

**Different Approaches to Teaching English Language Learners in  
Ontario Private Elementary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

There has been growing interest in the methods and programs that have been implemented in Ontario for English language learners in recent years. However, there is a dearth of research that focuses specifically on English language learners in the elementary years and their progress and needs.

The purpose of this portfolio is to review the current materials available and explore the methods of teaching English in Ontario schools. This exploration was completed through a pilot qualitative research that could be conducted on a larger scale. The sample interviews were conducted at two private schools with a focus on their elementary grade English language learners.

The interviews focused on five main themes that are present in the experiences of English language learners and many educators. These themes cover some important topics that could shed some light on how the experiences of elementary school English language learners could be improved. The themes identified in this research were the specific programs in place, and the identification of effective and ineffective methods used to design these programs. These themes also take into consideration the successful acquisition of academic English, the criteria and classification for English language learners, as well as the perceptions held by educators and English language learners themselves.

The analysis of these findings demonstrates a clear need for further research in this field specifically with regard to elementary English Language learners, but also of all English language learners in Ontario.

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“When you practice gratefulness, there is a sense of respect toward others.”

– Dalai Lama.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The research described in this portfolio examines different English language learning methods currently in use and why some methods work, whereas others appear to fall short for elementary level English language learners (ELLs) in the private educational sector. One of the tools currently in use for evaluating the success of a student in English language literacy is the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, which the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) (2013) cites as a goal for students working towards English language proficiency, "...so they [teachers] may provide the differentiated and precise literacy instruction their students need to be successful in all subject areas, as well as on the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test*" (2013). Apart from standardized testing achievements there is also research that provides a number of years expected for a student to fully catch up to their English-speaking peers in academic English skills, as Cummins (2007) explains, "English language learners require at least five years to catch up to English-speaking students in the acquisition of academic language skills" (p.1). It is also important to take into consideration the needs of these students aside from developing academic English skills. Some of these students may need considerations for interruptions in their education or the existence of exceptionalities. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) states that,

If ELLs arriving with commensurate levels of education require five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency, then ELLs who have had their formal schooling interrupted... will require more time to catch up to their age peers. The process will be different for each individual. (p. 63)

There is limited research to be found regarding this estimate that ELLs require five to seven years for academic language proficiency. Considering the number of variables, it is more reasonable to examine the support being provided to these students in specific educational settings. These variables can include age, gender, urban or rural life experiences (2008, p.10). However, according to Cummins (2007) notwithstanding students with exceptionalities and educational interruptions, most students between grade 4 and 8 would not attain an academic level of English until they enter secondary school. Whereas those who begin this process at the secondary level

will theoretically not have adequate time to achieve an academic English level equal to that of their English-speaking peers.

This portfolio begins to examine the methods which appear to be best practice for assisting ELLs with their academic English learning goals. The commonalities identified through this research as best practice were determined to be of benefit to those who study English through the programs provided by private schools within the Toronto and Greater Toronto area. The following questions were the base guiding questions for this portfolio research:

- What methods do educators use to help English language learners to develop their language skills?
- Which research theories are used to develop the methods used by educators?
- What correlations or similarities do educators observe of English language learners and their successful acquisition of academic English?
- What criteria are used by educators to determine whether a student is an English language learner?
- What perceptions exist about English language learners?

Looking at the experiences of ELLs within a smaller geographical location was easier to examine; therefore, I looked at the school systems within Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area.

## **Who are English Language Learners?**

It is important to understand who English language learners are, particularly in a Canadian context. Canadians are often proud to identify as a multicultural nation, and the Toronto area is recognized as a major hub of immigration within Canada. “Toronto, touted by many as the most multicultural and global city in the world, has citizens from over one hundred and sixty-nine different countries speaking more than one hundred languages” (Chambers, 2006, p.9). This appreciation of multiculturalism comes, in part, from the development of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988. There are a variety of reasons why some people choose to immigrate to Canada; some individuals come for

opportunities, a new life, family; and some find themselves coming to Canada as refugees.

Canadian Immigration and Citizenship (CIC) stated in their 2014 annual report, "...we also continued to maintain our long-standing commitments to refugee protection, welcoming over 24,000 refugees in 2013" (2014, p.2). Others who contribute to this multicultural identity have been here for a generation or more. The National Household Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada (2011) found that,

Second generation includes individuals who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside of Canada. In 2011, this group consisted of just over 5,702,700 people, representing 17.4% of the total population. For just over half (54.8%) of them, both parents were born outside Canada (p.3)

However, all Canadians have one important commonality, the languages we use for official communication in our daily lives. As Statistics Canada found in the 2011 census, ...French was the first official language spoken of 7.7 million Canadians, or 23.2% of the population, while English was the first official language spoken of 24.8 million, or 75.0%. The rest of the population (1.8% or just under 600,000 Canadians) was essentially comprised of persons who could not conduct a conversation in either English or French (2012)

Even though Canada has two official languages, English and French, there are a substantial number of people who communicate primarily in English.

Some newcomers have also been challenged by having little or even restricted access to English language learning in their country of origin, as Kayad (2015) discusses these potential restrictions with regards to Malaysia.

