more peace, very peace. They don't, uh, hurt many person or broken anything. They do ...

Joan: Like, uh, protest, the peaceful protest.

Faze: Yah, peaceful protest. And it's nice. And the police, like they never say to them like get out of the way. You know they sometimes do it in the morning, with traffic. And sometimes they close the street. And the police tell them 5 minutes for you, 5 minutes for the cars like a light (laughing).

(July 17, 2003)

These participants share a common realisation about experiencing culture. Like Byram (1989) and Moran (2001), these participants identify not only the importance, but also the necessity, of cultural experience. Whether the participants came to this awareness through their day-to-day experiences of living and studying in a Canadian city, or by travelling around Canada, they clearly communicated their perspectives.

Defining culture and Canadian Culture. As a researcher exploring international

students' perspectives on learning culture in their ELP, I was intrigued by how the participants would define culture, and in particular, the target Canadian culture. As a Canadian, I understand the difficulty in defining Canadian culture (although one thing I am certain of is that it is more than a different brand of beer). When faced with answering questions about Canadian culture, and thereby operationalising the term, the participants' responses were extremely varied. A couple of participants were reluctant to even attempt to give their own definitions; while others were very articulate in their opinions of what Canadian culture entails.

Nana was very hesitant to define Canadian culture, and asked me for an example or an explanation.

Nana: Mhmm. Canadian culture, mhmm... I understand the question, but I have no idea. For example?

Joan: For example...

Nana: Can you tell me? (December 5, 2002)

Sony also struggled to define Canadian culture, and would have liked me to provide her with an explanation of what I meant by Canadian culture.

However, by holding back from offering her a definition, she had an opportunity to explore her own understanding of Canadian culture (which is what I was most interested in hearing about all along).

Sony: I don't know what... what's... what is the Canadian culture...

Joan: Mhmm

Sony: I know the meaning, but I don't know what exactly ...

Joan: Mhmm, yah... Well, I don't know, like how would you explain it?

Sony: Uh, yah. Maybe the way to eat food or some... some festival. I just a little confused about Canadian culture.

Joan: Yah.

Sony: And people ... sometimes people ask what is the Canadian culture, but this is really difficult to say what is Canadian culture, maybe even change the questions... for what people do... do this things in China or people do this things in Canada, and then I can talk about the differences...

Joan: Mhmm.

Sony: ... and maybe the differences in the Canadian culture and the Chinese culture, but if you say ... if you ask what is Canadian culture, I really have no idea. (December 2, 2002)

Interestingly, later in the same discussion Sony offered another explanation of Canadian culture when she stated that Canadian culture is not very different from Chinese culture.

Sony: You said the Canadian culture and ... what can I learn from Canadian culture something, but I think there is no so much differences between Canadian culture and Chinese culture. Just some festival, but the daily life or some ... some place is not so different.

Joan: Not that different, ok. That's interesting.

Sony: Yes. I'm not ... maybe a villager go to the city and see a lot of new things...

Joan: Right, right.

Sony: Because this kind of things are also in China, so I'm not so surprised about it. (December 2, 2002)

Jet, like Sony, saw an aspect of Chinese culture within the multiculturalism of Canadian culture. His ability to experience something familiar appears to have increased his comfort level, which may have helped him adjust to Canadian culture.

Jet: Uh, okay let me see. Canadian culture, mhmm... I just feel in the Canadian culture it's, uh, including many contact... and I think the Canadian culture is made up to many of other culture. Its includes the Chinese, the Chinese culture, so when I study, when I live in the Canada sometime I will feel comfortable because I will touch something, uh, very familiar. (May 28, 2003)

At another point in the same discussion, Jet made a comparison between the creative ability of Canadians and the inability of the Chinese to be inventive.

He then suggested that differing forms of education is the reason behind this difference. At the very end of his commentary, Jet links an emphasis on imagination and creativity to Canadian culture.

Jet: And, uh, I think Chinese people, mhm, compare the, uh, native people and the, uh, sorry compare the Chinese people and the Canadian people, uh, I think the Chinese people always, I don't think the Chinese people good at to invent, or create some new things. Uh, they just, uh, they can got some, uh, experience from the, uh, long time activity. They will got some experience and use this experience service their life. But I think in the, uh, in the Canadian, in the uh, Canada many people have some very strange or very new idea. I think it is very good for create...

