A Study of Middle School Students’ Motivation to Learn English as a Second Language

By
Margaret Aisicovich

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MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

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Abstract

Adopting a constructionist interpretive research approach, I investigated the phenomenon of motivation to learn English as a second language (ESL) in a sheltered, middle school, transitional class. I interviewed eight ESL students who were attending an ESL program in grades seven through nine. This process enabled me to distill the essence of which factors impacted the students’ motivation for second language acquisition (SLA). The literature does suggest that ESL students’ motivation to learn English may be influenced by numerous factors including, but not limited to: previous learning experiences, family perspectives on education, peer interaction, and classroom teacher, teaching strategies and procedures. The study occurred over a period of five months, from April 2012 to August 2012, and included data gathering and analysis.

Key words: motivation, ESL, SLA
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**Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective filter</td>
<td>A mental blocking mechanism which increases in students under stress/pressure, preventing them from allowing for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981).</td>
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<tr>
<td>CET</td>
<td>Cognitive evaluation theory – positive feedback facilitates intrinsic motivation (Gagne &amp; Deci, 2005).</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENREB</td>
<td>Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
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<td>Extrinsic motivation</td>
<td>A change in motivation level due to external influences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>Anything a student learns through listening, reading, or viewing (Krashen, 1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental motivation</td>
<td>Selective commitment to the learning of a language, where the language is seen as a tool, usually for the performance of a job (Gardner, R., 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrative motivation</td>
<td>Complete commitment to learning a language and integrating into the culture in which it is couched (Gardner, R., 2007).</td>
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<td>Interpretive constructionist particular</td>
<td>Researchers who work to find shared meaning within “a group, recognizing that though each person interprets the events he or she encounters in a somewhat distinct manner” (Rubin, H., &amp; Rubin, I., 1995, p. 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>A change in motivation level due to internal drive and desire (Gardner, R., 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>A subsequent language learned after the mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNEST</td>
<td>Non-native English speaking teachers (Ma, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>Anything a student produces through speech, writing or representing in an effort to communicate (Krashen, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second language acquisition.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural theory</td>
<td>A theory which suggests that learning is, “embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 287).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-determination theory</td>
<td>“SDT postulates that autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of both their underlying regulatory processes and their accompanying experiences, and it further suggests that behaviors can be characterized in terms of the degree to which they are autonomous versus controlled” (Gagne &amp; Deci, 2005, p. 334).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>Willingness to communicate (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>“the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).</td>
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Chapter I: Introduction

As a teacher of ESL students for the last four years, I became interested in what factors contributed to student motivation to learn English. Through this study I have developed a clearer picture of these factors.

Immigration to Manitoba has increased in the last four years and has brought with it students from around the world from a variety of previous educational experiences, languages and levels of ability (Puchala, Vu, & Muhajarine, 2010). As such, it behooves Manitoba ESL teachers to become educated regarding what has occurred historically regarding ESL children’s experiences of learning English as a second language, as well as the educational context they come from in order to support their learning appropriately. I wanted to better understand ESL students’ motivation to learn English in order to be better aware of how I could positively affect my future students’ motivation for second language acquisition (SLA). Consequently, I wanted to hear the first hand perspectives of the students in their own voices regarding this phenomenon.

Being aware that my students are all individuals and come from a variety of backgrounds and family philosophies regarding ESL, I believe that their contributions are most valuable in this process. By giving these students ownership in the study, they were able to realize that their knowledge, cultures, home languages and experiences have value in an ESL context. Additionally, by participating in this study, the participating students can reflect on the factors that influenced them and become more meta-cognitively aware of how these factors impact their individual motivation to learn.

I have conducted this research with the use of interpretive constructionist methodology. As described by Creswell (2007), an interpretive researcher weaves their
own experiences and thoughts throughout their study: “Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and that they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 21).

By viewing my research through the lens of an interpretive constructionist, I also endeavored to maintain theoretical sensitivity as I did so. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define this as: “the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t.” I believe that having been an ESL student myself, and now being a teacher of ESL students, I was able to maintain and employ theoretical sensitivity throughout my research.

My ESL adventure began when I arrived in Canada at the age of six. I did not speak any English when I entered the Manitoba public school system. My first language was Polish. The school I first attended was an English/Hebrew bilingual school. I was lucky to have a teacher who spoke English and Polish. Her ability to translate English into my L1 impacted how I viewed learning English. This unique educational context and her assistance facilitated my understanding enhanced my motivation to learn English (Vygotsky, 1978). From a familial influence perspective, my parents always put a lot of weight on academic success, and they expressed an integrative attitude towards SLA. As a child, I was not shy, and took risks when learning English; consequently, I felt good about my successes and was further motivated to strive for fluency. It took a long time for me to feel ‘Canadian’. For a very long time I felt ‘other’, no longer Polish but not yet Canadian. Eventually I developed an identity that encompassed all of my experiences,
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becoming who I am today. I believe that my experience as an ESL student allows me to empathize with my students who are now learning English in the classes I teach.

As I began this study, I expected that the factors that contributed to my motivation to learn, my acculturation and the development of my identity would be the same factors that affect the participants’ motivation as they went through the process of learning English. The factors which I expected and are supported by the literature include: familial perception regarding learning English, acculturation, and the need to develop an ‘ideal L2 self,’ intrapersonal factors, such as personality and willingness to communicate, interpersonal factors such as peer relations, and the educational context. My assumption was that students who were highly motivated to learn English would list a combination of said positive factors (integrative familial perception, outgoing personality, positive peer, teacher and educational experiences and a development of an ideal L2 identity) as contributors to their intrinsic motivation. However, students who stated that they did not feel motivated to learn English would recount fewer positive factors or a combination of fewer positive factors (instrumental familial perception, introverted personality, neutral or negative peer, teacher and educational experiences, and no definitive L2 identity) as contributing to their non-motivation or de-motivation. My findings were strongly supported by the literature.

In chapter one I introduced the methodology and overviewed the topic of this study. In chapter two I consider the literature in the field of ESL students’ motivation to learn English, the contributing factors including: familial motivating factors, acculturation and L2 ideal self, intrapersonal motivating factors, interpersonal motivating factors, educational factors, as well as my theoretical framework. In chapter three I
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discuss the methodology of interpretive constructionist research, the research paradigm, the researcher’s role, participant selection, data sources and data collection, interviewing, data analysis, trustworthiness, limitations, and ethical considerations. In chapter four, I discuss and analyze the data I gathered including the data from participant interviews. Additionally, I summarize my research journal and the field notes. Finally, I consider how the themes in the literature were evident in the data I gathered. In chapter five I discuss the implication of the findings, discuss the limitations and make some recommendations based on the findings.
Chapter II: Literature Review

In chapter two I consider the literature in the field of ESL students’ motivation to learn English as well as the contributing factors including: familial motivating factors, acculturation and L2 ideal self, intrapersonal motivating factors, interpersonal motivating factors, and educational factors; additionally I describe my theoretical framework.

Literature in the area of ESL student motivation consistently highlights a cluster of factors that can affect students’ motivation to learn English. Most of the research conducted in this area has been focused on older children. I am interested in seeing if the same factors affect younger students’ (grades seven to nine) motivation to learn English.

Familial motivating factors

A large segment of the literature in the field of ESL education and motivation goes back phenomenon of ESL (as opposed to English as a foreign language teaching or EFL) that started with the increased movement of immigrants around the world over the last 50 years. In order to understand the context of ESL students, it is important to understand the perceived value of English language learning abroad. Gardner, R. (2007) found that ESL learners seek to learn English for one of two reasons, either for instrumental or integrative purposes; these two approaches to ESL language learning are also described by Jordan (2004) as:

Identify positively with the people and culture of the target language, wishing to resemble the people concerned, to understand their culture and to be able to participate in it, could be said to have ‘integrative motivation’; ‘Instrumental motivation’ [occurs when] a learner is motivated to learn an L2 for utilitarian purposes, such as getting a job, or passing an exam. (p. 197)
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On the same theme, Brown (1991) concurs that a majority of the immigrant population of professionals from a variety of fields come to Canada, “for their children’s future, [and] instill this sense of responsibility in them” (Mady, 2010), and most wish for their children to integrate fully into Canadian society. Therefore, the parents’ perception of English and its value is reflected in their children as they begin attending ESL classes (Li, 2004; Sayadian & Lashkarian 2010). The parents’ influence on the children’s perception of their new cultural environment on (both positive and negative) can impact how students’ view their classmates, teachers and the language acquisition process (Berger, et al., 2006; Brittain, 2009; Cebello, 2004; Gardner, 2007; Griffith, 1996). According to Gardner, R. (2007) the cultural context and parental influence have a lot to do with how well a student will perform in the L2 acquisition process. If the language acquisition perception at home is that it is important to learn English fully, as it relates to all aspects of their lives (integrative), students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to work hard in order to gain English language proficiency (Hardre, & Sullivan, 2008; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Shirbagi, 2010; Tucker, 2007; Williams, 2003). However, if the attitude at home is that the sole purpose of English is to perform a paying job (instrumental), then students are less likely to be motivated to immerse themselves in all aspects of the L2 experience (Barwell, 2003; Jordan, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Often parents will encourage their children to continue speaking their L1 at home while encouraging them to focus on their L2 acquisition at school for the sake of a good education (Fernsten, 2008). L1 maintenance is important not only for cultural reasons, but also because multilingualism is a benefit in and of itself (Kouritzin, 2000). Sridhar (1994) as well as Menard-Warwick (2007) point out that SLA should occur in addition
to, not as a replacement of, the mother tongue. Additionally, the view that the mother tongue is less valuable and needs to be replaced by English is groundless. The idea that a student’s L1 carries with it a subtractive connotation makes English ‘superior’ is a hegemonic attitude which can cause a sense of inferiority and insecurity in the student and can, in turn, negatively impact student motivation to take any risks when learning a new language (Butler, 2003; Jung, & McCroskey, 2004; Williams, & Butler, 2003).

Wong-Fillmore (2000) suggests that even Early Years (K-4) students become quickly aware of the currency placed on speaking English. Some will replace their L1 with English in order to fit in as equals with their monolingual English-speaking counterparts: “The learning of English is a subtractive process, with English quickly displacing the primary language in young, first generation immigrants” (203).

ESL students also have to navigate through their new educational landscape while dealing with the reaction they receive from their Canadian-born contemporaries and teachers who often perceive ESL students as exceptional (Donnelly et al., 2009; Lvovich, 2003; Macpherson, 2005). Sridhar (1994) believes that there is a sort of prejudice and marginalizing attitude towards L2 learners despite their possible competency in two or more languages. This type of social stressor can, “present an obstacle to optimal educational achievement and rapid integration into the student mainstream population” (Clemente et al., 2000). Canagarajah (2006) concurs when he points to further examples regarding the negative message that students received from teachers who urged them to choose English over their L1, arousing feelings of being undesirable or ‘other’ by the target populations (Miller, 2004; Weiner, 1985). On the other hand Grayson (2008) claims that ESL students’ performance is unaffected by non-ESL students in the class.
There is also a feeling that the use of another language by students while they are learning English may muddy the linguistic waters and make acquisition of English more difficult (Larsen-Freeman, 1991). However, research has found that learning two languages simultaneous does not impact students’ ability to keep the languages separate (Merisuo-Storm, 2007). As well, Cummins (2001) states that L2 learners use their L1 as a means to make sense of their world and to transfer meaning from their L1 to their L2, which is an imperative in SLA since without an L1 it is impossible to transfer meaning to an L2 (Clemente, & Collison, 2000).

**Acculturation and L2 ideal self**

Acclimatization, personality and the shifting identity development of young L2 learners also affects SLA (Ajaya, 2011). English language acquisition in new Canadians is more than an academic exercise; it is fraught with psychological adjustments to new cultural mores (Cuero, 2009):

Immigrant youth often face cognitive and psychosocial challenges related to cultural adjustment and adaptation . . . experiencing difficulties in forming cross-ethnic friendships, over-reliance on support from peers with similar cultural backgrounds, alienation and isolation . . . their experiences are compounded by complex linguistic, acculturative, [and] psychological difficulties. (Van Ngo, 2009 p. 82)

The acculturation of ESL students arriving in Canadian middle schools (grades seven to nine) is based on more than just learning a new language. The process goes much deeper than that, and places pressure on students not only at school but also at
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home. Full acculturation can take anywhere from months to years depending on the
student’s motivation and language proficiency. The process new Canadian students go
through, includes: acculturation, adaptation and finally, integration (Van Ngo, 2009).
Other factors that impact the process of acculturation, as described by Daryl (1996)
include: pre-immigration socio-economic level, previous education and post-traumatic
stress (in the case of refugee students). Additionally, the “changing family structure”
(Daryl, 1996, p.76) upon arriving in Canada can affect student acculturation. Often
children seem to adapt, acculturate and learn English quicker than their parents. This L2
acquisition makes them the authoritative, capable individuals in the family, required to
translate for parents and speak on their behalf; on the other hand, “children often desire to
assimilate and are embarrassed about their parents ‘Old ways’”, [while] parents fear
children’s loss of L1 and cultural values” (Daryl, 1996, p. 76).

Upon entering school, school readiness is another factor which may affect some
students’ assimilation and academic success. ESL students arriving in Manitoba are
generally placed in a grade based on their age. This rule becomes a ‘best guess’ with
African students we have received over the last four years whose birthdays all seem to
fall on either December 31 or January 1, and documentation of their actual birth date is
often lacking. Additionally, in many countries, the Philippines included, the academic
process does not align with the Canadian one, thus creating gaps in new students’
knowledge which is compounded by the fact that they are more than likely not fluent in
English: “ESL children [have] lower levels of school readiness than non-ESL children on
all domains, especially the communication skills and general knowledge domain”
(Puchala, Vu, & Muhajarine, 2010, p. 517). However one thing is certain, acculturation
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manifests itself when ESL students are thriving, developing social connections within and outside of their L1 peers, and are demonstrating academic growth and success (Daryl, 1996).

Additionally, ESL students have to contend with parental pressure regarding learning English, as well as how they are perceived by others, and becoming acculturated to a new educational paradigm (Berry, 2009; Buttaro, 2004; Schmitt, 2008). Some ESL students choose to use English in favor of their L1, believing that this will accelerate their integration into Canadian society (Weisman, 2001). There is always a concern when an ESL student with insufficient L1, tries to learn an L2 and becomes ‘stuck’ in an ESL limbo. Such students are caught between two languages, insufficiently proficient in either, one which they are learning, and one which they are losing (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Additionally, students who feel marginalized, “reject a bicultural identity” (Zatate et al., 2005, 111; Garnett, et al., 2008) which could negatively impact how they perform academically. Making the choice to reject ones L2 environment on social grounds when one is not proficient in an L1 is doubly tragic for such students. The loss of the L1 is often unfortunate collateral damage in the process of second language acquisition (Benson, 1991; Thorne, 2005). Similarly, bicultural friendship dyads among immigrant and English native speakers can lead to code-switching and the creation of a hybrid culture, and even a hybrid language within a social cluster (Fuller, 2007; Xu et al., 2007). Callahan et al (2008) discovered that larger ESL communities fostered more successful SLA than did schools where there were only a few L2 learners. Much longitudinal research suggests that first generation immigrant students do not attain the academic success that they strive for due to lack of L2 proficiency (McCarron et al., 2006).
Intrapersonal motivating factors

A student’s personality and how a student feels about him or herself as a learner can impact their motivation to learn English: “Willingness to communicate plays an important role in second language acquisition. Both an individual’s personality and the situation can influence willingness to communicate. Personality has a major impact on willingness to communicate” (Yu et al., 2011, p. 257); Harkins (2001) points out that children’s personalities, whether their introverted or extroverted cannot be changed. However teachers can help students recognize their particular strengths and to help students employ them to their benefit (Gardner, H., 1983). Motivation in ESL learners can come from a variety of sources. Self-directed motivation can come from a student’s need for self-improvement to gain a sense of completeness, or for the purpose of integration into a target population (Conger et al., 2011; Heine et al., 2001; Noels et al., 1990; Stetenko & Arievitch, 2004). Alternatively, students with a naturally inquisitive nature may merely require the presentation of language learning as a puzzle, or a game for them to invest in their own learning as they acquire their L2 (Noels et al., 1999).