Despite more than a decade of literature instruction, results in national and international tests show that literacy and proficiency in English among Malaysian students are below standards. With students' poor performance in English linked to teachers' apparent lack of proficiency in English... it is necessary to examine how prospective teachers are being prepared for the task. (p.286)

Malaysia is not a singular example of these situations; similar circumstances can be found around the world in non-English speaking countries; as Al-Nasser demonstrates in his 2015 research concerning English language acquisition in Saudi Arabia; "After

studying English for about 9 years, school leavers are, in most cases, unable to speak or write a single flawless sentence in English. This raises many questions about the soundness of teachers and suitability of methods employed" (p.1613). There are two similarly drawn conclusions regarding this lack of English proficiency. As Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra have discussed in *Internationalisation, multilingualism and English-medium instruction* (2011), in some countries within the European continent English has become the lingua franca in universities; however, this varies greatly;

This situation is due to sociolinguistic differences, because the presence of English is much greater in some countries than in others... the Finns are exposed to English through mass media in general and television... on a daily basis (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998), and in Sweden many are concerned about the overwhelming presence of English in their everyday life... (p.348)

The exposure to English in everyday life is said to differ greatly when looking at southern European countries. As Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2011) continue to explain. "This contrasts with the presence of English in Italy or Spain, which is far more limited. These sociolinguistic features have an obvious impact on higher education" (p.348). As is clearly stated, a student's exposure to English will have an impact during the pursuit of post-secondary education; however, the size of this impact can be determined by the amount of exposure to English at a young age.

When considering what this may mean for young English language learners in Canada there are a considerable number of variables to understand. Students come from all walks of life and there are several different groups that have been acknowledged within most provinces for English language learners. The Ontario Ministry of Education's document *English language learners, ESL and ELD programs and services: Policies and procedures for Ontario elementary and secondary schools, kindergarten to grade 12* (2007) provides the following descriptions for English language learner subgroups. There are two main groups that can be further broken down into several subgroups. The first of these groups is that of Canadian-born English language learners.

Many English language learners were born in Canada and raised in families or communities in which languages other than English are spoken. They may include:

- Aboriginal students whose first language is a language other than English.
- Children who were born in communities that have maintained a distinct cultural and linguistic tradition, who have a first language that is not English, and who attend English language schools; and
- Children who were born in immigrant communities in which languages other than English are primarily spoken (p.8-9).

In the document named above the Ontario Ministry of Education outlines three subgroups. The first is, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) students who have been raised speaking a language other than English as their first language (2007). The second shares some similarities with the first and third, but refers to a community that has been established and acknowledged as a cultural and linguistic group within Canada. The third subgroup is that of children from immigrant families, who were born in Canada but are raised within an immigrant community and spend much of their lives outside of school with a linguistic group other than English (2007)

The second group that the Ontario Ministry of Education's document discusses is that of Newcomers from other countries, who are defined in the following way and include the following subgroups.

Newcomers arrive from countries around the world at various stages in their educational careers... Depending on their age and country of origin, they may have had varying educational experiences prior to their arrival in Canada...

- Children who have arrived in Canada with their families as part of a voluntary, planned immigration process... most have often received formal education in their home countries, and some may have studied English as a foreign language.
- Children who have arrived in Canada as a result of a war or other crisis in their home country... These children have often suffered traumatic experiences... They may have been in transit... or may not have had access to formal education in their home country

- International or “visa” students who have paid fees to attend school... often plan to attend a Canadian university. Most visa students are of secondary school age... but may still have considerable difficulty learning English in Ontario classrooms. (2007, p.9-10)

There is so much diversity within the different groups of English language learners and the needs they have. Similarly, these students and their families have a number of different educational options for schooling within Ontario as well.

### **Educational Options for English Language Learners**

Settlement.org outlines the different educational options for students within Ontario. There are four primary options with some sub-options; these options are public, public Catholic, private, and homeschooling. In both the public and public Catholic sectors there are English and French instructional options. The private options are those of a number of private schools which can be found easily on the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools (2016) website or homeschooling. Therefore it is important to consider what all of these different options can mean to ELLs. The TDSB (Toronto District School Board) website contains the following explanation:

More than 50% of students in the TDSB speak a language other than English at home. While some English language learners are new to Canada, others start learning English when they begin school. We offer a variety of programs and services for English language learners and all TDSB elementary schools provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Development (ELD) programming. (2014)

The TCDSB (Toronto Catholic District School Board) website identifies English language learners as,

Students in English-language schools whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used in Ontario’s schools, and who may initially require educational interventions to assist them in attaining English language proficiency. They may be Canadian-born or newly arrived from other countries. They come from diverse backgrounds

and school experiences, and have a variety of needs... English As a Second Language (ESL) programs are for students born in Canada or newcomers...

English Literacy Development (ELD) programs are for newcomers (2016)

Within the public education sector, the offerings of both the TDSB and the TCDSB, based on their given descriptions, provide similar support and structuring of their systems. The identification criteria of English language learners, as outlined on the TDSB and TCDSB websites, provide similar definitions of students. They are either Canadian born or newcomers to Canada who, either do not speak English as a first language, or speak a variation of English that is separated from the English used in the Ontario classroom. This similarity is understood to be due in large part, to their responsibility to comply with the Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines.