Joan: To create things?

Jet: To create something. And, uh, I think in the education it's different. When I was a child I read some books just learn how to become, uh, uh, useful people in the society. Right some, learn something what is right, what is wrong. And I feel [in my age] something. But here in the bookstore in the children area, it's the Harry Potter. Like this book. I think this book will make people, will make just, especially children, will imagine something. So, maybe, I think this is, uh, Canadian culture. This is very good for people. (May 28, 2003)

Hazel's observations of Canadian family life, inside her homestay and in public places, helped to form her opinions of parenting styles in Canada. When Hazel compared her childhood experiences with what she had seen of Canadian children, she concluded that Canadian children were more polite than Korean children, in part because Canadian parents are stricter than Korean parents. Through her comparison of Korean and Canadian parenting styles, Hazel comments on her understanding of Canadian culture.

Hazel: It's very strict compared to Korean mothers. And I think Canadian children is more polite...

Joan: Really?

Hazel: Yah, cause when I was young I have a mistake or I ... how can I say ... I spoiled, something fell over, to Mum.

Joan: Like you knocked over a glass of juice?

Hazel: Yah, glass of juice, something. And if I want to buy something, but my Mum told me, no you couldn't. But I was crying and I was pressuring

my Mum, usually my Mum bought me, bought that for me, but I think Canadian parents don't do that. They are so strict. No, and one time they said no, and no still exists.

Joan: Right. So, no means no.

Hazel: Yah, no means no. Yah, yah! But it's totally different. (December 4, 2002)

David's defining comments about Canadian culture contained a couple of main points. Although he touched on the difficulty of defining Canadian culture, David also expressed his belief that Canadian culture included the freedom to maintain a different first culture. Through his travels across Canada, David may have witnessed Canada's cultural diversity, as well as, its geographical vastness to arrive at his understanding of Canadian culture.

David: Yes, I don't think so somebody has the answer to say, ok this is the culture of Canada. It's huge and different, so it's difficult to say this is the culture of Canada.

Joan: Right, right. I think even Canadians have a hard time, exactly defining what Canadian culture is.

David: Yah, that's true. And also because in Canada you're free to do whatever you want, like, you want to do about your culture, you want to get dressed like that ... you're free. So that's the most important.

Joan: Yes, yes, that's true. Interesting. So freedom is one element, maybe, of...

David: To keep your own culture. (November 20, 2002)

Robert had no difficulty in focusing in on a few elements of culture, which included language. He also named his host family as one of the means by which he was learning Canadian culture.

Robert: Well, uh, I think culture is a big topic. For me, culture includes like language and the way we are living in Canada, and the way we are to communicate and the way we are doing things. And I think I learned Canada culture, not only from my class, but also from my host mother, host father, and my Canadian friends here. (January 17, 2003)

In our third meeting, Robert shared his understanding of the deeper aspects of culture. By comparing the degree of openness in China and in

Canada, he explained how this difference related to a feeling one has within, and about, their culture.

Robert: Yah, maybe the third one it's really deep, but it's kind of the culture points, like it's really come from our original. That kind of feeling, I can't tell you, but maybe you are going to China you will feel it. I know but, I don't know, you know something inside my feeling I can't say (laughing). Yes, so that's kind of, you know. Yes, China's now is more open, but not like in Canadian, Canada. It's really like in the open... but, yah. So for sure, maybe that's one, third, point.

Joan: Yah, yah. Like going even deeper into that.

Robert: It's kind of really deep, deep for cultures. That kind of feeling unless you've been in that place for a long time you don't know.

Joan: Right, right, because it's the whole, uh, maybe, essence of the Chinese culture, maybe.

Robert: Yah, that's kind of the culture (laughing). (June 3, 2003)

The final words of this section of cross-cultural dialogue come from Faze.

Faze was the only participant to touch on the issue of cultural identity. His statements present his experience of living in a new culture; while maintaining a hold on his first culture. Within his commentary, Faze identifies his respect for Canadian culture, as part of his management strategy for balancing his life between the two cultures.