Willingness to identify with a culture, the student’s language learning aptitude, tapping into students’ natural curiosity, and the classroom environment, both physical and cultural, are all factors that can impact students’ motivation to learn English. Working with this idea, MacIntyre et al (2002) theorized that one’s willingness to communicate (WTC) is a personality trait. In one’s first language this trait is stable, but when it comes to SLA, WTC can be affected by SLA proficiency and communicative competency (Dörnyei, 2003). Their theory is situated within a complex set of psychological and linguistic variables which impact how an L2 student will learn the
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language. These factors include: confidence, desire for interpersonal communication, parameters of social situation, experience, and last of all (Dörnyei, 2003).

Where personality is concerned, extroversion and resilience seem to positively affect language acquisition, while sensitivity to rejection and anxiety inhibit language acquisition. Krashen’s (1981) describes the affective filter as a variation in the level of student comfort:

Learners who are comfortable have a positive attitude toward language learning have their filters set low, allowing unfettered access to comprehensible input. In contrast, a stressful environment, one in which learners are forced to produce before they feel ready, raises the affective filter, blocking the learners’ processing of input. The affective filter, according to Krashen, can help explain the variable outcome of SLA across L2 learners, including differences in the learners’ ages and in classroom conditions. (Van Patten & Williams, 2007, p. 28)

A further aspect of intrapersonal motivation can be found in examining the process of an ESL student becoming a Canadian student, and the resultant development of their Canadian self.

Markus and Nurius (1986) describe how motivation and one’s L2 identity are connected: “[O]ur possible selves are important . . . because they function as incentives for future behavior” (p. 954). Delving further into this correlations, achieving one’s Canadian self is a tension between mental and emotional aspects of the student as he or she relates “goals and outcomes to emotions between the actual self and the ideal self, and anxiety to a discrepancy between the actual self and the ought self (an image of self held by another)” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 958).
Often immigrant students learning an L2 are in the process of developing an L2 identity for themselves; their Canadian L2 identity includes fluency and complete acculturation (Csizer & Kormos, 2008; Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). This process occurs through an internal mediation as the L1 student acquires English, and integrates into the target culture, he or she takes on his or her identity as a New Canadian. The student decides which aspects of his or her old life and self to keep, and which aspects of the new culture to incorporate.

Deci and Ryan’s (2002) self-determination theory ties into the psychological aspect of a student’s personality, and states that motivation for the L2 can be tied to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: “Self-determination theory, which incorporates CET (Cognitive Evaluation Theory) is more comprehensive, particularly with respect to extrinsic motivation, [and] provides a fuller and more useful approach to understanding the motivational bases for effective organizational behavior” (Gagne, & Deci, 2005, p. 356). This theory looks not only at the student, but also places each student within the learning environment where the environment and the teacher directly impact student learning (Dörnyei, 2003). I have found that it is important to embrace each student as an individual. In so doing, I can also encourage him or her to share their culture, their language, and their roots. Encouraging students to hold onto their roots helps them to validate their cultural roots, mediate their new identity which includes who they were, with the Canadian they are becoming.

**Interpersonal motivating factors**

Gardner, R. (2007) observed different ethno linguistic communities in multicultural settings (Kim, 2011; Miller & Hidehiro, 2004). His goal was to define the
factors which enhanced and hindered intercultural communications. What he saw was that in many cases the motivating factor for using and developing an L2 was that the L2 was a tool for multicultural exchanges; a motivated student’s personality usually possessed cognitive, affective and behavioral components, which translated into a willingness to take risks to communicate (Alessandria & Nelson, 2005; MacIntyre et al, 2002). If they are persistent, self-confident, and positive (Guay et al., 2000; Vitterso, 2003) in their efforts to acquire their L2, they are usually successful. Although the process of SLA has markers and sign posts indicating stages of language acquisition, “students carry individual personality factors that make their involvement with the process uniquely their own” (Ernst-Slavit et al, 2001, p. 172). All ESL student relationships strongly impact the student’s motivation for SLA. Many theorists would argue that learning is, for the most part, about interactions and relationships. The interaction occurs between students and other students, students and the teacher, and students and the educational artifacts they encounter (Dörnyei, 2003). These factors alone are not significant until the student chooses how they will be employed to benefit his or her learning. Working in concert, the teacher and students construct the educational context. This is only successful when all parties work in good faith in an effort to help each other understand what is being taught and what is being learned (Gardner, 2007).

**Educational factors**

Aside from the cultural and personal context of ESL learners, the educational context also impacts students’ motivation. The classroom environment, teacher’s methodology, and choice of materials used, all work together to motivate or de-motivate the students. The ideal ESL classroom would have a multilingual ESL teacher at the
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helm. However as this is often not possible, it behooves ESL teachers to become as
culturally sensitive and aware as possible for the sake of their students (Dodd, 2001). As
Van Patten and Williams (2007) note, the most if not the only factor important is the
learning environment of ESL students: “[The] environment consists of developing
responses to environmental stimuli. If these responses receive positive reinforcement,
they will become habits. If the responses receive punishment (in this case error
correction), they will be abandoned” (p. 19). Beyond the academics and cultural
sensitivity, and ESL teacher must be caring and nurturing. Feeling valued and supported
helps students to be more confident feel more capable of achieving success. Borba (2009)
stated that beyond respecting a student’s culture and first language, teachers need to care
about their students and their students’ families, by being available, open and supportive:
“Educators must take the first step towards entering the world of the immigrant family in
a caring and respectful manner” (p. 685).

In the classroom, factors which impact a student’s academic success include:
“students’ previous educational background, linguistic competence in L1, initial ESL
experience, integration profile, [and] use of L1 strategies” (Appel & Gilabert, 2002;
Early, 1989). A student is motivated to learn within a classroom setting where context
rich subjects such as math, science and social studies transcend continents as well as
languages, providing the students with layers of context and accessible meaning.
Classroom motivated students draw parallels and make connections to their L1 when
learning these subjects in an L2 setting (Cho & Reich, 2008; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).
This is not to say that a classroom motivated individual is language motivated as well;
these two may be mutually exclusive and therefore may pose confusion for the classroom
teacher (Gardner, R., 2007). Language is the vehicle in the ESL classroom by which content area learning occurs (Mgqwashu, 2005). The ESL teacher must work to ensure that the learning context provided to her ESL learners is positive in order to maximize integrative motivation (Nikolov, 1999). Unobtrusive techniques such as “revoicing” can be used by a skilled ESL teacher to help move her students from one stage of language development as they work together to develop and strengthen the student’s L2 speaking skills (O’Connor & Michals, 1993).

ESL students come to the classroom with different multiple intelligences and preferential learning styles that affect how they learn and show learning (Gardner, H., 1983). According to Cohen (2003), ESL students have insight into “their own language learning preferences and . . . [are] . . . aware of the specific kinds of challenges which both classroom and out-of-classroom tasks pose to them as language learners” (p. 289). Strategy use is also significant for ESL learners because its’ use and achievement is, “complex, multifactorial, and often nonlinear” (Yamamori et al, 2003, p. 407). Teachers’ sensitivity to students’ previous learning should guide lesson planning as well as assessment, while being mindful of the fact that L2 learners, “should be allowed to find what works for them rather than have strategies pushed upon them” (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, p. 297). Teachers also should be open to the fact that, “to a large extent, the response that a [student] has to a learning activity reflects his or her cultural background, [and] talents that have been nurtured” (Ginsberg, 2005, p. 223). Despite students’ initial inability to express themselves clearly and to fully demonstrate their understanding, “teachers are justified in holding high expectations for their students” (Marinov-Todd et
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al, 2000, p. 30); to that end the ESL teacher must be clear about her expectations and maintain high standards (Baker, 2008).

Another factor which aids in promoting motivation in the classroom for L2 learning is a refocusing of teachers away from feeling as though ESL students need to be ‘fixed’ (Lo & Hyland, 2007; Winer, 2007), and onto what students have accomplished. It has been shown that intrinsic motivation grows out of a sense of achievement and competence, or a mindset of success: “CET (Cognitive evaluation theory)…suggests that feelings of competence as well as feelings of autonomy are important for intrinsic motivation…and that positive feedback facilitates intrinsic motivation by promoting a sense of competence” (Gagne & Deci, 2005, p. 332). The ultimate goal of the ESL teacher is for her students to become independent learners with a tool kit of strategies which will allow them to tackle future academic challenges. For learners with additional language learning challenges, the ESL teacher needs to promote autonomy by adapting, differentiating, or individualizing work to ensure success (Dörnyei, 1994). Similarly, Vygotsky (1978), hypothesized in his Sociocultural Theory that, “… human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts (287)”. Taking a similar position, Grayson (2008) posits that comprehension and manageability of tasks greatly impact student learning: “The SOC (Sense of Coherence) theory suggests that students’ understanding of what they are learning also affects academic achievement; students who perceive their problems as comprehensible and manageable are more likely than others to achieve academically” (Grayson, 2008, p. 489). Since students’ motivation is linked to a feeling of success and competence, ESL teachers should work towards facilitating these experiences for their
students (Pae, 2008). Like Brown (1991) before them, Deci and Ryan (2002) also believe that this can be easily accomplished by encouraging students to feel invested in their learning and to provide them with reachable goals that will empower them (Guilloteaux, & Dörnyei, 2008; Holme, & Moulton, 1997; Roman-Perez, 2010). It therefore follows that if students feel empowered and are able to feel success, they will develop a strong sense of intrinsic motivation (Gardner, R., et al, 2004). Bridging L2 learning with L1 previous knowledge and experiences validates ESL students’ L1 currency and cultural value thus enabling them to succeed in an inclusive and accepting environment (Oxford, 2003). Vygotsky (1978), and later Brown (1991), discuss how the difficulty level of tasks presented to students needs to be monitored and adjusted as each student grows in language and skill acquisition to ensure learning is constantly occurring and students do not get bored or lose motivation. Stemming from Vygotsky’s (1978) research, the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) states that the pace at which the teacher challenges each student and how the student is scaffolded throughout that process will invariably impact how successful that student feels and progresses in his or her SLA. This is illustrated in the research of Van Patten and Williams (2007): “The relationship between learning and development is not directly causal, but intentionally designed learning environments (e.g., instructed L2 settings) stimulate qualitative developmental processes” (p. 211).

According to Gardner, H., (2010), another way to motivate ESL students’ to learn English is by activating the learner’s curiosity by ensuring that teachers harness the students’ inquisitiveness. This strategy draws learners in and helps them develop intrinsic motivation to learn. At the commencement of the 44th annual TESOL Convention in
Boston, Gardner, H., (2010) spoke about how the disciplined and creative minds must work together in order for students to be able to, “Think outside the box”:

People cannot be creative unless they have mastered at least one discipline, art or craft. And cognitive science teaches us that on average, it takes about ten years to master a craft. So, Mozart was writing great music when he was fifteen and sixteen, but that is because he started when he was four or five.

Group work is another way an ESL teacher can increase motivation in her classroom and help promote cross-cultural awareness. Collaborative work allows students to develop socially as well as academically while providing stimulation through peer assessment, goal setting, and collaborative mediation of a challenge in a constructivist environment (Halleck et al, 2002, Harklua, 2000; Irving, 1984; Kite & Crossman, 2007; Olivio, 2003; Oxford, 1997; Wu, 2003). Group work in the ESL classroom should be culturally sensitive and not be imposed as cultural and personality dynamics could potentially cause more harm than good (Storch, 2002). Social interaction in a multicultural and multi-linguistic classroom allows students to become aware of the richness of their own heritage as well as share in the stories and experiences of their contemporaries. This normalization of ESL-ness aids in motivating students by validating their L1 (Kouritzin et al, 2009; McCarthy et al., 2005). Additionally, verbal intelligence is one learning style which does not get as much focus as other learning styles do (Gardner, H., 1983). However, in an ESL classroom it is doubly important, firstly because it allows verbal learners to exercise their learning style of choice, and secondly because it encourages ESL students to employ their L2 (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Paper, 1990). Aside from group work, teachers should employ multimedia and all manner
of technology in their ESL classroom to give students a multi-faceted learning environment as a way to mediate their SLA (Yunus et al, 2010).

**Theoretical framework**

This project was predicated on the belief that there are many factors which impact ESL student learning. These factors include previous schooling experiences, both positive and negative, as well as the impact of familial integrativeness versus instrumentalism (Gardner, 2007). Vygotsky (1978) defines discourse regarding language learning as interactions between students and other individuals for the purpose of communication, including factors such as peer interaction and the classroom environment. Finally, the ESL student is influenced by his/her interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, while acculturating to a new country, school, and language as he/she forges a new Canadian identity for himself/herself (Markus, H & Nurius, P. (1982). It is my contention that insufficient positive influences, or experiences related to education experience of the student, negatively impacts the ESL student’s motivation for SLA and consequently impedes his/ her ability to develop his/her Canadian identity or version of himself/herself.

Similarly, Deci and Ryan’s (2002) *self-determination theory* postulates that motivation and a student’s self image within a classroom are tied together. Additionally, as stated in Krashen’s (1981) *affective filter* theory, the student’s willingness to communicate (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan, 2002), would undoubtedly impact his/her motivation for SLA.