The Ontario Federation of Independent Schools (2016) explains that the private sector is not as strictly governed by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. There are also a large variety of private schools available within Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (2016). There are many different approaches to English language learning presented by the large collection of private and independent schools found in the Toronto area. One such approach is described by Northmount's program,

CASTLE, stands for: Character, Academics, Athletics, Arts, Strengths..., Toward, Leadership and Excellence... The CASTLE Program is truly essential for Northmount as it helps address the needs of our students who are gifted, underachieving, ESL, or have other unique learning styles (2015)

The CASTLE program focuses on many of the traits that parents and educators alike hold of high importance. I have reviewed the information provided on Northmount's website, and found that there is also no explanation provided as to who is an English language learner and who would therefore qualify for Northmount's ESL program (2015). Among other highly sought out private educational institutions other forms of categorisation are used.

Other schools recognize the importance of students studying at least two languages. According to Branksome Hall (2015), "Students at Branksome study two languages: Their strongest language, usually their native language... and a second language" (2015). This is only the introduction to the expectations of students who will

experience much of their educational instruction in English. “The Basic ESL Support Program provides specialized ESL classes, tutorial support and help with preparing for the Ontario Grade 10 Literacy Test. An optional TOEFL Preparation Course is also available” (2015). Even though no specific information is provided there are definitive expectations outlined for students regarding the expected level of English proficiency they should reach. Branksome also explains on their website,

All students must pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in order to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma... Students write the OSSLT in the spring of their Grade 10 year. A student who enters Branksome Hall in Grade 11 or 12, who has not passed the OSSLT at a previous school, will be required to take, and pass, this test. Students who plan to attend university must successfully complete the Grade 12 English course designed as a prerequisite for university study, known as University Preparation English, ENG 4US (2015, para. 3)

This English as a Second Language outline focuses heavily on the secondary level and does not discuss the possibilities for English language support in the formative years of primary and junior education. These are only two of a large number of examples that could be discussed; however, many of the independent and private schools share similar policies, when stated.

This is not unique to single-sex educational facilities, this can also be found within co-educational institutions as well; however often the more developed programs are only for secondary school students. Hudson College’s approach to ESL is described as,

The Academic ESL program emphasizes reading, writing, vocabulary and practical speaking skills, as well as a plethora of vocabulary needed to be successful in academic courses... The program is taught by experienced ESL teachers in very small classes... international students studying in our solid and effective Academic ESL program will gain necessary and useful skills required for success in both the regular school system and in an English-speaking environment (2016)

Hudson College provides a clear explanation of what is still offered only at the secondary level with no recognition of those at the primary and junior levels. However, private and independent schools operate with English as their primary language of instruction (Hudson College, 2015a,b, 2016).

Another area of consideration is those private schools that offer instruction in a language other than English, with an additional program provided for English language learning. For example, the German International School Toronto, provides the following explanation on their website,

The program of our Primary School (Grundschule) is based on the curriculum of both the German state (Bundesland) of Thuringia and the Canadian province of Ontario... the goal is to provide a foundation they can build on for the rest of their school career in any part of the world (2016)

This is one of a group of private and independent schools whose primary language of instruction is a language other than English, but also has a strongly developed English program. As TFS Canada's International School states, "Our English program is based on the Ontario curriculum, but goes far beyond its scope. The purpose is to immerse students in the language in many ways and forms." (2016).

Considering the previously presented examples of the variety of programs available, we can see that the public school boards, through the Ontario Ministry of Education, provide a framework to support ELLs. However, several private and independent schools do provide some level of support for ELLs; there are still a large number of private schools that do not clearly provide English language support programs for primary and junior grades.

With such a large variation of schooling possibilities, and with many believing that a private education is superior to that of a public education, it is not clear what actually constitutes the best type of education. In a study from the Fraser Institute, Van Pelt, Allison, and Allison (2007) found that,

...more Ontario parents have been choosing private schools for their children.

Fewer than 2 percent of Ontario students attended private school in 1960... the Ontario Ministry of Education web site shows that this had risen to 5.3 percent by 2003... private sector growth has accelerated in recent decades (p.6)

With this growth in private school enrollment, it is arguably more important to consider the offerings and development of their programming for ELLs, and to examine why this increase has been occurring.

## **Program Funding**

The private sector's growth has probably developed in part, as a response to the publicly announced cuts in educational funding that has been occurring for several years. According to Anderson and Jaafar's findings in *Policy trends in Ontario education 1990-2003* (2003),

The Harris government swept into office in June 1995... While it had little to say specifically about education, the overall message was clear... The document envisioned at least a \$400 million reduction in annual spending for education.

While promising to protect "classroom funding", the document targeted spending cuts through reductions in non-classroom personnel and administrative costs, through measures to reduce duplication of services across school boards (p.14)

Although the original document is reported to have outlined the government's plan and intention to make these cuts "...in non-classroom personnel and administrative costs..." (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003, p.14), the non-classroom personnel and administrative costs to which Anderson and Jaafar refer were not the areas which experienced the cuts.