Faze: And when I meet Canadian people I have to like be between...

Joan: Uhhuh.

Faze: ... between my culture and their culture. Um, because I cannot erase myself and I cannot ignore people.

Joan: Right, right.

Faze: But they didn't tell us we have to do that.

Joan: No, no.

Faze: They just show how is the Canadian culture. And, uh, I respect Canadian culture really and I like it. Uh, for, you know every culture has something good and something bad.

Joan: Exactly.

Faze: Yah. Everywhere.

Joan: Yes, yes.

Faze: In my culture or Canadian culture.

Joan: Or any culture.

Faze: Yah, ok.

Joan: For sure.

Faze: Yah. And, uh, sometimes I feel I learn something when I met Canadian people. Uh, I respect that, like I like to do something they way when they like it, plus what I like.

Joan: Right.

Faze: Between. (July 15, 2003)

While Faze stood alone in revealing an awareness of being in a “between” position, all of the participants offered unique perspectives on their experiences as international students living in Canada. Moreover, through their one-to-one interviews, the participants revealed the nature of their experiences of learning culture within an ELP. The participants’ exposure to the overt curriculum provided them with time to read, write, and talk about cultural topics within their classroom environments. In addition, their regular in-class tasks, activities, and assignments provided them with opportunities, albeit limited opportunities, to expand their cultural awareness and to encounter cultural experiences. While learning culture through the covert curriculum was not self-evident for most participants, two participants were able to offer some insights into learning culture through the hidden curriculum. However, these discussions were not as elaborate, or as profound, as the commentary about learning culture through the overt curriculum.

As the participants explored their experiences of learning culture through the out-of-class elements of the ELP, they uncovered the value of the homestay program. Generally, the host families extended guidance and direction to the participants, often by modelling culturally appropriate actions and behaviours. To a lesser degree, the sociocultural activities created opportunities for the participants to experience the target culture.

Finally, by comparing their lived experiences in the cultures of their home

countries with their experiences of living in Canadian culture, the participants also had opportunities to explore their cultural assumptions, challenge their cultural stereotypes, and re-create themselves in their new cultural environment. Based on the participants' commentary that expressed their individualised definitions of culture, and Canadian culture, it is evident that some participants had entered into an exploration of their cultural assumptions, that other participants had begun to question and challenge their culturally based stereotypes, and that a few participants were in the midst of re-creating their cultural identities. While the ways in which the participants might act, react, and interact, in their new cultural environment, and in their first cultures, upon returning home, is beyond the scope of my research project, I am most definitely curious to know more about their continuing cultural experiences.

Chapter Six - Discussion and Implications

Discussion

(Un)covering the themes: A deeper level

During the process of writing the results chapter, I discovered that the participants' commentary about the covert curriculum, within their ELP classrooms, was virtually non-existent. The fact that the overt curriculum was the focus of the participants' commentary about their experiences of learning culture, within their classroom environments, can be attributed to a couple of factors. Since the covert curriculum, within the classroom, is a mixture of cultural information from both the deeper levels of Canadian culture, and that of classroom culture, it may have been challenging for the participants to identify, let alone bring into clear view, these different aspects. While a couple of participants made a few comments connected to the hidden curriculum, this does not mean that they were fully aware of these elements of the curriculum. Moreover, because the hidden curriculum can be influenced by individual ELP instructors, to an even greater degree than the overt curriculum, there is less chance that the students will have repeat exposure to one specific covert curriculum, as they move through the levels of the ELP. However, the repetition of overt curriculum skills, such as those connected to academic reading and writing, should make these skills very familiar to the students. It makes sense, therefore, that the participants would be able to discuss these areas; while not being able to articulate their experiences with the covert curriculum.