The phenomenon of motivation in ESL students for SLA is a complicated and multifaceted process that all of the ESL students experience to some extent throughout their acculturation process. Figure 2.1 depicts the SLA process.
Interpretive constructionist research

I chose to use interpretive constructionist as the methodology in this study. Rubin and Rubin (1995) define this method as: “[Working] to find shared meaning within some particular group, recognizing that though each person interprets the events he or she encounters in a somewhat distinct manner, he or she is likely, at the same time, to bring to bear the understanding held by peers, family, [or] friends” (p. 29). When using interviews, “data tends to be qualitative, [where the researcher aims] to understand what is happening in social situations” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p. 46). Stringer (2008) states that interpretive research allows the inquirer to, “reveal the meanings people attach to events [that] they experience, and the way they connect to their life-world” (p. 23). I interpreted the discourse that the students shared with me, but I also injected my thoughts, hunches and experiences into the process (through the use of a journal and interview observation notes). In effect the students and I constructed the data.
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as it related to what motivated the ESL students for SLA, from various perspectives; by undertaking this method of gathering data, I was able to focus on: ”achieving credibility through careful choice of interviewees, research sites, thoroughness of questioning, and accuracy and transparency in reporting” (Rubin, & Rubin, 1995, p. 16). Additionally, I was mindful of maintaining theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to ensure that the data I gathered was the data that would support my theoretical framework and would. I also focused on safeguarding each interviewee’s story and their anonymity while distilling from their words the authentic data which allowed me to formulate my conclusions. Arnette (2007) expresses the broader purpose of interpretive inquiry by stating:

Qualitative research is responsive, engaged in constant public disclosure, and obligated to offer a public context for any evidence claimed…that continues to advance both the natural and the human sciences . . . permitting the public to accept or reject the findings and or what they were based upon. (p. 31)

In the second chapter I surveyed the literature in the field of ESL student motivation. The factors that are significant influences on student motivation for SLA include: familial motivating factors, acculturation and L2 ideal self, intrapersonal motivating factors, interpersonal motivating factors, and educational factors. I developed a theoretical framework which set up the parameters for the research. The research methodology I chose to use was the constructionist interpretive methodology.
Chapter III: Methodology

In chapter three I discuss the methodology of interpretive constructionist research, the researcher’s role, the research paradigm, participant selection, data sources and data collection, interviewing, data analysis, trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and ethical considerations.

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions in order to ascertain which factors influence students’ motivation to learn English:

1. How do ESL students describe the process of learning English as a second language?
2. Which factors do ESL students feel enhance motivation for SLA?
3. Which factors do ESL students feel impede motivation for SLA?

Researcher’s role

The research process is predicated on questions. As the researcher, I situated my topic of interest based on the literature in the field, and then developed my research tools, or interview questions.

One of my goals in undertaking this study and interviewing eight ESL students was to gather data (between April 2012 and August 2012) was to better understand the contributing factors of the phenomenon of motivation for SLA in middle school (grade seven to nine) ESL students. By interviewing each student individually, I was consciously aware that, “interviewees and interviewers work to construct themselves as certain types of people in relation to the topic of the interview and reflexively the
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interview itself” (Rapley, 2001, p. 303); Creswell (2007) states that the role of the interviewer must be established with this in mind. My role in the interviews was neither as, “a participant nor a nonparticipant, but rather a middle-ground [between the two]” (p. 139). I positioned myself as an inquirer, who shared in the ESL experience with the interviewees, and therefore I was in a unique position to understand their journey.

Using the interpretive constructivist methodology as well as the responsive interview model I was able to straddle the role of the researcher as well as a participant in the study: “A responsive interview model assumes that there is a mutual and personal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 34). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), aside from the mutual relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, other characteristics of the responsive interview model are: the interviewee is given the forum to express his or her interpretation of an experience or situation, the interviewer’s style and personality is evident in the give and take of the interview. However, the interviewer does not impose his or her views on the interviewee and the interview process is understood to be flexible and adaptive depending on the interviewees’ responses (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The process of respecting the interviewees’ thoughts, feelings and experiences goes back my focus on maintaining theoretical sensitivity throughout the data gathering process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data gathering

Participant selection. In order to recruit participants, I employed criterion sampling (middle school students who attended an ESL program) of participants. In so doing, I was able to “select individuals …because they [could] purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell,
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2007, p. 125). Additionally, the participants who volunteered were ones who felt comfortable about sharing their feeling and thoughts and who were comfortable speaking at length about their motivation for SLA: “for one-on-one interviewing, the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share idea…less articulate, shy interviewees may present the researcher with a challenge and less adequate data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133).

I visited the ESL class and shared my study idea with a group of ESL students in grades seven through nine. They received a package including an information letter, an assent form and a consent form as well as a stamped and addressed envelope. I chose the eight students who mailed back the assent and consent form to me signaling that they would be interested in being interviewed. I expected to receive assent and consent forms from the students who had been excited about sharing their thoughts and experiences about learning English during my presentation. However, some of the first students to send their forms back were some of the quieter students in the group.

The sample size I chose to use was eight. I was not as concerned about the number of students as I was more interested about mining the necessary depth of information. Sample size was not as important for me as what I was able to glean from what was said and how it related to the data I had gathered (Boles & Bombard, 1998). McCloskey (2008) supports this theory: “Researchers recognize that important patterns can emerge in small samples, and large samples can create an unmanageable amount of data without adding to the analytic outcome” (p. 30). Prior to interviewing children it was valuable to establish a rapport with the participants in order to, “provide a safe environment for them to explore their experience” (Stringer, 2008, p. 64); similarly,
Rubin and Rubin (1995) stress, “the importance developing and maintaining a partnership with the interviewee” (p. xi).

**Interviewing children**

Interviewing children unlike interviewing adults has its’ pitfalls because while the researcher wishes to ask open ended questions, responses may not yield depth and richness of data: “[children] tend to respond or react to events in immediate rather than abstract terms” (Stringer, 2008, p. 64). Interviewing middle school aged children (grades seven to nine) may hold further challenges as there are internal mitigating factors that affect how children at this stage of development view themselves and their role in society: “Children between 11 and 14 years of age and undergoing the developmental transition from child to adolescent... [and] are challenged to become competent at handling increasingly complex social situations and incorporate the physical changes of puberty into their self-concept” (Horner, 2000, p. 510).

Additionally, because pre-adolescent and adolescent children are growing and developing their identities, they tend to hold the values and opinion of their mentors, rather than internally subscribing to them their own, as adults do: “the words of language are always half someone else’s: when individuals use words, they formulate themselves and their thoughts from the point of [view of] others, and from the point of view of their community” (Talja, 1999, p. 471). Consequently, the views the students may profess to hold about their motivation for SLA may in fact be those of their guardians or friends. Research has shown that how questions are framed when interviewing children is the key to a successful interview: “Interviewing children concerns the structure of the interview. Information obtained from free recall, or an unstructured interview schedule, is more
likely to capture the unique perspective of the child” (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999, p. 181).

**Developing a general interview guide**

From the research there does not seem to be a consensus on which factors are the most contributory to student motivation to learn. I was aware that, “the most crucial development aspect of the research process (whether qualitative or quantitative) is the research question” (Burck, 2005, p. 240); having said that, I used questions that would allow me to gain a better picture of the factors influencing SLA. Factors that are the most prevalent in the literature include: previous learning experiences, familial influence, peer influence and the students’ personality and self image. I believe that my interview questions yielded further information regarding factors affecting ESL student motivation for SLA.

During the first round of interviews, I met with each of the eight students one-on-one for approximately one hour. During the interview I asked each participant the same planned, questions as well as probing questions, and follow up questions depending on the students’ responses, as discussed in Rubin and Rubin (1995).

The initial interviews were planned in conjunction with the students and their parents and we met at a location conducive and convenient to the parents and children. The parents and participants were given guidelines for the location: it had to be conducive to the digital voice recording of the interview (minimum background noise), and with some measure of privacy in order for the researcher to maintain the interviewees confidentiality. The respondents were given the option to refuse the use of the digital recorder in order to ensure that they were comfortable in the interview environment. They
were also given the option to stop the interview at any time. I engaged in a short five to ten debriefing session upon the completion of each of the 16 interviews in order to ensure the accuracy of the data.

I used a variety of questions to elicit the data I was looking for. The different kinds of questions used include: introductory or opening questions to put the students at ease, probing questions which would guide students to speak more deeply about their experiences, follow up questions to ensure all data was as complete as possible, and debriefing questions to ensure students had a chance to clarify and issues they might have experiences along the way (see Appendix A).

I started each interview, as suggested by Stringer (2008) by putting my participants at ease by: identifying myself and my role in the conversation, identifying the topic to be discussed, and asking the interviewee for permission to discuss said topic with him or her: “Help the interviewee as well as the researcher surface detail-rich descriptions as well as their significance and meaning in a way that is less likely to be dictated by cultural scripts and established identities” (Schultze & Avital, 2011, p. 5).

I asked each participant the same general questions, what Rubin and Rubin (1995) call “survey” (p. 1) questions, in order to gather responses about the same aspects of their motivation for learning English experience while they attended the ESL program and as during their time as students transitioned into their regular classes.

Major topics for interview questions:

1. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today and discussing some questions I have about how students who come from other countries, feel about learning English; I am trying to understand students’ desire to learn and what pushes
some students to learn and not others. Please feel free to stop me at any time
or to let me know if you need clarification on anything I ask you. This will
take approximately an hour, is that ok with you? Is it alright if I ask you some
questions about your experiences with learning English at this school and in
the ESL class? Is it alright if I record our conversation? Is it ok if I take notes
while we talk? We can stop the interview at any time. Just tell me that we
have talked enough for now and that you want to stop.

Question one was a series of opening and introductory questions to establish rapport
and the purpose of the interview. I gave the students the opportunity to feel free to ask
questions throughout the process as well as giving the parameters of the interview and
I asked permission for asking him/her questions and recording the interview.

2 How long have you lived in Canada? Please tell me about the languages you
   speak other than English.

3 Please tell me about your experience learning English.

4 Can you please tell me a little bit about how school in Canada is different
   from school in your home country? I’m interested in hearing about the
differences regarding your peers, how the classroom was run and how your
teacher taught.

5 Can you please tell me how you feel about learning English? Was it hard or
easy learning English when you first came to Canada? What do you think
affected how you learned English? Why have you been successful in learning
English? What kept you working hard to learn English?
Questions two to five were more specific questions, and were meant to elicit information regarding the student’s previous learning, and how they viewed their previous experience in comparison to their current one. The length of time that a student had lived in Canada impacted how much time they had had to acclimatize to the new culture and structure of the school. Some students require an extended period of time, to adjust to the difference when they first enter the ESL program; I found that there was a correlation between students’ previous learning experiences and their current successes and challenges as they learned English. These questions were open ended enough so that student responses lead to clarifying or further probing questions.

6  Can you please tell me about the friends you have made at this school? What languages do your friends speak? How do you think you have changed as a person since you’ve lived in Canada?

7  How do your friends feel about school? Do your friends affect how you feel about learning English? If so, how?

Questions six and seven required the students to share more personal data and to reach back into their memory banks for the answers. The questions were meant to prompt students to discuss their relationships with their peers and whether their peer group had any impact on their own learning. I assumed that motivated peers would excel at learning English, whereas peers who were not invested in their own learning would not feel that they were as successful at SLA. These questions were more specific and were meant to yield data that I was able to analyze across all participants to compare their perceptions regarding SLA.
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8 Can you please tell me what your parents’ experiences of learning English are? What are they doing to learn English?

Question eight was also a more specific question and was more personal in nature than the previous two questions. It was aimed at discovering how the student had been influenced by attitudes regarding education in the home. *Instrumental* parents may send a message to their children that becoming fully immersed in the culture and language of their new country was not a necessity. This, in turn, would be manifested in the student’s low motivation to learn English. However, if the student’s parents had an *integrative* view of learning English, then the student’s attitude would reflect this through their high motivation to learn English (Jordan, 2004). These questions were open and were meant for the students to share historical and familial perception of language learning. I anticipated that I would have to use further probing questions based on student responses in order to delve deeper into familial perception of SLA.

9 How do you feel about school now that your English has improved since you arrived? What is your favourite subject? What are your favourite things about Canada? Is there anything you miss about school in your native country? Are there things you don’t miss about your native country?

The purpose of question nine was to ascertain how the participant felt about his or her new educational environment and whether they felt comfortable and integrated into the culture and fabric of their new school. This question could have made the participant feel vulnerable if I had not developed sufficient rapport, but it was open enough so that the participant was free to speak his or her mind. Often more motivated students become more involved on all manner of activities offered by the school and surrounding
community, and show a more invested attitude, including motivation towards studying. I expected the responses to this question to vary as the students I was interviewing came from a variety of academics experiences, and cultural backgrounds.

10 Are there any questions you would like to ask me about anything we’ve been talking about today?

The purpose of question ten was to debrief the students and to answer any questions they or their parents had for me. At this point if other questions arose from me or the students based on the responses to the previous questions and answers, they were addressed. I also thanked them for their time, as well as asked for permission to contact them again if I require further data or clarification after I started analyzing the data.

The second set of interviews included two clarifying questions (Appendix E), which arose from the previous interviews as well, I used this time at which I used for member checking.

1  Do you feel Canadian?
The first question in the second interview was meant to further clarify for me how much assimilation and acculturation the students felt that they have achieved, and how much they had acculturated by how “Canadian” they felt. I assumed that the more they associated with being Canadian the more acclimatized they were.

2  Would you say that you have an outgoing or shy personality?
The second questions required that the participants be more introspective and to qualify themselves as having a personality that was either introverted or extroverted. The purpose of this question was to see if an outgoing personality made intrinsic motivation for SLA,
or would translate into a lower affective filter (Krashen, 1981). The interviews were semi-structured and audio taped and then transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

**Sources of data**

I three sources of data as suggested by Creswell (2007) including: the interview data, an interview guide (Appendix A), field notes taken during each interview (Appendix B), noting observations regarding the interviewees, reactions to the questions, the participants’ comfort level, the setting, and my feelings about each interview, including anything surprising as well as outlying. Additionally, I made notes throughout the research process in a research journal noting: my thoughts, hunches, surprises and things I learned along the way (see Appendix C). It was essential for me to have more than one source of data because the relying on just the audio recording of the interview only captured the participants’ voice:

Tape-recording does not capture the tacit, non-verbal elements of an interview, which are crucial aspects of the experience for the researcher. We may not know exactly how we assess people, as human cognition remains something of a mystery, but we do know that. (Walsham, 2006, p. 323)

I ensured that I was actively listening to my participants during each interview, and that I observed their non-verbal language, that I recorded in my field notes (see Appendix B), for example: “… questions that they [might feel] they cannot or should not answer [may become evident in] nonverbal responses that might indicate a lack of understanding of a question” (Goldstein, 1995, p. 351). I was also conscience of the choice of words the participants used to express their thoughts and feelings. As a teacher of ESL students, I felt gratified that they were able to fully express themselves in English,
their second or third language, as, “language competence should be measured…as the ability to translate, transpose and critically reflect on social, cultural and historical meanings conveyed by the grammar and lexicon” (Pennycook, 2008, pp. 33-34). When I transcribed the interviews I quoted the interviewees verbatim, and even though their grammar and tenses were not perfect, they were able to make themselves understood.

I believe that interviewing these students not only allowed me to understand the various mitigating factors which affect their motivation to acquire their L2, but also because also it allowed me the opportunity to gain, “. . . knowledge about how ‘ordinary’ pupils learn … [giving me] valuable information for [how all] other pupils [learn]” (Dahl, 2004, p. 130).