Anderson and Jaafar (2003) elaborate on another change made to address the element of equality for students across the province,

...centralizing control over the education levy on property taxes across the province... the province was able to address issues of greater equality in per pupil funding for students, regardless of location, type (public, Catholic, French or English) ... ensuring a more standardized per pupil funding policy across the province... (p. 45-46)

The reality was that the majority of boards announced layoffs for teachers, plans for drastic cuts to many programs and services, as well as increased local property taxes to counter-balance the cuts (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003). However, these changes had large

ranging consequences, many of which can still be seen today, and include the walk outs, and work to rule actions that have been experienced since 1996 (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003). Though Anderson and Jaafar discussed drastic changes that occurred prior to 2003; these were not the only changes to happen. As the Canadian Press reported in 2014,

Some schools in Ontario will be shut down as the Liberal government makes education funding cuts to help eliminate a \$12.5-billion deficit in three years... the Ministry of Education is spelling out \$500 million in cuts to our classrooms and says annual increases are things of the past... (2014)

Even with this said, there are still contradicting stories of information that claim increases to funding, and decreases in enrollment. However, this is not to say that all of this information is wholly accurate, it is presented in the face of conflicting sources, and the general plan of where these cuts should have been made, but were not. The picture painted in the 2016/2017 Ontario budget was not any prettier; as Sheila Block reported, "We're not getting too excited about easing of spending constraints: increases to health care and education will continue to fall behind inflation and population growth. That will likely mean more nursing cuts and continued turmoil in Ontario's education system" (Block, 2016). There have been many reports that discuss the funding shortfalls in education, and they have spanned over a decade (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003; 2014; Block, 2016). However, these funding shortfalls do have dire consequences, as Mackenzie (2015) discusses,

Simply to bring funding for those students currently recognized as requiring ESL assistance to the four-year standard set out in the provincial auditor's report, the TDSB would require at least an additional \$55 million, and the Toronto Catholic District School Board at least an additional \$19 million (Mackenzie, 2015, p.8)

This lack of funding therefore begs the question as to whether or not the move towards private education for English Language learners is indeed founded. Even though private and independent schools do not promote English language learning programs for primary and junior levels on their website. Van Pelt, Allison, and Allison (2007) found,

While English clearly dominated the hearth and home languages identified by the private school parents, respondents nevertheless identified no less than 56 different hearth languages overall... While most private school parents... were Ontario-born, English speaking Canadian citizens, some were non-English speaking recent immigrants... (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007, p.22)

With the public boards lacking such funds for proper program support it brings to light the question that even though there is a well-structured program, does it really have achievable promises of what can realistically be delivered to ELLs.

## Conclusion

This research was developed from several years of experience within private schools in Ontario and abroad, while teaching English language learners, and English as a Second Language. Through these experiences I encountered several different methodologies and theories employed in these institutions, all with their own successes and weaknesses. Upon completion of my Bachelor of Education, I decided to continue my education with Additional Qualifications, specifically English as a Second Language Part 1. While researching the previous and current literature available in this field, I found the variations in methodology intriguing. I wanted to further explore this topic, especially in the private school sector within Ontario. I completed the Research Ethics Board application which was approved for a larger variation of this research. However, upon deciding to proceed with a portfolio I determined that a focus solely based on the private sector would be a more effective exploration in this field, to answer the proposed questions. The exploratory study described here was conducted with two participants from different private schools within the Toronto area. Though the schools had markedly different approaches to best practice for educating English language learners, they also had some overlapping aspects of their approaches. In Chapter One I establish the purpose and need for this research. In Chapter Two, I explore literature related to this work, in Chapter Three, the methodology. In Chapter Four I present and discuss findings for the research I conducted and Chapter Five provides a conclusion.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the literature about research on Ontario programs for English language learners. This research discusses the funding, the structure, and statistics, as well as other influential factors. Much of this research addresses adult students and there is a small body of work that specifically discusses the experiences of elementary ELLs.

I have not been able to find any research that specifically examines the experiences of those ELLs in private schools in Ontario, specifically within elementary education, nor at the secondary level. The importance of this research is to begin establishing a small body of work that looks specifically at examining the programs and methods available to English language learners in the private sector. In Chapter Four, the findings of this research are presented. The conclusions drawn make use of, and reference the research found in the public sector for English language learners. It is important to note that there is a lack of research in the private sector and limited research that specifically refers to elementary ELLs in the public sector.

### What is Already Known?

It is generally accepted that the Ontario Ministry of Education is the governing body for the public sector of education. However, there are misconceptions about the Ontario Ministry of Education's role in the private sector. The Ontario Ministry of Education has some regulations in place based on the Education Act for private schools. However, outside of private schools who want the authority to provide courses for obtaining secondary school credits, there are not really any other regulations.

I chose to conduct my research in the Toronto area because of its large culturally diverse population. As People for Education (2008), a non-profit public advocacy group, explains, "Ontario's urban/suburban areas are home to a unique mix of families... they represent the greatest cultural mix of any cities in the world" (2008). The number of students who require ESL support is increasing; as well as the diversity within Ontario

classrooms, which leads to the examination of research concerning the empathy of teachers for language learners. As People for Education (2008) further describe,

Over 100,000 people have moved into the GTA each and every year over the past 15 years. There is rapid growth in regions like Peel, York and Halton, and places like Mississauga and Brampton, once considered merely suburbs of Toronto, are now among Canada's largest cities (p.6)

Basu (2008) illustrates this point by discussing the important divergence between the criticisms of multiculturalism and the evolution that has been seen within educational practices. The important elements of multiculturalism that directly impact the classroom environment are also highlighted: demographic, symbolic, and structural process. These elements are important for the social cohesion of the classroom and the integration process for students (p.5).