The focus of the commentary changed when the participants spoke about

the out-of-class elements of the ELP. The participants who were living in homestays expressed their experiences of learning about culture, in terms of what they learned directly from their host family members. The participants explained how their host families guided their learning of culture in, and through, everyday actions and situations. I would like to suggest that host families, like our own families when we are growing up, played a significant role in the participants' cultural socialisation, and that this is closely connected with language learning. As Jupp, Roberts, and Cook-Gumperez (1982) showed in their research into language socialisation, the language (and cultural) socialisation of children is vastly different from that of adults learning a second language (and culture). While host families do not exist for exactly the same purpose as nuclear families, based on the participants' commentary, they do appear to have a significant impact. Furthermore, the importance of close relationships between the host family and the international student needs to be emphasised. Like children, who within their nuclear families, are socialised in their first language, there appears to be a link between the quality time students spend, talking and interacting in positive ways, with their host families, and the level of understanding of, and acceptance of, the target culture.

Implications

The implications of my research should be divided appropriately for two distinct groups: the international students, and the ELP administrators and instructors. In some instances the same implication, or recommendation, can be viewed from two sides. Beginning with the international students, I will discuss the main

implications that have emerged from my research, and offer some recommendations.

International Students

The message for new international students is best heard coming from the international students, who participated in my research. First, by listening to Hazel, Robert, Jordan, and Jet discuss the benefits of living with a Canadian host family, the value of the opportunity to improve English speaking and listening comprehension, and also to experience a new culture becomes clear. In Jordan's own words, "If you have the ability to deal with your homestay people, like homestay son, daughter, uh, or some other people, homestay friends, also I think you have the ability to deal with your classmate, including a lot of foreign people, a variety, a variety of people" (June 5, 2003). The recommendation, which is based on the participants' comments, is to take advantage of a homestay program, and experience Canadian culture by living with a Canadian family.

In addition, the participants recognised the limitations of only interacting with other international students from their home countries. Although it may be easier, and more comfortable, for international students to interact with others who speak their language, and are familiar with their cultural background, some of the participants saw the benefits of branching out, meeting, and making friends with international students who were not from their home countries. Jet understood that making the break from interacting primarily with his fellow Chinese students would help him to improve his spoken English, and expand his cultural experiences. Similarly, Hazel was aware of the problem of remaining

exclusively with other Koreans, during the socio-cultural activities, when she stated that, "I don't think I learned culture in social activities... cause there were too many, cause there were all of international students, even though from different countries we usually get together the same country people, the same country's students. So I don't think I learned the culture in the social activities" (December 4, 2003). Therefore, it is recommended that international students attempt to mix with international students from a variety of countries. Not only does this encourage the use of English, as the common language, but it also allows for cross-cultural dialogues and increased cultural awareness.

A final point that the participants made centered on preparing to be challenged, not only by the academic/language learning, but also by experiences within the new culture. Robert faced the challenges of learning how to write a research paper, *Canadian style*, as well as, adjusting to new ways of eating and shopping. Hazel was challenged by her exposure to Canadian culture in her classroom environment when she learned about the difficulties facing many Aboriginal Canadians. She was also challenged by her experiences with the open displays of affection between her host mother and host father. However, in both situations, Hazel found a way to add this new cultural awareness, and cultural experience, to her Korean cultural background. While some of the challenges facing international students are related to language learning, it is also important to recognise that adjusting to a new cultural environment is a process complete with the exciting highs of meeting new people, and having new experiences, and the lows of home sickness, unfamiliarity, and uncertainty.

Sony's struggle with the target Canadian culture might have been minimised, if she had been better prepared to face a new culture, and been given more support, in order to have a more positive experience of Canadian culture.

ELP Administrators and Instructors

The implications and recommendations are for ELP administrators and instructors to focus on the classroom environment and the homestay program. Based on both my review of the relevant literature, and my thematic analysis of the participants' commentary, encouraging increased cross-cultural awareness and providing opportunities for cultural experiences should be viewed as integral components of the academic ELP curricula. Cross-cultural dialogues between international students that include discussions of the positive and negative aspects of life in a new cultural environment, such as learning about the phases of culture shock, meeting new people, experiencing different attitudes and behaviours, should become a regular component of the academic ELP curriculum. In particular, during the first couple of weeks of each term, new students could be teamed up, in small groups, with returning students. With instructors acting as facilitators of three or four groups, the groups could meet to explore topics of a cultural nature, and discuss their experiences in the new cultural environment. Moreover, the homestay program should be promoted for an even greater number of international students, who can benefit in their cultural, as well as, language learning.