**Analysis**

The first order of business was to transcribe the interviews verbatim. Secondly, the data was organized in a meaningful way so that it could be analyzed (Appendix D & Fig. 2): “Interviews are systematically examined - analyzed to suggest further questions and topics to pursue…[and] the researcher may go back to conduct more interviews… if gaps are seen” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 15). The transcribed data was coded for significant statements, and then clustered, allowing for common themes to be mapped across each participant, and then all of the participants’ data. Figure 3.2 depicts the process I undertook during the data analysis process.
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Figure 3.2 Interpretive constructionist breakdown of data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s personal context</th>
<th>(8) Individual student context / description</th>
<th>(8) Within each individual student’s data theme</th>
<th>Assertions &amp; generalizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Synthesis</td>
<td>Field Notes Summar</td>
<td>Across all student’s theme analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. This model depicts the path I took while analyzing the three sources of data including: the research journal, the field notes, and the interviews.

Based on Creswell (2007) model (p. 172)

**Coding.** Researchers, “use a recursive, iterative process in developing the codes and increasing [their] understanding of the phenomenon” (Weston et al., 2001, p. 386). As suggested by Creswell (2007), transcribed data was reduced, “into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in…discussion” (148). Coding occurred repeatedly in order to ensure that all data has been sufficiently coded and analyzed:

A return to the immediate data as given to us in consciousness…accounts of that irreducible sphere of primal impressional consciousness that somehow constitutes
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…an access to the elusive nature of the moment of the now that is always somehow at the very center of all phenomenological reflection. (Van Manen, 2006, pp. 715-716)

The process of analysis required the researcher to follow the steps of describing the data, interpreting the data, and finally explaining the data (Verschueren, 2001). Coding was a significant part of the analysis of discourse data; it needed to be done thoroughly and exhaustively:

Coding is not what happens before analysis, but comes to constitute an important part of the analysis. There is a reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon. (Weston et al, 2001, p. 397)

Through coding new and previously overlooked and unexpected connections and perspectives can emerge. Additionally, yielded clusters of outlying data that was reanalyzed and recoded:

The goal of coding is to pave the way for data analysis. The variables that emerge in this stage are a combination of anticipated and unanticipated discourses and discursive processes . . . the next step is to return to the data, dissect it, and identify any unanticipated discourses or processes. (McCloskey, 2008, p. 33)

In addition to the students’ data I reflected on my own notes: what I had learned, anything that surprised me along the way, and what conclusions I had reached:

Including the incorporation of ideas from social constructionism . . . constructivism, and an emphasis on the use of self-reflexivity . . . the various
assumptions and beliefs researchers bring to their research work with regard to
questions of ontology . . . and epistemology. (Burck, 2005, p. 241)

**Themes.** The resultant themes were written into a description of the phenomenon of ESL students’ motivation for SLA. Field notes and journal notes were summarized, and in addition to the interview data, yielded a rich description of the phenomena including my perspective of the process, a reflection on the students’ experiences during the interviews, as well as the interviewees’ experiences as ESL students describing their motivating factors for SLA:

Thick description presents human behavior in a way that takes not only the physical and social context into account, but also the actors’ intentionality [as to make] the meaning and significance of behaviors and events are made accessible to the reader. (Schultze & Avital, 2011, p. 3)

Through the use of interpretive constructionist methodology, I gained a depth of data from a variety of perspectives all converging on the question: what motivates middle school ESL students to learn English?

Interpretive constructionist methodology was the most conductive method for me to use in an effort to discover the factors which influence ESL students’ motivation to learn English. Therefore, transcribed and analyzed data from these interviews revealed a picture of what motivates similar ESL students for SLA. Analysis included critical discourse analysis (see appendix D).

**Critical discourse analysis (CDA).** Maintaining standards during research ensures validity, and reliability of findings. The interview data yielded layers of meaning and a variety of contexts which needed to be considered:
The big issue for any critical approach to language use is the fact that in this world of communication almost nothing is ever exactly what it looks like . . . communication is basically about ‘meaning’ and meaning is an intangible phenomenon. (Verschueren, 2001, p. 61).

Without strenuous guidelines it would be difficult to ascertain the quality in qualitative research as the methodology could be viewed as somewhat ‘fuzzy’, with researchers sharing their thoughts, observations and documenting participant interview statements as the bulk of their data analysis:

Critique derives from investigating and problematizing the connection between language and social structure…to support this premise by means of insights from other social-theoretical fields of inquiry, seeking a more sustainable social, cultural, and/or historical foundation for linguistic analysis. (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 456)

When interviews are the main source of data gathering, and the interviewers such as me must be aware of a myriad of factors when analyzing interview data. Uldam (2011) concurs with Fairclough’s (1993) definition of critical discourse analysis which states that:

Analysis…aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped. (p. 135)

**Delimitations and limitations.** Being the sole researcher conducting this study, I had to consider my perspective and bias and how it played into the data: “We are all
biased by our own background, knowledge and prejudices to see things in certain ways and not others…the people in the field situation do not perceive the researcher as being aligned with a particular individual or group” (Walsham, 2006, p. 321). By taking notes and audio taping my participants, and by being present in the interview process and being the inquirer, I was impacting not only the participants’ but also my own perception of the participants: “The importance of scrutinizing one’s assumptions and values as researcher and of examining their impact throughout the research process has been addressed by a number of qualitative researchers” (Burck, 2005, p. 242). The nature of interpretive research is that it is subjective to a point and invoked my perspective and bias as to the research question and the participants: “Emphasis upon the question [which] takes us from raw subjectivism to public engagement of the text…the resultant insights that emerge from the question and text then have public admission of perspective” (Arnett, 2007, p. 32). I believe that by being consciously open-minded and actively listening to the interviewees stories so that I could accurately retell then, I was able to remain unbiased throughout the process.

There were some other limitations and challenges which needed consideration. One limitation was the fact that I did not conduct a pilot study prior to interviewing the participants. Additionally, all of the students who volunteered seemed to be very motivated; therefore, I was not able to interview any individual who felt unmotivated to learn English. As well, the process of acculturation, and the development of the L2 identity can take up to as long as a decade. The students I interviewed were at the beginning of this process and I was not able to document the entire process.
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Another issue which arose was that one of the interviews mysteriously did not record. This was very disappointing and frustrating as I thought I had data which was really interesting. The student did not want to redo the interview, so unfortunately I was not able to use any of the data I had gathered aside from the recording. I interviewed a different student instead who was interested in participating in order to have the required number of participants interviewed. One way to avoid this kind of occurrence might have been to have more than one recording device working at each interview, but it seemed that the students got somewhat apprehensive about being recorded with one device – more than one might cause them even more stress about the process. When the participants were nervous they spoke very quietly and it was very hard to hear them on the recordings. This was the other frustration I had when I was transcribing. By the middle of the interview they all invariably loosened up and got caught up in the process of sharing the details of their experiences.

The data which I gathered from the participants generally fell within, and was delimited by the literature in the field. A few unexpected results did come up throughout the research. One unexpected factor was that the primary reason that all of the ESL students cited as motivation to learn English was to make Canadian friends. Peer pressure on the other hand was not a factor in the ESL classroom as a influence or motivating factor for SLA. Introversion and extroversion were not ties to an affective filter (Krashen, 1989) that was correspondingly high (introversion) or low (extraversion). It was possible it seemed that a shy student could have a low affective filter and an outgoing student could have a high affective filter.
Validity. Guba’s criteria for validity of qualitative research require that data demonstrates: “credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability” (Mills, 2007, 85-87). I was able to do so through the use of triangulation by collecting data from three different sources: research journal, field notes and observations during interviews, and the 16 interview transcripts from eight participants, each bringing with them a different perspective on the same phenomenon. I also maintained validity by obtaining member checking, including sufficient literature, the identification of outlying data, and the saturation of the data. In the Field Notes I made citations regarding the participant’s physical demeanor; their eye contact, where they chose to sit in relation to myself and apparent comfort level during the interviews. The interviews themselves gave me insight into the participant’s mind’s and their thoughts regarding their education past and present as well as how they saw themselves as new Canadians. The Research Journal allowed me to synthesize what I observed in my field notes as well as what the students said in response to my questions, their tone of voice and how they felt about the questions and their answer. Using only one of these sources of data would have yielded a more flattened impression of each student; however by triangulating these sources of data I was able to construct a more three dimensional view of each participant including their physicality, expressiveness, their voice and their thoughts:

The reliability of research findings can be increased by methodological triangulation using multiple data-gathering methods (e.g., observation, interviews, and diary techniques). In the study of interpretive practices, the reliability and generalizability of research findings can be enhanced by combining different types of research materials. (Talja, p. 473)
Ethical considerations

Recruitment criteria. All eight of the students were chosen through criterion/convenience sampling. Both parents and students signed off for the students to participate before they were included in the study. If either the parent or the student did not agree on the student’s participation, that child was not included in the study. Both the parents and students were present during the interviews.

Deception. There was no deception necessary to conduct the research for this study, and participants were not compensated in any way for their participation. Participants benefited from taking part in this research project as they were given the opportunity to share their experiences and recollections of their previous educational experiences. This process was relevant and meaningful to the participating students; as well it yielded beneficial information to them as a member of a larger immigrant community. Additionally, the participants were able to gain meta-cognitive awareness of what makes them more motivated to learn English. There were no risks to the participants in this study.

Confidentiality and participant safety. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, each of the eight interviewees was assigned a pseudonym to protect the students’ identity, age, grade, sex, cultural background, the interview site, the school they attend, and the division. Although the researcher made every effort to protect participant confidentiality, in accordance with current legislation, disclosures of harm to self, threats of/or harm to others, and/or reported or suspected child abuse would have been immediately reported to the appropriate authorities. Including, but is not limited to, reporting to the supervising professor and (if necessary) Winnipeg Police Service. All
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files were stored securely separate from student consent documents. At all times the safety of the children was safeguarded by following the ethics protocol; as well, “strict adherence to an a priori format, such as the traditional “question-and-answer” mode, is discouraged” (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999, p. 178).

Disposition of data. The disposition of data from withdrawn participants or data from participants' whose parents choose for their children to withdraw, was not included, or analyzed during the study. The data collected from such participants was disposed of immediately after the student’s withdrawal notice as per destruction of data steps (See security of data).

Security of data. The security of records and data collected in this research, including the researcher’s journal and field notes were kept secure in order to maintain participants’ anonymity. Digital voice recordings of interviews were transferred from the digital recorder equipment to a folder under the interviewees’ pseudonyms in an external memory card or usb (universal serial bus), or flash drive, which I wore around my neck during the day and locked up in a safe at my home during the night, immediately after finishing the interview and before leaving the interview room. This memory card was password protected with 128 bit digital encryption. After the voice recording was transferred from the digital voice recorder to the encrypted memory card the digital recorder was wiped clean of all recordings through the use of the “delete all” command.

Digital documents, including all documents produced by any computer software, such as Microsoft Office, Adobe PDF and/ or scanned software, were kept in a password protected folder on an encrypted thumb drive designated for this research alone. Paper based data (correspondences, notes, field notes, assent and consent forms) containing
students’ names were kept in separate folders in a locked safe at the researcher’s residence, and place of research analysis. Electronic data, such as email communication with the researcher were transferred to a usb key, and then the original messages were deleted, and then deleted from the delete file. At the conclusion of the study (Aug, 2012), all data collected in this research, digital and physical alike, such as paper drafts, paper transcripts, paper journal, paper field notes and any other paper based records or data, were destroyed as per the following steps at the conclusion of this research: all physical paper based data were shredded with a witness present and all electronic digital data were incinerated with a witness present. All electronic communication was deleted from the inbox, sent box and deleted box.

**Dissemination.** Students were given the option of receiving the summary via email or regular mail. The summary was made available in August 2012. The research findings were disseminated to the supervising professor for review and a brief summary (excluding personal identifiers), written in a manner that was easily comprehensible to individuals whose first language is not English, and sent to the participants at the completion of the research project excluding identifiers such as names, race, and age.

In this chapter I described the interpretive constructionist methodology I used and the process I followed during this phase of the study including: the research paradigm, the researcher’s role, participant selection, data sources and data collection, interviewing, data analysis, trustworthiness, limitations, and ethical considerations.
Chapter IV: Presentation of Findings

In chapter four, I summarize the field notes, and the research journal. As well, I consider how the themes in the literature were evident in the data I gathered. Additionally, I discuss and analyze the interview data I gathered.

In middle school, the friends I associated with were likewise academically focused; their drive bred competition amongst our peer group and drove us all to work hard. Being academically driven and successful became a part of my identity in high school. All of these factors, familial influence, peer group, classroom routines and structures and teachers influenced who I became as an ESL learner. Having experienced being an ESL learner from grade one onward, I have always been interested and empathetic to other ESL students’ experiences. To that end I chose to study the factors which influence the motivation of ESL students in grades seven through nine to learn English.

Throughout middle-school I had a series of very supportive English teachers with high standards in grades seven through nine who encouraged me to read, analyze, and question everything. They gave me the skills necessary to be successful and instilled a love of English literature to the point that I went on to complete an undergraduate degree in English literature. Additionally, I recall how much focus my parents put on education. They were constantly reminding me how important good grades were, and showed disappointment if I did not achieve of the highest level.
Interview field notes summary

During the process of meeting with the participants, I took notes either during the interviews or immediately afterwards in order to capture all of the impressions and observations I made while interviewing the students.

Alice. Alice and her parents chose to meet me outside a local McDonald’s, while all of the other interviews occurred at the participants’ school. The parents purchased drinks, seemed comfortable. As we sat down to begin the interview at a stone picnic table outside, the father apologized for having chosen such a bustling location. Throughout the interview Alice was very open and animated (using her hands to express herself), she looked straight ahead rather than at me, perhaps because the sun would have been in her eyes otherwise. But her voice was monotone and I wondered if this was as a result of how she spoke in her L1. She showed that she had strong convictions about learning. She was a good student and believed in working hard. She was somewhat critical about the “low” level of education in Canada as compared to her European education. She was not one of the students I had expected to participate. She had been engaged during my initial presentation to the ESL class, but unlike some of the other students, she was quiet, and I remember wondering if she understood what I was talking about. After the interview was finished and I was packing up, Alice’s mother made a point of saying that they had picked up and moved to Canada after the age of 40, it was not easy, but it was an adventure and their choice so they could not blame anyone if it was difficult. This statement reflected the theory that parents’ perception of complete integration into the new culture affects students’ perception of the value of said culture and their motivation to learn English (Gardner, 2007). The parents seemed very supportive of their daughter,
allowing her to participate and not showing any indication they disagreed with anything she said.

**Keemo.** I had arranged an interview date with Keemo, and he chose to meet at the school during the lunch hour. Keemo was an amazing youth who told me stories about growing up in Africa, the loss of close relatives and his struggle learning English. He did not know a word of English when he arrived in Canada but remained a strong and resilient individual, despite the many trials, tribulations and changes he had undergone to get to this point in time. He had learned English in less than 21 months, and had a hunger for learning which he did not try to mask nonchalantly with teenage bravado. The one thing he stressed that he liked about Canada was that he could get food anytime he wanted, and that he could eat three times a day instead of once, as he had done in Africa. He was very passionate about soccer, and it had been one stumbling block to arranging an interview time as he practiced or played soccer nearly every night. He was very soft spoken at the start of the interview, but he was open about his experiences and shared freely. He answered all of my questions. I found it interesting that he said he only had ‘white friends’, even though there were students in the school from his cultural and linguistic background. He said that the other African students could not help improve in his four African languages or correct him because they knew about what he knew. He said that his white friends were smart and helped him in all of his subjects. This attitude reflects the idea postulated by Jordan (2004), that new immigrants with an integrative attitude identify with the target community and endeavor to join them and become like them. Successful acculturation often manifests itself when ESL students such as Keemo feel comfortable seeking out and developing social connections outside of their L1 peer
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group as well as within their L1 peer group (Daryl, 1996). During the interviews, Keemo sat straight in his seat, choosing to sit beside me instead of across from me, but he looked straight ahead instead of at me. He used his hands to express the things he felt strongly about.