Multiculturalism has been addressed as a large contributing factor within Ontario's society, and it also affects newcomers who settle within Ontario as well. Basu (2008) further explains the important social element the school can represent for newcomers.

For newly arrived immigrants, especially those with young children, schools are important sites of settlement experiences... coordination of various settlement programs and services for newcomers (such as English as a second language classes, translation services...) and frequently are the first (if not only) institutional contact for these groups within the public realm (Basu, 2008, p.7)

Understanding the role of multiculturalism in Ontario's society and a school's social make up is important in order to understand the experiences of ELLs. It is also important to consider the Ontario Ministry of Education's role in both the public and private education sectors as it is a part of what shapes the experiences of ELLs as well.

### **Ontario's Public Education Programs for English Language Learners**

Ontario's public education system has had its share of changes and adaptations that have been made with regards to education as a whole, and more specifically the education of ELLs. Nevertheless, this is an area that has seen some research, mostly

focused on secondary and adult education. However, this system has struggled and suffered through many of these changes, particularly with regards to funding, as Basu (2008) explains,

...since the early 1990s, rapid restructuring of the public education system in Ontario has led to cutbacks in many of these services... A recent report from the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005) notes that over the last few years, ESL programs and support structures for immigrants have been steadily eroding through deep and damaging cuts. (p.7)

If these funding cuts have had such negative repercussions, why has more not been done to rectify these challenges? Basu (2008) poses the following question, "... why is language of particular importance to the discourse and material practices of education and questions of integration more broadly?" (Basu, 2008, p.11). This question can be answered by the examination of the history of the Heritage Language Policy coupled with a discussion of the language offerings provided within the Toronto region, as Basu (2008) explains,

Of the 576 public elementary schools in the City of Toronto, 404 (70%) are administered by the Toronto District School Board, while 172 (30%) fall under the Toronto Catholic District School Board. By 2005, 229 schools (nearly 40%) were offering 57 different heritage/ international language classes to their students (p.17)

These heritage/international language classes provide a strong method of demonstrating support of multiculturalism within the educational system that can result in successful English language learning initiatives. However, providing these heritage/international language classes, as well as providing English Language Support can be challenging for school boards with the current funding challenges, as Basu (2008) explains,

The school boards usually deliver the provincially funded ESL programs for elementary and secondary students. It is important to note that the Federal Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship does not fund any programs for school-aged newcomers but only for adults through the LINC programs... school boards in Ontario have historically developed their own strategies for teaching English as

a Second Language in public schools. They note that there has never been a national plan for the education and integration of immigrant children and youth..." (p.31)

Basu (2008) also cites an extensive study conducted by James and Burnaby on Toronto's ESL Programs. They noted that the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto reported, "that depending on the school, ESL students are assigned to partially self-contained ESL classes and/or integrated into the regular classes with short-term and small group withdrawals. Some schools provide no direct ESL support at all" (Basu, 2008, p.31). Basu continues to discuss the contrast that has occurred between the decline in elementary school enrollment and the increase in students eligible for ESL support.

Basu also explains how the funding has been divided, and that Citizenship and Immigration Canada, as a federal entity, provides funding for adult ESL students, and the ESL funding provided for school-aged children is provincial, from the Ministry of Education. These challenges are more confounded by the funding cuts that have also occurred. Basu has explained these challenges quite well, but has failed to further explore the consequences of these cuts and the effects that this lack of access to ESL support has on future student education.

However, Basu's research was not directly looking for these results. In Folinsbee's (2007) paper, which is more directly related to this background and research, *What do we know about the Connections between Literacy and English as a Second Language in Canada?* she explains the reasoning behind this paper; it "is to highlight and summarize current Canadian research over the last five to seven years in terms of key themes, issues, gaps and needed strategies on connections between literacy and ESL" (Folinsbee, 2007, p.6). However, when considering the methodology of this paper, it appears less organized and quite large scale, considering the already large umbrella of information contained within English as a Second Language education.

The discussion paper includes a focus on both recent newcomers who join ESL or Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs... In other cases, there could be a benefit in looking at effective practices in Aboriginal and

Inuit education where adults speak English as a second language (Folinsbee, 2007, p.6)

Folinsbee (2007) also discusses the definitions of ESL literacy, but in many ways avoids agreeing with a particular definition and instead states, "This paper deliberately does not embrace or assume a particular definition of ESL literacy... The research shows a range of different definitions in use" (Folinsbee, 2007, p.10). With such broad parameters and no set understanding, it proves challenging to follow a consistent understanding of the findings presented. Though this paper focuses primarily on adult students, there is considerable overlap for young English language learners. Folinsbee (2007) highlights two important facts in the literature review, she cites from Sussman's findings,

Using IALS data, Susan Sussman found that one of the demographic groups with the lowest literacy skills (level 1) is those adult Canadians who speak neither English nor French. In describing this group, she notes that some do not have literacy in any language while others may be highly literate in their own language. In addition, some have been here for decades, while others are newcomers... currently there is little research in this area and as many as 20-30% of participants in literacy programs are immigrants (Folinsbee, 2007, p.13)

Folinsbee provides a complex backdrop for the research conducted, but later clarifies that this study does have some guiding structures, but did not specify exactly which group of English language learners were being observed.