As a means of encouraging cross-cultural awareness and providing opportunities for cultural experiences, there are three main recommendations, for

ELP administrators and instructors, that I see emerging from this research. The first recommendation is for the design and development of a multi-level unit that addresses cultural awareness and cultural experience. This component of the curriculum should be developed with the co-operation of, and input from a representative, and interested, group of international students. The unit should be designed to provide students with a variety of activities, tasks, and experiences that explore cultural topics and issues. A variety of multi-media, such as newspapers, magazines, TV programming, film, and music from Canadian culture and the students' own cultures, should be integrated into the unit and used as starting points for discussions, writing exercises, and projects. Other elements of a cultural unit might include ice breakers related to cultural awareness, and outings to places that bring the students into contact with various aspects of Canadian culture.

In addition to the creation of a unit that focuses on culture, I see the need for an increase in resources related to culture within the ELP classroom. ELP instructors require support materials and resources to help them face the challenges of examining cultural topics and raising cultural awareness. The participants' comments suggest that there was a limited coverage of topics and issues related to culture within their classrooms. Moreover, the primary means of introducing and covering culture was through in-class discussion, with a writing assignment as a possible follow-up. Since the teaching of culture was not the focus of my research, it is only speculation to suggest that the instructors would have incorporated culture to a greater degree, or with greater variety, if they had

access to more resources. However, I believe that having a variety of resources that focus on the teaching and learning of culture, within English language classrooms, would assist instructors in planning, preparing and presenting lessons that include cultural topics and help to raise cultural awareness.

Currently, there are several excellent books available that deal with covering culture and developing cultural awareness within the classroom. For a very practical, “Oh no, it’s Monday morning and I don’t have my lesson planned”, kind of book I recommend Cultural Awareness from the Oxford Resource books for teachers series. Co-authored by Barry Tomalin and Susan Stempleski (1993), Cultural Awareness offers a practical approach to addressing culture in the classroom. Although I do not recommend waiting until Monday morning to pull together a lesson for the day, there are enough tasks and activities in this resource to cover a term’s worth of Monday mornings. For a more theoretical examination of culture, Patrick Moran’s (2001) book, Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice is one option. Moran’s audience is pre-service and in-service teachers, and while his focus is on the integration of language and culture, the practical content is rather buried under the theoretical discussions of language and culture. An examination of one chapter of Moran’s book, for an in-house professional development session, might provide instructors with the motivation and information to explore their own role in the teaching of culture, and to bring culture into their classrooms in new and exciting ways to teach. In addition to these two resources, there are currently a number of other publications available that address the connection between language and culture

from a variety of perspectives. I believe that ELPs that expand their resources and support materials, so that instructors have resources at their disposal that support the exploration of culture within their classrooms, can only strengthen those ELPs.

The most important recommendation focuses on the promotion of the homestay program. In reviewing the results of my research, the central role of host families, in providing opportunities for international students to gain an awareness of, to explore, to challenge, and to be challenged by both their own cultures and the target Canadian culture, stands out as the most significant finding. Therefore, taking steps to strengthen the homestay program, in ways that support the creation of warm and friendly homestays, should be a priority. Although the classroom environment has a wider impact on international students, since not all students choose to stay with host families, homestays seem to have a deeper impact. The ability of host families to model deeper levels of culture, to provide opportunities for international students to become aware of cultural differences, and to help international students move through the phases of culture shock, cannot be achieved to the same degree in the classroom. It is only through daily contact and the development, and growth of close relationships between the members of the host families and the international students that this natural exposure to the target culture can result in this kind of socialisation. Considering that many international students intend to remain in Canada for a number of years, at least long enough to complete their education at the Bachelor's, or Master's, level, the positive impact of a homestay may have

long-term benefits for those students who experience Canadian culture by living with a host family.

Further exploration of the language and culture connection

Reflections

It is my intention that this final chapter should be a place of reflection upon the process, and the product, of the research. Tremendous changes have taken place in the year and a half since I first began meeting with the participants to discuss their experiences of learning culture in their academic ELP. As I reflect upon the process of this research project, in terms of my own growth as a researcher, two main questions come to mind.