**Viola.** When I interviewed Viola, she made eye contact and used her hands when the words were hard to find. She moved her chair closer to me and seemed very comfortable to be talking to me. She spoke about how in Vietnam girlfriends held hands and when she came to Canada and tried to hold hands with a friend, she was “rejected”, and found this confusing. She seemed a little self-conscious about not being able to find the right words to express herself, but she persevered until she felt as though she had gotten her message across.

**Shai.** Shai the Korean student was very well spoken and polite. It was interesting how the students normally sat beside me, but Shai chose to sit across from me at a small round table. When I asked him what he missed about his country he got a little emotional thinking about his family and friends. He said he spoke with them via email but it was clear that after only being in Canada for 10 months, he still felt the loss. He generally maintained eye contact and seemed at ease answering all of my questions. Shai seemed very empathetic to me. He asked me if I was going to be eating lunch too, as he saw I did not have anything with me. He also spoke of friends who came to Canada without family at all to study and shared how hard that experience was on them. He made a point of mentioning more than once how kind and caring Canadians were as compared to Koreans; I found this a surprising generalization. I was struck by how clear his English was when he spoke. He had not learned much English prior to coming to Canada and his
grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary were really good. He mentioned that culturally Canadian schools and Korean schools differed in how students resolved conflicts. In Korea students fought and carried weapons like knives to school and this was generally accepted as the norm. However in Canada this would lead to a threat assessment if not a lockdown and suspension. I was touched by the fact that he attributed his success to his ESL teacher because of how kind she was and how well she taught. This comment put me in mind of what Gagne and Deci (2005) Cognitive Evaluation Theory, regarding the effects of positive feedback facilitating intrinsic motivation in students by promoting a sense of competence and self confidence in themselves as learners.

Sawana. Sawana was calm, comfortable and open during her interviews. She wore a traditional Muslim head scarf, tee-shirt and jeans. I appreciated the fact that she had retained her religious beliefs and traditional head scarf while integrating into the role of becoming a Canadian teenager. Deci and Ryan’s (2002) self-determination theory posits that a student able to assimilate their roots into the psychological aspect of their personality is tied to intrinsic motivation for the L2. She was also well spoken and audible. She made occasional eye contact, but I wasn’t sure if this was as a result of cultural or shyness. She mentioned that the only thing she missed from her native country was her grandmother; she did not miss any friends, food, or childhood comforts. A lot of the differences she remembered were differences between schools in Canada and Africa were cultural protocols – standing up to answer questions, wearing uniforms, no computers, and that generally boys went to school (not always the girls, unless they were an only child) because the family had to pay for school and the books. She had been in Canada 3 years and she seemed well adjusted and no longer tied to her previous life.
Chloe. I had met Chloe prior to the interview and she seemed to be a bubbly, confident girl, but as we started the first interview she became somewhat quieter. Once we got started her confidence came back and the volume of her voice increased to what I had previously experienced. She seemed very confident speaking in English, with no pauses or self-doubt about grammar or tenses (even though she did make some minor errors throughout. She mentioned how her parents are always reminding her that school was important and she needed to study first and “play later” (23/05/2012). This reiterated the philosophy that parents hand down to their children that school comes first and motivation to learn is shaped at home by what parents teach their children (Li, 2004; Sayadian & Lashkarian 2010).

Katana. Katana did not make a lot of eye contact, and started out soft spoken. I had the impression that he did not really want to open up too much. He answered the questions very briefly, but when I asked him to clarify, he shut down, and said nothing. I found his reaction surprising, but I persevered gently through the questions, giving him time in case he was thinking deeply of a response. He was the only one who said he did not like Canada and wanted to go back to the Congo. However he did not tell me much in the way of things he missed back home other than the fact that school was half the day and he had lots of good friends. My guess was that he was trying to intrigue and shock me as he did volunteer to be interviewed, as his teacher had mentioned how well he has integrated into the ESL classroom and how well he was progressing. According to Callahan et al (2008), having larger groupings of ESL students within a school fostered more successful SLA than in situations where there are isolated ESL students in a more homogeneous population with less L2 learners.
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**Vlad.** When I met Vlad, he chose to sit across from me during the interviews. He started out with his arms crossed. He was soft spoken with broken, heavily accented English. As he spoke his voice got louder and he started to make eye contact. He had a Ukrainian accent and a lisp which made it difficult to understand him at times. I had to repeatedly check for understanding. It was difficult to interview ESL students whose English is less developed because they accents and grammar mistakes make transcribing a challenge.

In addition to the field notes, the research journal allowed me to keep track of my impressions of the students, and my own thoughts along the way.

**Research journal summary**

From the beginning of the research process, I kept a journal in which I wrote thoughts, hunches and questions regarding the process interviews I conducted and about things those participants said during the interviews.

**Starting the research process.** When I began the process of recruiting interview participants, I presented my thesis and recruited participants by giving them a package of information and consent/assent letters to sign if they wished to participate. The school I chose houses the ESL program from which all of my participants attend. There was a class of approximately 28 students from grades seven to nine in the ESL class I met with. They were from a very diverse range of academic/ cultural backgrounds including a number of African countries, a number of Asian and European countries, the Middle East, and India. A number showed great interest in participating so I was excited about getting the participant pool I required without much difficulty; in fact I was concerned I would have to cut some willing participants. It was surprising that the students would be
so excited about research in a field that from the outset might seem dry to a teenager. I had expected that they would be dozing off after the first 5 minutes of my presentation.

It was encouraging to me that I slowly received consent and assent forms appearing in my mailbox and it seemed more than likely that I would have all of my required interviews done with all eight volunteers by the end of June. This allowed me to focus on transcribing, thinking through the data and analyzing it, distilling themes and comparing them to the theory.

**Participants.** The interviewees were four boys and four girls from a variety of countries including: Poland, Burundi, Vietnam, Philippines, Korea, the Congo, and the Ukraine. The criteria for choosing these particular students included: attending grade seven through nine, spending time in the ESL program, and an interest in participating in the interviews. Finally, as a group they came from a variety of countries and there was a balance between male and female students (see Table 1 for demographic information).
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Table 1

General demographic data from ESL student participant interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s pseudonyms</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Length of time in Canada</th>
<th>Previous ESL education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Polish, German, French</td>
<td>48 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawana</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Kirundi, Swahili, French</td>
<td>72 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Yes (private tutor only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choe</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shai</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Korean, German</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keemo</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Kirundi, Swahili,</td>
<td>21 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katana</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Lingala, Kikongo and Tshiluba</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlad</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Ukrainian, Polish, Russian</td>
<td>72 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The chart shows the demographic data as it pertains to the participants that were interviewed.

The interviews with the eight participants revealed they had been in Canada between 10 months to three years. They all had uninterrupted schooling prior to coming to Canada. Some of them began learning English in their home countries, while others only started learning English when they arrived. All of the students had a good grasp of English at the time that I interviewed them. Four students (Ukraine, Congo, Burundi, Poland) had no formal English schooling prior to coming to Canada; one (Vietnam) had a private tutor who was paid to come to her house after school to teach her English and three (Burundi, Philippines, Korea) attended public school where they had one hour of English language instruction a day taught by a non-native English speaker. I discovered that trying to put the students’ words into my own took away from the flavor and
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authenticity of their words; therefore I chose to quote them directly throughout my discussion of the interview data.

The first participant was Alice, a Polish grade eight student. I was surprised that she volunteered to participate because she did not seem excited during my presentation. I know the culture and country she is from and wondered what she would tell me about the differences between the educational system between Canadian and that of our native country. I would have expected the most vociferous students to have been the ones who stepped up as participants. I was looking forward to interviewing the rest of the participants to see what other surprises I would encounter. Alice was the only student who, along with her parents, chose to meet me at a local McDonald’s. The rest of the interviews took place at the students’ school during the lunch hour.

Shai, from Korea mentioned that in his previous school carrying knives and fighting was an acceptable way of solving disagreements between students. I wondered if the school division should make a point to focus on ensuring there is discussion regarding social mores and socially acceptable/ unacceptable behavior to help acculturate students as they come into ESL classes in addition to teaching English language skills and content.

Viola, from the Philippines was paged from the office twice to meet me in order to arrange the interview times and I was beginning to think she might be away when I saw her coming down the hall. I asked her why it took her so long to come to the office (her classroom was only a couple of doors down from the office). She said that when she heard her name, she thought she was in trouble, so she did not want to come to the office. Students from countries outside of Canada expressed a strong sense of adherence to the rules of the school, and they fear doing something which will lead them to being
reprimanded in the office. Shai had mentioned that his teacher occasionally hit students in Korea. New Canadian students are still learning the rules and expectation of Canadian schools, and at times their actions lead to reprimands because of the fact that the expectations here are different from that of schools in their native country. Consequently they are ever vigilant to what they do and how they do it in order to make sure they are not transgressing inadvertently.

Students with strong accents also presented a challenge when interviewing and recording. It was difficult to do the transcription.

**Questions and thoughts.** After the first three interviews I noticed that not only were all the participants intrinsically motivated but also, they were not very outgoing. Intrinsic motivation did not seem to go hand in hand with dominant personality. It seemed that a low affective filter could go hand in hand with shyness. I would suggest that the affective filter described by Krashen (1981) is an internal personal aspect which allows the individual to fully embrace their new culture and therefore allows them to easily learn the language. This however does not seem to tie into the individual’s personality. An individual with a shy, quiet personality can have a low affective filter, while someone with a dominant personality can have a high affective filter, an instrumental view of the language and learn it more slowly (Ernst-Slavit et al, 2001).

**Second interview questions.** I added two questions to the second round of interviews. The first question was: Do you feel Canadian? The first question aimed to ascertain how the students saw themselves after they had spent some time in Canada. The second additional question was: Would you say that you have an outgoing or shy
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personality? The second question targeted the idea that learners with low affective filters learned more easily that those with a high affective filter.

Upon analysis of the transcripts I found that the data fell under five major umbrella categories under which various themes arose. The main categories were: familial influence, intrapersonal interaction and the L2 ideal self, acculturation, interpersonal interaction, and educational factors.

Familial influence

Parental influence on student learning. The first theme that arose under this category was the premium that the parents of the ESL participants put on education in general. All the students mentioned that their parents encouraged them to do well at school, but some parent provided their children with additional educational opportunities beyond school. The parents’ desire for their children to have a solid language base speaks to Gardner, R.’s (2007) theory that the integrative attitude facilitates a fuller acquisition of a language. All of the students expressed the belief that learning English was an important part of becoming culturally integrated into Canadian society. The two students who mentioned that their parents procured tutors for them included Shai (Korea) and Viola (Vietnam). In the case of Shai, his mother asked his aunt to teach Shai some German: “my aunt was from German…she taught me little bit” (15/05/2012). Shai said it was a very difficult language to learn, primarily because of the pronunciation. Viola’s mother paid a tutor to come to her house on a daily basis to teach Viola English: “a tutor came to my house to teach me English… in school I didn’t learn English” (10/05/2012). It was clear from what the students said about their parents’ influence and their perception and the importance of education and particularly their motivation for English
language acquisition, as a result (Li, 2004; Sayadian & Lashkarian 2010). Furthermore, all of the students stated that their families expressed that English language fluency was a priority for all of the students as well as their parents. Aside from academic support, the students shared how important their parents’ emotional support and physical proximity were to them.

**Parental support of student learning.** Based on what the students said, strong family connections and the support of the parents for their children made the move to Canada less traumatizing for the participants. In juxtaposition, Shai reflected on the experiences of his international student friends and others he knew who were in Canada for the purpose of studying English, but whose families were in Korea: “Koreans changed after coming here … they every day are getting more bad… because in here no friends no family so they feel …some people don’t have family too” (24/05/2012). Based on Shai’s statement, a lack of family support and connections gave the students a sense of rootlessness and loneliness which in turn affected their success academically and socially. Li’s (2004) research corroborates Shai’s statement. In her study she interviewed a group of Chinese university students who were studying in Canada, away from family and friends. She discovered that when students suffered from social/culture shock as well as homesickness with no supports, familial or otherwise, their academics suffered (Li, 2004). Another aspect of supporting their children included the parents’ financial support of their children.

**Parental choices and sacrifices.** In many cases the parents made a choice for the sake of survival as to which of the two parents had the best chance to learn English and be successful and progress professionally, while the other parent worked in order to
provide for the family in the interim at any kind of job they could find which did not require extensive knowledge of English. For example Shai said: “My mom take classes in university…my father doing his job working…making sushi; to my dad it is so hard, but my mom she is good to learn English and enjoy it” (15/0502012). The students seemed to realize just how important it was to be able to speak English when they saw the types of jobs their parents held in their home country: bankers, economist and dentists as compared to the jobs they were able to get in Canada with little English; these jobs included, making sushi and cleaning buildings. Viola discussed how her mother “worked in a bank for 30 years [in the Philippines], and she loved it [but now] she cleans buildings, so she tells me to learn English and get a good job” (10/05/2012). Brown (1991) supports this comment with the theory that parents sacrifice much to move in order to give their children a better life. For the parents, having gone through the experience of having a well paying job in their home country and now working at a low skill position because they lacked English language proficiency, obviously the parents wanted better for their children. It seemed all of the parents stressed to their children that education and integration was the key to the future. They seemed to stress that ‘failure was not an option’, having gone from being comfortable and doing well, to moving to a new country where they were struggling, they wanted to ensure that their children’s successes outshone their own.

Parent and child views differ. The experiences of the parents impacted how the participants viewed English language learning. All of the students shared that many of their parents either were currently or had taken English language classes in order to be able to work in Canada. However, despite insisting to the children that they needed to
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learn English, it seemed from their stories that their parents took a more instrumental approach to English, meaning that the parents’ goal was to learn just enough English to fulfill their jobs. Alice described her parents’ English language learning: “They learning [English], they have to go to work so they speak English at work” (02/05/2012). Both Vlad and Shai said their mothers were taking English classes while their fathers worked. The apparent instrumentalism of one of the parents was a matter of necessity as most new families did not have the luxury to have both parents not working while they attended English classes full time. Vlad said: “My mom went to college to learn how to speak English and my dad doesn’t know ‘cause he has to work” (29/05/2012). In the cases of Chloe and Alice, both of the girls’ parents attended adult learning classes. Viola’s mother as well as Katana’s father opted to learn English on their own, while Katana’s mother was studying French. It was clear from what the students were saying about their own integration into Canadian society, as well as their parents’ efforts to become Canadians and to learn English, that full integration was the goal for their children, but not necessarily for the parents (Hardre, & Sullivan, 2008; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Shirbagi, 2010; Tucker, 2007; Williams, 2003). From a critical analysis point of view, this premium put on language learning and the struggle for both parents and children to learn English created an acute awareness in both groups of learners as to how intrinsic language is to survival, and why failure was not an option. In the process of watching their parents struggling to carve out a new life for themselves and their children, the students were able to be introspective and to share with me how they saw themselves in the context of their new lives.
Intrapersonal interaction and the ideal L2 self

Several themes arose under the umbrella of intrapersonal interaction and the ideal L2 self; how the students saw themselves as they built their new Canadian identity; as well as how their personalities impacted their learning of English and helped them to adapt to their new academic and social environment. I was interested to hear how the students viewed themselves in the context of their new country and language.