Folinsbee has stated that there has been little research in this particular field at this time. Though Folinsbee has some basis for these claims, there has been a substantial amount of research in different areas of the ESL field of study. This research does not perfectly correlate with the goal of this paper; however, other research in the field should not be rejected, as it still has relevance. Even considering the difference of Folinsbee's focus on adult ESL students, the findings correlate with many studies regarding English language learners who are children. One example Folinsbee provides is, "...findings indicated that immigrants and refugees with low literacy in their own language experience extreme disadvantage in a culture that is governed by print" (Folinsbee, 2007, p.15)

Rather than having only focus groups, a stronger approach may have been to also observe the classes, and conduct individual based interviews, to collect more well-rounded data and feedback. Folinsbee (2007) further discusses potential professional development for the improvement of the ESL programing. “More practitioner support and professional development was identified as key. A mentoring system in which experienced practitioners mentor those less experienced was recommended...” (Folinsbee, 2007, p.34). The claim is levied that there is limited Canadian research regarding ESL and literacy in ESL programs (Folinsbee, 2007, p.37) and is clearly supported through a basic search. There is limited research that can be found and considered applicable in this field.

Basu had discussed the general breakdown of funding and how students who require ESL support have been on the rise. Folinsbee has discussed the variety of English language learners who make up the student body regardless of whether adults or children and the direct link between first language literacy skills and ESL skills. Folinsbee (2007) states, “... immigrants and refugees in ESL literacy programs represent a wide variety of countries, age ranges, time in Canada, learning strategies, and oral fluency in English” (Folinsbee, 2007, p.16).

Another approach presented by Taylor, considers integrative antiracism education for English language learners who are newcomers. Taylor states that this study was done in a “3-day innovative, Freirean-styled, antidiscrimination leadership program” (Taylor, 2006, p.519). Though many may challenge this claim to be purely anti-discriminatory, and not achievable because of natural human biases, it is argued that it “can support immigrant language learners’ intersectional and multilevel understandings of discrimination” (Taylor, 2006, p.519). Regardless of the approach used it is important to note that to this point much of the research discussed has pertained to adult English Language learners.

There is the exception of Basu who has discussed both the funding provided for adult English language learners and for the school system. Research and information has also been provided by People for Education (2008; 2016), the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board regarding English

language learners in the Ontario education system, but much more would definitely be beneficial for educators' professional development.

People for Education (2008) explain that in Canada, immigration trends have resulted in an unprecedented number of English language learners (ELLs) in the school system. Over 50% of newcomers to Canada settle in Ontario (2008). In large school boards such as the Toronto District School Board, almost half (47%) of the student population have a language other than English as their mother tongue or primary home language (TDSB, 2011) (Faez, 2012, p.65).

### **Teachers and Teaching English Language Learners**

There are many challenges discussed here that are being faced by educators tasked with educating English language learners. "Another major concern about the education of a diverse student population is the mismatch between the proportion of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds..." (Faez, 2012, p.65). Faez discusses teacher education programs and the specifications of teacher certification criteria in Ontario, as well as the importance of a diverse teacher pool through equitable hiring practices (Faez, 2012, p.66). Faez (2012) also highlights some important aspects of overall performance by English language learners in Canada,

...compared to Canadian-born students has not been necessarily lower (Worswick, 2004) and they have, overall, shown stronger aspirations to go on to post-secondary education (Taylor Krahn, 2005). However... particularly those of African and Aboriginal backgrounds, have revealed patterns of low academic achievement and higher drop-out rates (Solomon, 1992; Statistics Canada, 2007). Arguments have been made that... classrooms across North America promote a Eurocentric world view that is only responsive to White middle-class students (Banks, 2006; Coelho, 2004) (Faez, 2012, p.68-69)

Faez (2012) further investigated IETs (Internationally Educated Teachers) and Canadian-born teachers and their understanding of empathy and preparedness to educate English language learners and their responsibility to these students. This was a

qualitative study conducted through the use of a questionnaire and interviews with the participants. The research was thoroughly analysed to determine that teachers,

...who were internationally educated and had experienced learning English as a second or additional language expressed a relatively higher level of empathy towards ELLs and understanding of diversity-related issues compared with their Canadian-born counter parts... Some Canadian-born participants also reported a high level of empathy towards ELLs (Faez, 2012, p.73-74)

Empathy is an important trait for all teachers to have when working with English language learners, and all students in general. This empathy also translates into the understanding of best practices, which are also approached from the understanding of perspectives on good language learning practices.