My first question is: In what ways has undertaking this research changed me? My second question is: What have I learned from doing this study? With respect to my first question, changes have occurred in a number of different ways and on different levels. Some of these changes are related to my own expectations. In particular, I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the cross-cultural dialogues with the participants. Even though I expected this phase of the research to be the most enjoyable, it was much more so than I had even hoped it would be. Moreover, I was charmed by some of the participants, both male and female, to a much greater extent than I had anticipated. In their own unique ways, Jet's interesting and thought provoking theorising, Jordan's insightful articulation of the benefits of homestay, Robert's positive and accepting attitude towards the target culture, David's awareness of deep culture and cultural issues, Hazel's challenge in examining the cultural aspects of personal relationships, and

Faze's storytelling abilities, all added special dimensions to the interviews that left me wishing I could have more time with each of them. I was also very impressed by the dedication and commitment to the study of most of the participants. Finally, the depth of some of the participants' responses went far beyond what I had expected.

In considering what I have learned, as a researcher, about conducting research, I am left with a number of questions, some of which are, as yet, unanswered. The primary question I am in the process of reflecting on is: How have the participants been changed by their participation in the research? Perhaps it is unrealistic for me, as the researcher, to comment on this aspect of the research. However, based on my observations of the participants over the course of their series of interviews, I feel I have some insights worth sharing. As the interviews progressed, many of the participants opened up more and more; while a couple of participants became increasingly closed. In addition, some participants grew as the study progressed. It was obvious to me that some of the participants became more reflective, and achieved a higher level of critical thinking, through the course of the interviews. Since, in some cases, the series of three interviews extended over a period of several months, this increase in participants' ability to analyse and think critically is more likely a result of their continued language learning and cultural experiences than of their participation in the research. Another question, connected to the participants that I am struggling with is: Were certain participants easier to interview because they had achieved a higher level of cultural socialisation? In other words, did the participants who

responded to my interview questions in greater depth and with more insight, and who revealed more about their experiences of learning culture, did so because they had adjusted and adapted to the Canadian culture to a greater degree than the other participants. A final question that arises on this topic is: As a researcher did I treat all the participants equally? More specifically, was I as encouraging of, accommodating of, accepting of, and open to hearing the voices of the more difficult participants as I was with the easier participants? This is certainly a very challenging question to consider, particularly for a researcher who emphasises the importance of equality. My answer is - not likely. However, I am left wondering if it is possible, or even desirable as a researcher, to overcome human nature and leave all our personal feelings towards the participants outside the interview room. Surely in research, as in life, we connect with more immediacy, more easily, and more completely with some people than with others.

A final thought on what I have learned about research from conducting this study pertains to my growing appreciation of *good* research. Since I have moved through the process of conducting a research project, I have become more fully aware of the inherent challenges. As a novice researcher, I learned that each step of the process has its own merits and its own drawbacks. Moreover, while I suspected that conducting *good* research requires a bit more from the researcher, I am now beginning to realise the extent and intensity of the personal commitment required. Not only does undertaking a research project involve a considerable commitment of time and effort, but it also requires perseverance and patience. As Gumperez (1982) suggests, research that involves

“communicative flexibility in face-to-face interactions” between the researcher and the participants calls for a high degree of personal investment. Finally, experienced researchers may be better able to address the almost endless list of possible considerations that *good* research demands, but for a first-time researcher, this was an overwhelming prospect. Although I considered a number of issues pertaining to the participants’ involvement in the research project prior to beginning the study, I now appreciate that these considerations, while well intentioned, were only a small portion of all that could have been taken into account.

The Questions

At the end of a research project, there seems to be even more unanswered questions than there were at the start. Through exploring and examining a specific area, learning more, and coming to new levels of awareness and understanding, the most difficult questions emerge. Perhaps, as Jostein Gaarder (1994/1991) suggests in his exploration of philosophy in *Sophie’s World*, this is an age-old problem. For,

[human]kind is faced with a number of difficult questions that we have no satisfactory answers to We can either fool ourselves, and the rest of the world by pretending that we know all there is to know, or we can shut our eyes to the central issues once and for all and abandon all progress. In this sense, humanity is divided. (p. 59)

However, I believe that,

In addition to the group of those “pretending to know it all” and the group with their “eyes shut tight”, there is a third and essential group - those who ask the difficult questions, fully aware that they do not have all the answers. This group also struggles with that knowledge and with their sense of responsibility. (Birrell, 2000c, p. 4)

As a member of the third group, I see concerns about justice, equality, and power as being the “central issues” from which the difficult questions emerge. As a researcher, I am now tasked with posing the difficult questions that have emerged from my research, not only aware that I do not have the answers, but also with the belief that there are multiple answers to these questions.