The process of building a new Canadian identity. None of the students saw themselves as completely Canadian. They initially identified themselves with their native country, but some felt as though they had become slightly Canadian-fied. Vlad illustrated this by saying: “sometimes [I feel] Ukrainian, sometimes [I feel] Canadian” (28/05/2012). Alice thought for a long while before answering, and when she did her answer was, “probably I will never feel completely Canadian but I feel like I live here and you know now I live here I don’t live there anymore so you know but um . . . I would say I am from Poland, definitely” (02/05/2012). Sawana had no issue describing herself: “I feel like I am an African girl, I am not Canadian… maybe after 10 years 20 years [I will feel Canadian]” (18/05/2/12). It would seem that their roots in their native country and their first language(s) kept them identifying strongly with their country of origin. However, it seemed that all of the students were on the road to becoming and feeling Canadian. This process takes anywhere from years to decades, but as long as the students have a willingness to identify with the culture, they are well on their way (Macintyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan, 2002). Additionally, it seemed that their L1 language(s) was/were a stronger force than the physical movement from one continent to another. The
students all agreed that a willingness to identify with the culture you are residing in affects an individual’s personality, and how they perceive themselves.

**Personality and affective filter.** On one hand, Krashen (1981) posits that a high or low affective filter is not tied to an introverted or extroverted personality; whereas Dörnyei (2003) suggested that an outgoing personality facilitated quicker acquisition of a second language. Based on the students’ introspective self-assessments it seemed that personality and affective filter were not necessarily tied together. Students such as Viola (10/05/2012) admitted to being shy and not wanting to risk speaking up in class when she first arrived, but her affective filter was low enough that she learned English rapidly and excelled in her classes after only 12 months. Even though none of the students presented as extremely outgoing during our meetings, I believe that the process of becoming uprooted and having to struggle to make a new life necessitated that they shrug off the luxury of being shy and made gains with their language acquisition and integration into the school community as a means of surviving and because ‘failure was not an option’.

**Students’ Canadian identity.** It is my assertion, that a well-developed, positive L2 Canadian identity occurs when a student has successfully integrated into his or her new physical and linguistic landscape and has changed in order to facilitate the language acquisition process. Most of the students shared that they felt they had changed for the better. Alice said: “I think I changed cause . . . now I actually want to learn more and change …cause of I met lots of new people and different things and everything was so new and that I think it kinda changed me too” (02/05/2012). Similarly, Sawana had positive feedback about how she had changed since coming to Canada: “I changed . . . I used to be like, ‘why are we going to Canada?’ But now I am like, positive . . . When you
come here you meet a lot of people and then like, Canada is a good country and you will be happy here” (18/05/2012). Sawana’s willingness to be open to the new experiences allowed her to maintain a positive attitude in conjunction with a low affective filter helped her to learn English. Chloe felt that she had changed positively as her personality was more outgoing, demonstrating her new confidence with English and her comfort at school: “last year I was so quiet that because I don’t know some people here but this year I am like, so hyper every day and I am so loud” (23/05/2012). The process described by the participants coincides with Sorrentino’s (1986) statement regarding the changes that middle school aged children undergo as they develop their ideal-self:

[Children] . . . have a systematic and thorough knowledge of many of their values, their hopes and their fears, their plans, their goals, their potential, and their future and it is their components of the self-concept that serves to generate individual differences in motivated behavior. (Sorrentino, 1986, p. 97)

Keeping an open mind helped the immigrant students learn English and to integrate into Canadian society (Yu et al., 2011, p. 257). Vlad, who had already spent three years in Canada seemed torn between where he belonged and he seemed to have developed a meaningful connection to Canada in the time he had lived here: “I changed ‘cause when I moved back to the Ukraine for three months - I wanted to stay in Ukraine because sometimes I love Canada, sometimes I love the Ukraine” (28/05/2012). Two of the students did not have positive changes to share. Katana had a difficult time defining the changes he had experienced in himself since arriving in Canada, and having only spent a year here, and having lost many close relatives prior to coming to Canada, it may was
difficult for him to pinpoint: “In Congo I act very good I was very nice, but here… (I) don’t know, but (I’m) different” (24/05/2012).

Whether the changes were a conscious effort to fit in and learn English, or subconscious adjustments to new mores and expectations, it seemed that all of the students had successfully managed to adjust to being new Canadians to the extent that they were doing well in school and making friends in and outside of school.

**Acculturation**

For each of the eight students, in some cases social and academic mores were a minefield of surprises and shattered expectations as they learned that what was the norm in their home country did not hold true in Canada; while others reported that adjusting to life in Canada was easy and a great opportunity. With acculturation also came the sometimes painful separation from one’s previous ‘home’ as a new one was established. For a majority of the students, homesickness and missing loved ones left behind in their native country was still a painful adjustment.

**Cultural adjustments.** Adjusting to the new cultural mores of Canada was a challenge for some of the students. Viola described one experience she had that did not transfer to Canadian culture when she started attending school in Canada: “In Vietnam when I was friends with other girls, we hold hands. When I came here, and I had friends, when I tried to hold hands the other girls, they didn’t like that; it is different like that” (10/05/2012). Similarly, Shai ‘learned how different Korean and Canadian rules are in school: “in Korea we are often fighting and we can carry knifes so it’s a little dangerous than Canada. But in Canada [we] can’t carry knife and. . . my teacher said ‘don’t bring it to school’. . . its different rules” (15/05/2012).
New opportunities and a new life. Unlike the negative experiences that Viola and Shai shared, other students saw the positive side of adjusting to a new country. Chloe felt pleasantly surprised by Canadian compassion: “people here, they’re nice . . . like hugging each other every day. But in my country they don’t really hug” (23/05/2012). Vlad appreciated the cleanliness and abundance of Canada as compared to the Ukraine: “I like Canada because there isn’t garbage around and there are big stores like if you need to buy more food for one week in my country you need to buy ice cream you go buy ice cream” (28/05/2012). But the most poignant example of acculturation was shared by Keemo when he said: “I like that I can get food anytime, three times a day, back in Africa, I would eat once a day; now I can go eat whenever I want” (08/05/2012).

Setting down new roots while pulling up old ones. Additionally, the students had many favorite places and experiences already associated with Canada; for example: the snow, the Forks, and the food. However, just as they were beginning to set down roots and feeling like Canada was their new home, there was a consensus as to what they missed from their native country as well. Alice, Chloe, Shai, Keemo and Vlad all missed their friends. Katana and Sawana missed their families, and Viola missed her two dogs, which she said were like her “sisters” (10/05/2012).

The conversations I had with the students, let me share in their elation and frustration as they described trying to quickly acquire the necessary language to be able to understand and adopt the appropriate behavior in an alien linguistic and cultural terrain. However along with the struggle, there were rays of sunshine, the opportunities they saw in this new place to have a better life.
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In the process of acculturation and developing a Canadian L2 identity, the students cited social interactions and culturally heterogenic composition of their ESL class, and the development of their first social relationships as major aspects of their Canadian school experience.

**Interpersonal interaction**

All the ESL students felt their social interactions with the other students in the ESL classroom were their first forays into the English language social arena. Since all the students had different first languages, English was the common denominator. The topic of making Canadian friends seemed of utmost significance to all of the students. There were a number of different themes as to why certain students wanted to acquire Canadian friends: to help them learn English, to fit in, or to help them to feel as popular as they were in the home country. One concept which I expected to prove true did not. All of the students said that peer pressure was not a factor in their motivation to learn English.

**English language common denominator.** While in the ESL classroom, Alice (Poland), Vlad (Ukraine) and Sawana (Burundi) enjoyed the diverse culture as this was a new experience for them, coming from schooling that was traditionally culturally homogeneous. Despite the vast differences between culture and language in the class, and between the students’ home countries and Canada, they all wanted to learn English for the sake of making friends with Canadian students. The participants spoke about English as though it was the magic key that would facilitate relationships as well as educational opportunities. Shai summed up this sentiment: “[I learned English] for making friends” (15/05/2012). It seemed to me that making Canadian friends was a benchmark for the
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ESL students which meant they were ‘good enough’ in the eyes of their Canadian contemporaries.

The benefits of having Canadian friends. Keemo explained that he preferred making Canadian friends to Burundi friends because the students in the ESL class from Burundi, “can’t correct me when I talk; they don’t know more than me” (08/05/2012). Keemo’s focus on making Canadian friends seemed to be a way to ensure that he could challenge himself to learn English while making new friends that would then help him to continue improving academically. His Canadian, English speaking friends corrected his grammar, and this translated into better spoken and written English in class. Similarly Katana, who put me in mind of Kachru’s expanding circles of Englishes (1996), shared that, “English is important because in the world a lot of countries speak English” (24/05/2012). Additionally, Vlad felt that,” I talk with some friends that speak English [and] my English gets better” (28/05/2012).

The difficulties making Canadian friends. Unlike Keemo, initially Shai had a hard time making Canadian friends y as he was not able to communicate effectively or understand everything his Canadian peers were saying: “it’s hard to get a Canadian friend . . . ‘cause, they make a some joking to me and I can’t understand it” (15/05/2012). Some ESL students found it challenging to find their place within their new educational landscape while at the same time having to interact with Canadian born students who were less than tolerant and said or did things to made the new Canadian students like Katana feel like an outsider (Donnelly et al., 2009; Lvovich, 2003; Macpherson, 2005). Katana had to adjust to how people interacted with him in Canada as compared to his native country where he was very popular and making friends came easily: “in Africa and
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I have a lot of friends and they are good. They speak my language but like in here in Canadian, people are looking at me… even if you ask them they just laugh at my English” (24/05/2012). One influence which did not seem to be a negative factor amongst the ESL students was peer pressure.

**Peer pressure a non-issue.** All of the ESL students felt unaffected by the opinions of both their ESL friends and their Canadian friends when it came to motivation to learn English or complete assignments. I would have expected them to say that their friends’ attitudes did influence their perception of what was important. Sawana summed it up when she stated: “some of them aren’t excited about learning, and some of them are. It doesn’t make any difference to me…I am trying to keep going…learning more English and in my subjects” (18/05/2012). Some, like Viola interact with friends who shared the same views on school as she did: “Yes, they like school” (10/05/2012). Alice felt that her friends’ attitudes towards learning English were similar to hers: “most of them, those that are learning English they want to learn English cause … English became like part of their life” (02/05/2012).

The students seemed to have strong motivation to continue learning English regardless of their friends’ motivation. Their strong intrinsic motivation was not influenced by outside forces and came from a deeper place. This place was a need for success at all odds, because ‘failure was not an option’. It came from moving from one continent to another and starting one’s life over for a second time, and academic it was imperative for them to catch up. Alice stated: “it also kinda teach me that when you’re actually learning something you have to be patient and try, and try again and then do this, and do this and it have to come slowly” (02/05/2012).
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Educational factors

A comparison between the classrooms and the teachers’ methodologies both in their home countries as well as in Canada were other topics which were prominent in the students’ narratives. The themes of: adjusting to the cultural and academic differences between their previous school in the native countries to a Canadian school, how their previous schooling helped them adjust, and how their Canadian, English speaking, ESL teacher impacted their learning.

Differences between native school and the Canadian school. There were many differences between schools in their home countries as compared to schools in Canada. The differences fell into two categories, positive and negative academic factors and cultural elements. Academically, school in Vietnam, Poland, Korea and the Ukraine was described as more demanding, Shai (Korea) made a point of saying that, “students usually sleep three or four hours [because] they need to study” (15/05/2012). Students from all four countries described school as ‘hard’ and Vlad (Ukraine) said there was “homework every day, every time” (28/05/2012). He also mentioned that marks were given for completed homework and students who did not complete their homework were penalized. Viola (Vietnam) said the she had “tests, lots and lots of tests” (10/05/2012) in Vietnam. In the Congo and Burundi there did not seem to be an overwhelming amount of homework. Alice’s (Poland) experience was that, “school in Poland was much harder, you had more homework, you learn more stuff during the school year” (02/05/2012). It seemed that as learners of English on the outer rims of Kachru’s (1996) expanding circles, they felt they needed to prove themselves by working harder in order to compete
with the first language English speakers in the inner circles. The feeling of being insecure about their L2 competence motivated the students to work harder.

**Learning different Englishes.** One theme pertaining to academic challenges for the students, and a reminder of Kachru’s (1996) expanding circles of Englishes was the theme of NNESTs (non-native English speaking teachers). These teachers, for whom English was a second language, were teaching English to the students in their home countries. The issues arose when the ESL students moved to Canada, a country where English was the dominant language: “[NNESTs] are often considered less proficient English users…can never achieve native speaker’s competence… [and] their foreign accent…[are aspects that are] perceived as their major shortcomings” (Ma, 2012).

Several of the students had learned English in the home country from a teacher that was a NNEST which now presented issues for them in the areas of accents and pronunciation. Sawana said that when she spoke to her friends at school, the “kids from Africa, I understand them better than the Canadian kids [when they speak in English]” (18/05/2012). Similarly, Vlad said: “It was hard [to understand] because of the different accent” (28/05/2012). Aside from the differences in pronunciation, it was clear to me that the students had come with what they perceived was some knowledge of English; however their frustration was apparent and they felt short changed by their native country’s English programs. They were realizing that their previous English language schooling was not comparable to the program in Canada. Discovering that they were not able to decipher words they knew with a different accent was like learning English from the very beginning for some of them.
Previous learning a benefit to ESL students. One positive academic factor was the demanding nature of the educational system they were coming from had prepared them for the language learning struggles and rigor of academic life in Canada. The tension between the different experiences and the reality of the students’ previous schooling and the ESL classroom in Canada created motivation in the students to become reoriented and acculturated to classroom routines and teacher expectations. Previous learning experiences gave the students a sense of structure and general expectations as to what they would be experiencing in Canada. Overall, their expectations were fulfilled as their previous classroom experiences prepared them for how the ESL class ran; although there were some differences some students had to adjust to. One difference which arose several times was the lack of uniforms in public schools, and another was the abundance of technology, as well as classroom protocols in their Canadian school as compared to their native school. The students described the frustration, disorientation, and confusion they experienced initially due to the differences between their home education and their Canadian education; however, their need to fit in, learn English and make friends motivated them to persevere.

In comparison, all eight students felt their classes in their home countries were similar to the Canadian ones with books, black boards, lap tops and teaching methodologies which included student centered activities, and group work. However, the protocols in the classrooms did vary from those in Canada: Sawana (Burundi), Viola (Vietnam), and Chloe (Philippines) reported that all students wore uniforms in school back home. Additionally, in Burundi and the Congo, students had to purchase their own textbooks, while in the Philippines they were not allowed to keep the books or to take..
them home to study. Aside from the academic factors, there were cultural mores and protocols in Canada that the students had to adjust to.