Norton and Toohey (2001) discuss how the "...notion of *best practices* has been a preoccupation in a variety of professional fields including education..." (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p.307). Through a thorough examination of previously completed studies in the field, as well as their own research, Norton and Toohey (2001) found, "...that the proficiencies of good language learners in our studies were bound up not only in what they did individually but also in the possibilities their various communities offered them" (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p.318). This research helps to illustrate challenges that face language learners when working towards their English language acquisition. In Norton and Toohey's (2001) *Changing Perspectives on Good Language Learners*, researchers provide examples of what makes a good language learner. "In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), interest in discovering and disseminating information about successful activities or practices has had a long history" (p.307). Norton and Toohey present the minimal related literature in this field from Carroll's (1967) research to the late 1990s. Norton and Toohey (2001) looked at the skills of successful language learners and concluded,

... we have argued that the proficiencies of the good language learners in our studies were bound up not only in what they did individually but also in the possibilities their various communities offered them. Our research and recent theoretical discussions have convinced us that understanding good language

learning requires attention to social practices in the contexts in which individuals learn L2s (p.318)

This conclusion outlines the importance of considering the entire picture of all of the elements that affect English language learners including outside of the classroom.

Even with all of this considered, there is one area of research that is important. The data presented by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) from Wayne & Collier (2003) and Cummins (2006) state that,

... most English Language Learners can function well in social situations and in visually contextualized classroom activities within a year or two. Most take much longer – five years or longer – to catch up to their age peers in using the language to communicate complex academic concepts (p.12)

Here the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) has cited the findings of respected researchers in the field of education. They go on to explain that, "... young children may well take five or more years to catch up to their age peers in vocabulary acquisition and the accurate use of grammar in both spoken and written English" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p.11). Again the Ontario Ministry of Education discusses the length of time that is considered an average of how long it takes children to be able to perform on the same level as their native English-speaking peers. They further define the understanding of academic English in this context. "Academic English proficiency, often referred to as *cognitive academic language proficiency*, is more difficult to acquire and takes much longer, often five or more years" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p.12). There are numerous discussions that cite this tipping point of five years with the caveat of "or more" for student expectations of acquiring academic English. This is an interesting topic area that could potentially be further explored with more in depth research.

## Conclusion

After reviewing the existing literature surrounding the education of English language learners there is a clear need for more research. More research would be beneficial in the broader area of ELLs at the elementary level, but also specifically in the

private sector. There is a body of work that presents the challenges faced by adult ELLs, with some reference to those of elementary and secondary level. However, when discussing school-aged ELLs the focus has been on funding, and a lack of funding for ELL programs, while the number of ELLs in the classroom continues to grow. There is also the discussion of best practices and how to better support ELLs as educators in the classroom.

Therefore, this research makes a strong argument for the use of qualitative research in this field. This approach allows for a more personal and clearer understanding of all students as unique individuals and their experiences in this system. It is through this research that I hope to begin to create a body of work that will help to further develop best practices in English language education for both the private and public sectors.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

I examined the methods and programs used to educate English language learners in Ontario private schools at the elementary level. I conducted interviews regarding the different methods employed by two private educational facilities in the Toronto area. Prior to conducting my research I considered several different approaches for data collection to determine the most effective methodology for the proposed research, while also complying with the ethical standards set forth by the Research Ethics Board.

### **Considerations**

I considered a quantitative approach first, but after considering the challenges presented on how to collect data, particularly on such a small scale, I determined that a qualitative approach was more effective. I wanted to ensure that I fully communicated the potential findings that the various human dynamics within an interview setting present.

This research was also designed with ethical implications in mind, to minimize the direct impact and interference it could have caused students, educators, and administrators. A study conducted in the field of education, which involved a program for minors, made it important to conduct the research in the most non-invasive way. The decision to directly interview those who design and administer these programs for English language learners was determined to cause the least amount of interference for those involved in these programs. I determined that when I conducted interviews I could ensure that only those who administer these programs were involved in the interview process. This was achieved by meeting the requirements set forth by the Research Ethics Board and receiving their approval for this research. No English language learners, especially those who were not of the age of majority, were interviewed or disturbed in their learning.

## Research Design

After examining the research already conducted in the field of English language learning, I determined that a qualitative methodology was the most successful means of data collection and understanding the unique experiences of each English language learner. As previously discussed, this portfolio begins to examine the methods which appear to be best practice for assisting ELLs with their academic English learning goals. This research focused on private schools provided information about the support programs provided by two private schools in the Toronto area.

A qualitative grounded theory approach explored the questions for this research through the use of interviews; as Creswell (2014) elaborates, "...is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants" (Creswell, 2014, p.14). The most effective way to gain a clearer understanding of programs for English Language Learners was determined to be through individual interviews that were conducted with program administrators to achieve a fuller understanding of these programs.

It was important for me to remain conscious of personal biases, as Creswell (2014) explains, "It is easy to support and embrace the perspectives of participants in a study. In qualitative studies, this means "taking sides" and only discussing the results that place the participants in a favorable light" (Creswell, 2014, p.99). As an educator, having worked in the field of English language learning, the necessity of being aware of biases is important; in order to avoid only representing one perspective or the more favourable perspective. This fact is also important for Creswell's second ethical point, "...this means that the inquirer needs to report the full range of findings, including finds that may be contrary to the themes. A hallmark of good qualitative research is the report of the diversity of perspectives about the topic" (Creswell, 2014, p.99). The information collected was though conducting one interview with each participant who played a role in administering programs for English language learners.

I determined that the best course for this research was to ensure the use of questions that had been determined to be important. I designed questions that would help me avoid becoming over inundated with excess information that could be collected

during the interview process. I did this by clearly establishing which data points were to be added to my research. After these considerations I proceeded with the design of my research in order to determine how best to arrange and phrase my interview questions.