After examining the relationship between language and culture, and with a leaning towards critical theory, I wonder like James (2000) about the cultural content of the curriculum. In the past, I have questioned curricular content, within the context of ESL,

In teaching the dominant Canadian language and culture, what message is given to the students about other languages and other cultures? How are the students in these language classes socialised, marginalised, excluded, and dominated outside the classroom, and within the classroom? What issues and topics [including cultural ones] are excluded from the curriculum of these classes because they are viewed as being too controversial, too political, or too empowering? (Birrell, 2000b, p. 13)

Now adding on to these questions, I must also ask: Is the curriculum a version of the “classical” curriculum, with an underlying emphasis on specific behaviours, values and beliefs? Does the curriculum meet the (cultural learning) needs of the international students in academic ELPs? Is the curricular conversation multidirectional? Do the international students have a voice as key stakeholders, as to what the curriculum will contain in terms of cultural content? Or are the international students excluded from determining what cultural information, topics, and issues they will be exposed to? What is being revealed about Canadian culture and about the international students’ own cultures? What is being hidden, and why? What is the impact of students being challenged to

reflect upon, and potentially, revise their view/understanding of their own cultures? How are instructors changed by a growing awareness of the cultural backgrounds of their students? Some of these questions may point to further research that will either re-examine this research, or will explore new contexts, and other questions may focus on the issues.

The Challenge

Since I began graduate studies, my heightened awareness of the issues, masquerading in the difficult questions, has been a source of internal wrestling for me. Early on in my graduate program, I identified this struggle in one of my course papers.

The site of my struggle is located in my knowledge and awareness of the issues. For me, the awareness is always in combination with a feeling of responsibility to do something, in a real way, to bring about change. Therefore, the knowing takes on additional weight. So when I consider the issues...I am often paralysed by the weight of knowing. My immobility is twofold: first, not knowing how or where to begin, and second, feeling that the issues are so huge that I will not be able to make a difference. (Birrell, 2000a, p. 2)

While the issues behind the difficult questions still feel weighty, they are no longer paralyzing. I have learned to accept that, "by continuing to explore critical issues and to consider questions that challenge us to reflect on our reality....Ultimately, our own conscientization will allow us to struggle to find answers to the most difficult questions" (Birrell, 2000a, p. 2). So while these questions remain a source of struggle, they also challenge me.

I am challenged to re-examine my practice as an educator, to re-evaluate my position as a researcher, and to reflect on new possibilities. Reflection is a necessary part of facing the challenge, but without movement into a place of

action, reflection alone becomes a form of immobility. So how will I move from reflecting on reality to realistic action? I have identified four specific areas that I see as needing to be addressed. While I am not willing to go so far as to say that this is my own professional “to do” list, I believe that by naming these items I am making a stronger commitment to directing my time and energy towards these areas. The four actions that I feel should be attended to are: (a) the development of a cultural awareness unit, which specifically targets academic ELPs, (b) the preparation of guidelines for new host families (with input and assistance from host families and host family program coordinators), (c) the creation of a handbook for international students based on recommendations from current international students, and (d) the preparation and presentation of a professional development session on incorporating cultural awareness, and creating opportunities for cultural experiences, in English language classrooms. Through my increased awareness of both cultural learning, and the issues that surround the connection between language and culture, I am committed to continuing to explore the connection between language and culture. Like the ongoing cultural experiences of the participants, my own experiences within Canadian culture and other cultures I explore, will continue to mold my thinking, feeling, and understanding of cultural topics, cultural issues, and cross-cultural interactions.