The students all had a general familiarity with the process of going to school, attending classes, using books and completing homework. They were used to teachers’ expectations and brought skills with them which they were able to transfer to English language learning such as decoding, writing and reading. Cummins, (2001) stressed that ESL student preparedness and transferable skills are paramount for motivation to learn. All of the students had similar previous schooling experiences. Chloe’s experience in the Philippines included: “a lot of group work” (23/05/2012). Both Katana and Keemo’s schools had, “blackboards and books” (8/05/2012; 24/05/2012). Vlad had computers in his school but, “there are better computers [here] than in the Ukraine” (28/05/2012).

**Similarities and differences in classroom protocols.** Certain classroom protocols required that the students adjust to how things were done in Canada as opposed to their native country. For example Viola (Vietnam) said that all students had to stand up when answering questions. However assignment expectations were different for some students in Canada, and this led to frustration. Sawana wondered: “when you wrote an essay they are like, ‘why was it different from when I learn? And they are like ‘yeah, you are in a different country [now]’” (18/05/2012). Additionally, in the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam and the Congo, the school day was much shorter. A regular school day in the Congo started at 8:00am and ended at 12:00 pm. In Vietnam there were two school days in one. Students either attended from 7:00am to 12:00 pm or from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Another academic factor which greatly impacted students’ motivation and came up as a theme in all of the student’s narratives was the methodology and support of the ESL
classroom teacher. Despite their different cultural, linguistic and academic backgrounds, all the students were well adjusted and acculturated to the point that they felt comfortable in the ESL class when I met them. They had been motivated to learn, and were familiar with the teacher and school expectations.

**The ESL teacher.** Many of the students attributed their success to the efforts of their teachers that made them feel comfortable and to helped them with the process of SLA (Nikolov, 1999); Alice echoed what many of the students felt, that their ESL teacher’s help and gentle nature encouraged her to preserve at her language acquisition: “I came here and the teachers were nice and they’re like: ‘Oh you don’t know how? You don’t understand? That’s ok.’ And you kinda want to learn to just make them feel happy that you learned it” (02/05/2012). A large part of learning was the relationships which formed in the classroom between students and other students, the students and the teacher, and the students and the educational artifacts they encountered (Vygotsky, 1978). Aside from the technical knowledge and guidance that the ESL teacher provided to the students, it was very clear from how the students spoke about her, that she was caring and nurturing, and this made the students feel safe (Borba, 2009).

In summation, there were several umbrella categories which arose throughout the interviews, they were: the familial influence, intrapersonal interaction and developing the Canadian self, acculturation, interpersonal interaction, and educational factors. Under these umbrella categories there were themes that I was able to further distil. These themes were: the importance that parents put on education and doing well in school as well as the emotional and financial support of their children; additionally, further educational opportunities parents provided their children and the ‘failure is not an option’ view which
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the parents expressed to their children as a wish that they be more successful than themselves. Under the category of intrapersonal interaction and the ideal L2 self, the themes included: the students’ perception of themselves regarding their Canadian identity, how their personalities affected their English language learning and which factors affected their ability to adapt to their new academic and social environment. Within the topic of acculturation the themes were: the socio-cultural and academic mores which the students had to adjust to in Canada, that were different from those in their home countries, as well as the aspects of their lives which the students missed from their native home. Regarding the interpersonal interactions some themes which surfaced were: the desire of the ESL students to acquire Canadian friends, and the absence of peer pressure as an influence on their efforts for SLA. The themes under the umbrella category of educational factors included: both cultural and academic expectations, how their previous learning helped them adjust to school in Canada and how they contended with English spoken with a Canadian accent by their ESL teacher as compared to the accents of the NNESTs in their home countries.

In this chapter, I summarized the field notes, and the research journal. As well, I analyzed the themes that arose from the interviews and I connected the themes to the literature.
Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

In chapter five I discuss the implication of the findings as well as the limitations and the recommendations based on the data, and areas for further research. Drawing on literature from the field of ESL, and motivation for the purposes of L2 (second language) acquisition, I have noticed that there appears to be a gap regarding which factors work together to create intrinsic motivation in ESL students at the middle school level. The literature suggests that ESL students’ motivation to learn English may be influenced by numerous factors including, but not limited to: previous learning experiences, family perspectives on education, peer interaction, and classroom strategies and procedure. In this study, I have described which factors affected the eight ESL participants’ motivation regarding SLA. The study occurred over a period of five months, from April 2012 to August 2012, and included data gathering and analysis. Participants included eight students attending an ESL program similar to the one I developed. The program included grades five to nine. Prior to conducting the interviews, I secured divisional and the school’s permission as well as assent from the participants and consent from their caregivers. Using the interpretive constructionist research method, I endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. How do ESL students describe the process of learning English as a second language?
2. Which factors do ESL students feel enhance motivation for SLA?
3. Which factors do ESL students feel impede motivation for SLA?
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After interviewing the eight participants and analyzing the data, many of the factors that the students expressed or demonstrated through their stories aligned with the research in the field. The factors which seemed to enhance student motivation to learn English included: successful acculturation and the beginning of the development of a Canadian L2 identity, a positive familial perception regarding learning English, intrapersonal factors, such as an easy-going personality and willingness to communicate, and the educational context including a supportive, skilled ESL teacher and positive interaction among the students in the classroom.

Some surprising data came up during the study. One unexpected factor was that the primary reason that all of the ESL students cited as motivation to learn English was to make Canadian friends. I was also surprised that peer pressure was not a factor for the ESL students and their second language acquisition. I think this could be as a result of the fact that the students in the ESL class were all at different stages in their language development, and they did not compare themselves, their ability or performance with the other ESL students. From what the students told me there was a climate of supporting and helping each other in the ESL classroom. However, once the students were integrated into the regular classes, and their English competence was on par with their Canadian counterparts, peer pressure as well and competition within their peer group became a motivating factor for pursuing academic success. Additionally, all of the students expressed a ‘failure is not an option’ mantra which their parents instilled in them, wishing they be more successful than they were in Canada.

Limitations which came to light during the interviewing process included: the fact that it takes a decade or longer for a newcomers to truly feel as though they were
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Canadian. I must admit, this was true for me. Another limitation was the fact that all of the students who volunteered to be interviewed were motivated. I had hoped that some participants would have been able to share the challenges they faced in learning English and the factors which contributed to their lack of motivation. Consequently, I was not able to clearly answer the third question – Which factors impede student motivation?

Aside from this outlying data, the rest of the data I gathered fell within literature I surveyed.

The implications for the findings are that ESL students, regardless of their home country are influenced by a multitude of factors upon moving to Canada and learning English. Some of these factors are: parents’ beliefs regarding the importance of an education, the kind of educational experience they had prior to moving to Canada, the appropriateness of the ESL program, the sensitivity of the ESL teacher to the students’ needs, and the interaction with the other ESL students in the class. When these factors are aligned, the students seem to have a positive experience learning English and their intrinsic motivation is high.

Further questions which arose from this study are: what other challenges can be minimized in order to enable students to maximize their motivations to learn? How does student motivation to learn English impact their motivation towards learning other subjects? Do students’ learning styles and multiple intelligences such as: visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, and logical-mathematical (Gardner, H., 1983) impact how motivated they are to learn English? How can this be minimized?
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Further research needs to be done with students who are younger and older than the target group in order to ascertain if motivation to learn is greater at any one point, and to ascertain whether ESL classes would be beneficial in students younger than grade five (which is currently the grade at which ESL programming is implemented in Manitoba). Additionally, new research in this area would be valuable, especially a longitudinal study which would focus on the success of EAL students over a period of five to ten years, to gain new insight into the process of acculturations, how it affects student academic success, as it pertains to identity building. New information would benefit both teachers, administrators, post secondary institutions and policy makers.

Recommendations

As a teacher of EAL students who has worked in a division that has in the last four years received a large influx of ESL students, I have been a witness to how schools have developed protocols, processes, assessment tools and lines of communication in order to ensure that ESL students receive equal and appropriate education and are fully supported from the moment they arrive. Additionally as someone who has developed one two of the middle school programs in our division that is successfully transitioning student from a sheltered ESL program to regular classes from grades five through eight, I believe I am qualified to make some recommendations as they apply to ESL student motivation for SLA. I have worked with teachers, principals, consultants, and assistant superintendents in order to develop this program, and the processes and protocols associated with every aspect of student assessment, placement, programming, adaptation, EAL professional development, and administration. The whole impetus for me to study
and complete my Masters in ESL was to better understand ESL student motivation and to be a better ESL educator in order to teach and support those students.

**Teachers.** As previously stated by the participants, ESL parents are very interested in their children doing well at school. However as stated previously, often parents have little or no English. Teachers should make an effort to make connections with the home. ESL students’ parents want the best for their children but they may have questions regarding the Canadian school system. By connecting with the home either by phone, in person, in English or through a translator, it would help to make the guardians feel more comfortable working as a team with the school for the benefit of the student. I also think it is very important that teachers validate the students’ culture and first language and to let parents know how important it is for the student to maintain their first language(s) while they are learning English.

**Administrators.** Having worked with administrators to develop the middle school ESL program, I have seen the impact of support to the ESL program and how that translates into students; motivation to learn. I believe that it is important that administrators support ESL programming, education, staffing allocation as well as funding to ensure that ESL students receive appropriate education. This investment needs to be long term and administrators need to be mindful of the fact that ESL students may require up to a decade in order to fully acculturate. Once ESL students transition into regular classes, they should continue to be monitored year after year to ensure that they are being successful and thriving. To that end, it would behoove administrators to ensure that they are hiring qualified ESL teachers who will be able to monitor and intervene where appropriate to ensure ESL students have the resources and support they require.
Administrators should also make ESL professional development opportunities available to all teachers who work with ESL students in order to encourage teachers to develop and upgrade their knowledge with the newest research and tools.

**Policy makers.** Policy makers have great power and responsibility when it comes to the education and welfare of all students. I think it is important that senior administration and consultants are aware of what kinds of programming that is being provided to ESL students and to ensure that there is a high quality of ESL teaching that is appropriate, commensurate and beneficial across the division. I would also suggest that early years ESL students would likewise benefit from sheltered ESL instruction. Starting ESL instruction at grade five puts ESL students at a disadvantage if they arrive in Canada prior to grade five and are placed in a regular classroom and then moved to the ESL program once they reach grade five. ESL instruction at an earlier age, when students are learning to read would benefit early years ESL learners. By waiting until students are in grade five and expected to read to learn, this task becomes doubly difficult. As well, placing middle school students in grades chronologically rather than based on their previous schooling can set students up for failure. The one or two additional years they would benefit from by being placed a year or two below could make an enormous difference in their future SLA success; by placing students in grades based on their age, especially in grades seven to nine only makes achievement of graduation by the age of 18 that much more difficult. Finally, the ESL framework, which is the guiding document for teachers to use when planning and assessing ESL students has been in draft form for five years now (since 2007). It is time that the draft becomes finalized as it has not changed much over the last five years.
Parents and students. I strongly believe that it should be mandatory for all ESL students to attend an ESL program until such time that his or her language skills are sufficient to warrant transitioning him or her to the regular classes. From experience I have seen how students choosing regular classes before they are ready can affect their motivation for SLA. Once they start classes they realize they are out of their depth, and then they fall further and further behind, losing all motivation for learning. Students who do not want to appear different, to be segregated in a sheltered program, or whose parents believe that their children do not need ESL programming should have the facts and options clearly presented to them, through a translator if necessary in order to ensure that they are aware of the benefits and opportunities that come with attending an ESL program.

Personally, this was a fantastic experience. I was humbled by how hard these students worked, their resolve and motivation to strive to be the best they could be, speaking a second language in a country they were still trying to get used to. I was grateful to all the students for sharing their experiences with me, and it reinforced for me that what I do is important and it impact children’s lives.
References


A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE


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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

*Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(10), 786-791.


A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE


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Appendix A: Interview questions

I asked each of the eight interviewees the following questions during the first interviewing sessions. Each student was interviewed individually at a negotiated location. Prior to the interview, each student was required to remit a signed assent form and a consent form signed by their parent in order to be interviewed.

Main research topic: What can I learn from my previous middle school, ESL students about the factors that influence their motivation for SLA.

Major topics for Interview Questions:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

1. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today and discussing some questions I have about how students who come from other countries, feel about learning English; I am trying to understand students’ desire to learn and what pushes some students to learn and not others. Please feel free to stop me at any time or to let me know if you need clarification on anything I ask you. This will take approximately an hour, is that ok with you? Is it alright if I ask you some questions about your experiences with learning English at this school and in the ESL class? Is it alright if I record our conversation? Is it ok if I take notes while we talk? We can stop the interview at any time. Just tell me that we have talked enough for now and that you want to stop.
A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

2 How long have you lived in Canada? Please tell me about languages you speak other than English.

3 Please tell me about your experience learning English.

4 Can you please tell me a little bit about how school in Canada is different from school in your home country? I’m interested in hearing about the differences regarding your peers, how the classroom was run and how your teacher taught.

5 Can you please tell me about how you feel about learning English? Was it hard or easy learning English when you first came to Canada? What do you think affected how you learned English? Why have you been successful in learning English? What kept you working hard to learn English?

6 Can you please tell me about the friends you have made at this school? What languages do your friends speak? How do you think you have changed as a person since you’ve lived in Canada?

7 How do your friends feel about school? Do your friends affect how you feel about learning English? If so, how?

8 Can you please tell me what your parents’ experiences of learning English are? What are they doing to learn English?

9 How do you feel about school now that your English has improved since you arrived? What is your favourite subject? What are your favourite things about Canada? Is there anything you miss about school in your native country?
A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

10 Are there any questions you would like to ask me about anything we’ve been talking about today?

Creswell (2007) model (p. 136)
Appendix B: Interview field note protocol

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<th>Date:</th>
<th>Start time:</th>
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<td>End time:</td>
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<td>Duration of interview:</td>
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**Interview observation Protocol (1 of 8)**

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<td>responses/reactions/manifestations:</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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Creswell (2007) model (p. 137)
## Appendix C: Research journal

**Key Experiences/ Critical incidents/ New insights/ New questions**

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<thead>
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<th>Date:</th>
<th>Description: of an incident/experience/finding/hunch</th>
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Creswell (2007) model (p. 137)
## Appendix D: First round of interviews data analysis matrix

(First stage)

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<th>Qu.3</th>
<th>Qu.4</th>
<th>Qu.5</th>
<th>Qu.6</th>
<th>Qu.7</th>
<th>Qu.8</th>
<th>Qu.9</th>
<th>Qu.10</th>
<th>Coding of themes/contributing factors for motivation</th>
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Appendix E: Additional Interview Questions

Start time:
Stop time:

Duration:

I asked each of the 8 interviewees the following questions during the second interviewing sessions.

Main research topic: What can I learn from my previous middle school, ESL students about the factors that influence their motivation for second language acquisition?

Major topics for Interview Questions:

Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

1. Do you feel Canadian?

2. Would you say that you have an outgoing or shy personality?

3. Do you have any questions for me?

Creswell (2007) model (p. 136)
A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Appendix F: ENREB approval certificate

TO: Margaret Aisicovich
    Principal Investigator

FROM: Stan Straw, Chair
      Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: Protocol #E2012.022
    “A Study of Middle School Students’ Motivation to Learn English as a Second Language

March 30, 2012

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.

- If you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise, the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba Ethics of Research Involving Humans.


umanitoba.ca/research/orec
A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Appendix G: Divisional Consent

Research Project Title: A study of middle school students’ motivation to learn English as a Second Language
Principal investigator: Margaret Aisicovich
Email address: maisicovich@retsd.mb.ca
SW 3-14-2W, RM of Woodlands (204) 997-2097
Box 674, Warren, Mb
R0C 3E0

Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Ph. D
Email address: kouritzi@ms.umanitoba.ca
Professor of Curriculum, teaching and learning (204) 474-9079
University of Manitoba

Dear Ms. Isaak,

I am a University of Manitoba master’s student, and an ESL teacher in the division. I am studying in the area of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and I am interested to learn about how children from other countries feel about learning English. I am planning to undertake an interpretive constructionist research study with the goal of investigating the phenomenon of motivation to learn English as a second language in a sheltered, middle school, transitional, class. I will be interviewing eight students, and my goal is to ascertain their previous learning experiences, support for learning by parents, the influence of peers on their and how all these factors impacted their motivation to learn ESL. I will be interviewing each child two times, once for approximately an hour, and a second time for approximately half an hour for the purpose of clarification. These students will be chosen through criterion sampling from John Prichard School’s ESL population to avoid a conflict of interest and other ethical issues which may arise from using ESL student from my school.
The study will take place April 2012 to August 2012. I will interview each student twice. The initial interview will last 60 minutes. The second interview will last 20-30 minutes and will be used for clarification and member checking. Prior to participating, students will be required to remit assent and parents will be required to remit consent forms. Both forms will need to be signed before I can interview interested students.

Drawing on literature from the field of ESL, students’ motivation to learn English may be influenced by numerous factors, including: previous learning experiences, family perspectives on education, peer interaction, and classroom strategies and procedure. This study will endeavor to discover which factors affect these 8 ESL students’ motivation, individually and as a whole for second language acquisition.

In order to maintain the subjects’ confidentiality, it will be suggested to the parents that an ideal location would be one which allows for privacy and is conducive for digital voice recording (with minimal distraction and background noise). The participants and their parents will be given suggestions such as a designated classroom or room at the participant’s school, to be used outside of school hours. This option will be arranged by the researcher and the participant’s school after the student and parents have agreed to it. An alternative option which the researcher may suggest is at the student’s or researcher’s home. Both the parents and students will be present during the interviews.

The disposition of data from withdrawn participants or data from participants' parents who choose for their children to withdraw, will not be included, or analyzed in the research. The data collected from such participants will be disposed of immediately after the student withdrawal notice as per destruction of data steps.

The security of records and data collected in this research will be kept secure in order to maintain participants’ anonymity. Digital voice recordings of interviews will be transferred from the digital recorder equipment to a folder under the interviewees’ pseudonyms in an external memory card or usb drive, immediately after finishing the interview and before leaving the interview room. This memory card will be password protected with 128 bit digital encryption. After the voice recording is transferred from the digital voice recorder to the encrypted memory card the digital recorder will be wiped clean of all recordings through the use of the “delete all” command. Digital documents, including all documents produced by any computer software, such as Microsoft Office, Adobe PDF and or scanned software, will be kept in a password protected folder on an encrypted thumb drive designated for this research alone. Paper based data (correspondences, notes, field notes, assent and consent forms) such as those bearing students’ names, will be kept in separate folders in a locked safe at the researcher’s residence, and place of research analysis. Electronic data, such as email communication with the researcher will be transferred to a usb key, and then the original message will be deleted, and then deleted from the delete file.

At the conclusion of the study (Aug, 2012), all data collected in this research, digital and physical alike: paper drafts, paper transcripts, paper journal, paper field notes and any other paper based records or data, will be destroyed.

This study has been approved by the Education/Nursing Ethics Review Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.
All physical paper based data will be shredded with a witness present and all electronic digital data will be incinerated with a witness present. All electronic communication will be deleted from the in box, sent box and deleted box.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to contact me.

Please respond regarding approval of this study below. Thank you for your time.
Appendix H: Divisional approval

April 3, 2012

Margaret Aisicovich
SW 3 – 14 – 2W
RM of Woodlands
Box 647
Warren, Manitoba
R0A 3E0

Dear Ms. Aisicovich:

Permission has been granted for you to conduct your research project titled, A Study of Middle School Students’ Motivation to Learn English as a Second Language”. Please contact the principal of John Pritchard School, Ms. Barbara Bowles, to discuss the study and the process necessary to request the participation of the educators.

We would like to request a summary of the study results when completed.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Barb Isaak
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

cc: Mr. Kelly Barkman, Superintendent
    Ms. Barbara Bowles, Principal John Pritchard
A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Appendix I: Informed consent letter

Research Project Title: A study of middle school students’ motivation to learn English as a Second Language

Principal investigator: Margaret Aisicovich
Email address: maisicovich@retsd.mb.ca
SW 3-14-2W, RM of Woodlands (204) 997-2097
Box 674, Warren, Mb
R0C 3E0

Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Ph. D
Email address: kouritzi@ms.umanitoba.ca
Professor of Curriculum, teaching and learning (204) 474-9079
University of Manitoba

Dear parents/guardians,

I am a University of Manitoba master’s student. I am studying in the area of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and I am interested to learn about how children from other countries feel about learning English. I am planning to interview new Canadian students who are or who have been studying in ESL classes in this division. I am interested in learning about what makes them work hard at learning English and how they feel about learning English. I will be talking to eight students, from different grade levels. I will be talking with each child two times, once for about an hour and a second time for about half an hour in order to make sure that the information I got at the first interview is accurate.

In my reading about students who learn English as an additional language, there seem to be many different reasons for why student feel that working hard at learning English is important. Some of these are: their friends, their family, how they feel about school in general based on other schools they have studied at.
I will be conducting this study between April 2012 and August 2012. Before being able to be interviewed, interested students will need to return a signed assent form and their parents will also need to sign a consent form. Both forms need to be signed before I will be able to interview the student. I will meet with you for the interview wherever and whenever it is convenient for you and your parents. I will be recording the interview and want to protect your confidentiality, so meeting with you at school before or after school or at your house are locations which would work the best to protect your confidentiality.

Both the parents and students will be present during the interviews.

If you or your child decides part way through the interviews that he or she doesn’t want to do this anymore, any information I have collected from him or her be destroyed and will not be used in the study. Once I am finished with the study, I will be shredding all paper documents, notes and journals I have been keeping, deleting all emails and burning any usb keys I have used in my research.

All notes and recordings will be stored securely to make sure that any information related to the students is kept separately from personal information such as consent and assent forms.

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

If you are interested in allowing your child to participate in this study, please read the following statement and sign and date it. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.
I _______________________ agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my child from the study at any time by simply telling the researcher. I have read and understood the above description of the study. I understand that my privacy and my child’s privacy will be safeguarded as explained above. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns, I may contact the researcher and/or the Human Ethics Secretariat Board at the numbers given above.

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

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Ethics Review Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant’s Signature _______________________ Date ____________

Participant’s phone number/ email address:
____________________________________

Researcher and/or Delegate’s Signature _______________________ Date ____________

I would like to receive a summary report of the findings:

YES ___ NO ___

Please mail a summary report to the following:
____________________________________

University of Manitoba Bannatyne Campus Research Ethics Board
Basic Elements of Consent Disclosure Statements for Survey Research
November 27, 2011

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A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Appendix J: Assent for children

Study title: A study of middle school students’ motivation to learn English as a Second Language
Principal investigator: Margaret Aisicovich Email address: maisicovich@retsd.mb.ca
SW 3-14-2W, RM of Woodlands (204) 997-2097
Box 674, Warren, Mb
R0C 3E0
Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Ph. D Email address: kouritzi@ms.umanitoba.ca
Professor of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (204) 474-9079
University of Manitoba

Why you are here?

I am a University of Manitoba master’s student. I am studying in the area of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. I am interested in learning about what it’s like for children from other countries to learn English as a second language, and to find out how they feel about their school work and finishing their school work. I want to see if you would like to be in this study. This form tells you about the study. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask your parent, your guardian, my supervising professor, or myself.

Why are they doing this study?

You are here, because as a previous student who attended the ESL, you are the kind of student whom I want to learn more about. I am trying to find out how students feel about their school work and the factors that affect your motivation to finish your.

What will happen to you?

1 If you want to be in the study these things will happen:
The study will last between April 2012 and August 2012. I will interview you twice during the year. The first interview will take about one hour. And the second interview will take about 20 minutes to half an hour. We can do the interviews wherever you are most comfortable, quiet enough to record the interview and is private so that just you, your parents and I know you are being interviewed. Your parents will need to agree with you being a part of this study, and they will also be present when I ask you the questions. Both you and your parents will be present during the interviews.

2 I will ask you a number of questions when we meet for the interview. I will record your answers with a digital recorder and later I will type them up on the computer.
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If there are questions you do not want to answer or that you do not know how to answer, you can just tell me and we can skip them.

Will the study hurt?

There are no risks associated with this study. The benefits may be that you will learn something about how you make choices to complete assignments and what motivates you to finish your work in ESL.

What if you have any questions?

You can ask questions any time, now or later. You can talk to your family or someone else. If you want to contact me, at any time regarding this study, you can do so at: maisicovich@retd.mbu.ca, or by calling me at (204) 997-2097. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin at: (204) 474-9079, or by email at: kouritzi@ms.umanitoba.ca.

Who will know what I did in the study?

Any information you give during the study will be kept private (or secret). Your name will not be on any study papers and no one but me and my advisor (teacher), Dr. Sandra Kouritzin will know you took part in the study or how you answered the questions. Once the study is finished, I will destroy any information I recordings and notes I made based on what you tell me.

Do you have to be in the study?

You do not have to be in the study. No one will be mad at you if you don’t want to do this. If you don’t want to be in this study, you can say so. I will also be asking your parents if they would like you to be in the study and they will need to agree in order for you to be able to participate. But even if you say yes now you can change your mind later.

Do you have any questions?

Assent

I want to take part in this study. I know I can change my mind at any time.  
________________________ Verbal assent given yes ☐

Print name of child

[If verbal assent obtained the process must be clearly documented in the research]

Written assent if the child chooses to sign the assent.

________________________  Age  ________________  Date

Signature of Child

I confirm that I have explained the study to the participant to the extent compatible with the participants understanding, and that the participant has agreed to be in the study.

________________________  __________________  ____

Printed name of  Signature of  Date

Person obtaining assent  Person obtaining assent

University of Manitoba Bannatyne Campus REB
Assent Form
November 27, 2011

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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Boards
CTC Building, 208 - 154 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Phone: (204) 474-7122

Appendix K

Summary of study

Research Project Title: A study of middle school students’ motivation to learn English as a Second Language

Principal investigator: Margaret Aisicovich
Email address: maisicovich@retd.mb.ca
SW 3-14-2W, RM of Woodlands (204) 997-2097
Box 674, Warren, Mb
R0C 3E0

Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Ph. D
Email address: kouritzi@ms.umanitoba.ca
Professor of Curriculum, teaching and learning (204) 474-9079
University of Manitoba

Adopting a constructionist interpretive research methodology, I investigated the phenomenon of motivation to learn English as a second language (ESL) in a sheltered, middle school, transitional class. I interviewed eight ESL students who were attending an ESL program in grades seven through nine. This process enabled me to distill the essence of which factors impacted the students’ motivation for second language acquisition (SLA).

As an ESL teacher of grades five to twelve, I know that my students arrive with a preconception of what school means to them. They have had a variety of previous
educational and learning experiences. Some students seem intrinsically motivated and driven to learn English, while others do not seem to have the motivation for learning English. Drawing on literature from the field of ESL and motivation for the purposes of L2 (second language) acquisition, I noticed that there appeared to be a gap in the literature as to which factors worked together to impact motivation in ESL middle school students to acquire a second language. The literature did suggest that ESL students’ motivation to learn English may be influenced by numerous factors including, but not limited to: previous learning experiences, family perspectives on education, peer interaction, and classroom strategies and procedure.

The study occurred over a period of five months, between April 2012 and August 2012, and included data gathering and analysis. Prior to conducting the interviews, I secured divisional and the school’s permission as well as assent from the participants and consent from their parents/guardians.

Using the interpretive constructionist research method, I endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. How do ESL students describe the process of learning English as a second language?

2. Which factors do ESL students feel enhance motivation for SLA?

3. Which factors do ESL students feel impede motivation for SLA?

After interviewing the eight participants and analyzing the data I found that my findings closely aligned with the literature. Many of the factors that the students expressed or demonstrated though their stories aligned with the research in the field. The factors which
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seemed to enhance student motivation to learn English included successful acculturation and the beginning of the development of a Canadian L2 identity, a positive familial perception regarding learning English, intrapersonal factors, such as an easy going personality and willingness to communicate, and the educational context including a supportive, skilled ESL teacher and positive interaction among the students in the classroom. Although all the students said that one reason they were motivated to learn English was to be able to better communicate with their peers, a factor which seemed not to make any difference in influencing student language acquisition was peer perception of ESL.

Limitations which came to light during the interviewing process included: the fact that it takes a decade or longer for a New Canadian to truly feel as though he or she is Canadian and no longer affiliating themselves solely with their country of origin. Another limitation was that all of the students who volunteered to be interviewed were of the motivated variety. I had hoped that a few of them would be able to share the challenges they faced in learning English and the factors which contributed to their lack of motivation.

The implications for the findings were that ESL students, regardless of their home country were influences by a multitude of factors upon moving to Canada and learning English. The factors included: parents’ beliefs regarding the importance of an education, educational experience they had prior to moving to Canada, a student centered ESL program, the sensitivity of the teacher to their needs and a peer group of ESL students who are understanding and share the same experience. When these factors are combined, the students seemed to have a positive experience learning English and his or her intrinsic
motivation was high. In other words, if the students’ parents valued education and encourage their children to work hard at school, they attended a program tailored to their ESL needs and they are in a class of students like themselves, their motivation for SLA is high.

Further questions which arose from this study were: what other challenges can be minimized in order to enable students to maximize their motivations to learn? How does student motivation to learn English impact their motivation towards learning other subjects? Do students’ learning styles impact how motivated they are to learn English? How can this be minimized? Further research needs to be done with students who are younger and older than the target group in order to ascertain if motivation to learn is greater at any one age bracket, and whether ESL classes would be beneficial in younger students than grade five (which is currently the grade at which ESL programming is implemented in Manitoba).

Personally, this was a fantastic experience. I was humbled by how hard these students worked, their resolve and motivation to strive to be the best they could be, and speaking and learning in a second language in a country they were still trying to get used to. I was grateful to all the students for sharing their experiences with me, and it reinforced for me that what I do is important and it impacts children’s lives, and their future.

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

__________________________  _______________________
Margaret Aisicovich                Date