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Appendix A

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Learning Culture in an Academic English Language Program: Students' Perspectives
Investigator: Joan Birrell-Bertrand

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 is important that you carefully read this form and the attached summary of the project, which outlines the research project and describes your participation in the project. Questions or concerns about your participation in the research project will be answered or addressed by the researcher, Joan Birrell-Bertrand, before you sign this form.

I understand that I am participating in a study of students' perceptions of learning culture in an academic English Language Program (ELP), which is a master's thesis research project in the Faculty of Education. I understand that I will participate in a series of three interviews, which will take in total, two and a half to three hours of my time. In addition to these three interviews, I am aware that I will be asked to review written transcripts of the first two interviews.

I am aware that the interviews I participate in will be audiotaped, and then transcribed. I will be given copies of the transcripts to review, and then discuss at subsequent interviews. I know that I can refuse to answer any question during the interviews, and that I can also ask to stop the audiotaping of the interview. I am aware that the researcher may take notes during the interview, and that she will be writing reflective journal entries following each interview, which may refer to specific responses I have made. I also know that the journal entries will be used in her thesis to provide information about the participants and about the interview context.

I am aware that during the interviews I will be asked questions about my experience of learning culture in an ELP. I also know that in the first interview I will be asked to provide information about my education background, my short term goals within the ELP, and my long term goals after I have left the ELP. In the second interview, I understand that I will be asked to discuss my experience of learning culture in class, and outside the classroom in ELP activities and programs. I am aware that the purpose of the third interview is to review the information discussed and gathered during the second interview.

I understand that all information gathered in this research project is confidential. My full name will not appear on any audiotaped or written materials that are produced through this research project. A pseudonym, that I have

chosen, will be used in place of my full name. To ensure that confidentiality is maintained, data gathered throughout the research project will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, and computer files containing the transcribed interview data will be coded. Following completion of this research project, the audiotapes of the interviews, interview transcripts, and reflective journals will be destroyed.

I am aware that the information gathered in this research project may be used in future research and may be further analysed. I am aware that information about my experience of learning culture in an ELP will be represented in the written form of a master's thesis, and possibly in journal articles. I am also aware that persons other than the researcher, Joan Birrell-Bertrand, will have access to the data gathered during this research project. An undergraduate student in the Faculty of Education, Jessica Mason, may assist in the transcription of the interview tapes. In addition, I know that members of the researcher's thesis committee, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Dr. Patrick Mathews, and Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, may have access to the transcripts, however, they will not know my identity. The researcher's thesis committee members will have access to the data gathered during this research project for the purpose of the thesis only.

I understand that I will not be subjected to any physical, mental or emotional risk as a result of my participation in this research project. I know that my participation in this research project will in no way influence either my grades or my progress in the ELP. I am aware that I will not have any direct benefit from participating in this research project, and therefore, I will not receive any financial remuneration (honoraria) for my participation. However, in appreciation for my participation in this research project, I will be offered a summary of the research findings by the researcher. In the event that I have left Canada before the research summary is prepared, and I wish to have a copy, I will provide an address to which the summary can be sent.

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

If I have any questions or would like further information about this research project at any time, I should feel free to contact the researcher, Joan Birrell-Bertrand, at 284-4343, or her thesis advisor, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, at 474-9079.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If I have any concerns or complaints about this project I may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for me to keep for my records and reference.

Participant's signature

Date

Investigator and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

Appendix B
Research Instrument

My main interview questions are as follows:

1. Can you tell me what you have learned about Canadian culture in your academic English language class?
2. Can you tell me something about how Canadian culture is being taught in your academic English language class?
3. Can you tell me what you have learned about Canadian culture in your English Language Program, outside the classroom?
4. Can you tell me something about how Canadian culture is being taught in your English Language Program, outside the classroom?

Prompts are used to remind the interviewee about a specific aspect of a more general topic (Gillham, 2000b). In my study, I used prompts only to go back to a topic that a participant had already mentioned. The following are examples of the type of prompts that I used in the interviews with participants:

How does this happen in reading (speaking, listening, etc.)
What materials has your instructor used in class to present information about Canadian culture?

Probes were used to encourage the participant to tell more or to clarify a comment. Some probes that I used in the interviews with participants were:

Can you tell me more about?
What else can you tell me about ...?
What do you mean by ...?
I am not sure if I understand, can you explain it again?