## **Research Procedures**

The interviews for the present study contained open ended questions that help to guide the interview, but the majority of discussion and conversation was led by the interviewees. I stuck to open ended and option free questions to avoid, as much as possible, influencing the responses of the interviewees. The overall design of the interviews was in a form that Creswell (2014) calls *emergent design*. Emergent design is, “...the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data” (Creswell, 2014, p.186). Therefore, these interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow the interviewees to fully explain their thoughts, understandings, and own personal experiences in the field of English language learning. The questions that were presented to interviewees were:

- Please briefly describe the program/ methods used to assist elementary school English language learners in their language development.
- What approaches were taken when developing these current methods?
- What specific research theories were used in developing the methods?
- How frequently are these methods re-evaluated and updated?
- What adjustments or changes, if any, have been made since these methods have been used?
- Why have these adjustments or changes been made?
- Which elements of instructional methods for English language learners have been determined to be effective or ineffective?
- How have these determinations been reached?
- What correlations, or similarities, have been found among students that demonstrate their successful acquisition of academic English?

- What correlation has been identified between the successful acquisition of academic English and the amount of time spent in specialized classes focusing on English language learning?
- In your experience, what have you found is the average amount of time required for an English language learner to acquire academic English skills?
- How were the time requirements determined and what consideration would you give in altering the time requirements?
- What adjustments or changes do you feel, if any, would create a stronger and more effective program for English language learners?
- How frequently are students' language levels evaluated, and using what scale?
- How long are students classified as English language learners?
- What are the criteria for determining whether a student should remain classified as an English language learner?
- In your experience, what perceptions do English language learners have of themselves as learners?
- In your experience, what perceptions do educators and administrators generally hold of English language learners?
- Why do you feel that these perceptions exist, for either the student, or educators and administrators?
- In your opinion, what means are possible or available for rectifying these perceptions?
- What other information would you like to provide that might be helpful to further support an understanding of your program for this research?

This design permitted a large amount of flexibility in the interview, which was determined to be the best method to collect the most data.

However, it was also important to consider the privacy of my interviewees during the design phase. Creswell (2014) discusses privacy by questioning how participant anonymity is consistently observed and provided for. Prior to conducting interviews, participants signed an agreement to participate in this research, from which they could withdraw at any time. With this agreement came the understanding that all data collected would be securely stored and cared for. To provide anonymity for all those

involved and full respect for privacy, pseudonyms and/or omission of names have been used for both participants involved. Had a participant expressed the desire to withdraw from the study, their data would have been securely destroyed with respect for their privacy. However, neither participant selected to withdraw. To further maintain and conduct ethical research I was clear and transparent concerning the goal of this research and avoided collecting of any data which could be considered harmful.

### **Conducting the Interviews**

Each participant was recruited through initial contact via email. This information was collected from each school's website. The interviewees were selected based on their defined role at their respected school. Each interviewee participated in one interview which was conducted in a single individual session. The first interview conducted took 65 minutes to complete. This interview was with the Vice-Principal of the school, who had redesigned the English Language Program at this school. The interview was conducted in the office of the Vice-Principal. The second interview took 21 minutes to complete and was conducted with the ESL Coordinator of the school. This interview was conducted in the office of the ESL Coordinator.

The difference of duration of each interview was due to the personality of the interviewee and how much verbal information they chose to share. The interviews were taped, with the obtained permission of the interviewee, using Apple's voice memos recording technology. The purpose of recording the interviews was to ensure correct and accurate transcription of the interviews for effective data analysis. All of these steps provided the data which were analyzed and presented in Chapter Four as the findings of this research.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

I completed two interviews, which were then transcribed, and the data was analysed. Data was coded based on five themes that were found during the interviewing process, as well as a final open-ended question. The themes that were found are based on both commonalities and differences within the interview data collected. Data analysis was conducted based on the determined themes that were present within the interviews. In a larger study these areas could be examined within other private school and later compared with the public sector. I have also ensured that I have taken into consideration my own personal response bias in order to present both the positive and negative findings in my research. After careful analysis of the data that I have collected, I am presenting information on the following methods of English language instruction currently in use within two private schools in the Toronto area.

The purpose of this portfolio is to examine the methods which appear to be best practice for assisting ELLs with their academic English learning goals. There were five themes identified in the results of the data from the interviews conducted. There were clear similarities and differences found in this data. To provide clarity between the programs during the analysis of the data, the programs will be referred to as *the first program* and *the second program*, respectively.

### General Programs and Methods for English Language Learners

The first identified theme was the discussion and importance of the program for English language learners and the methods in place within the respected programs. There were a number of topics discussed in this theme. The first topic, which was very important, was a brief description of the schools' respected programs. However, both programs differed greatly with respects to the learners accepted into the programs and the general introduction designs. Whereas the first program would admit any level of learner including absolute beginners, the second program uses phases. The phase-based program consists of six phases and administers an admissions test; only students testing in phase three or up are admitted to their school.

The development of both programs used documented research from different backgrounds within the field of education. The first program used research from a variety of sources, and relied on many Ontario Ministry of Education documents. The second program, which utilized the phase system, cited the work of Cummins, and also worked based on the documentation provided by the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Even with these different approaches and research sources, the frequency of re-evaluation, was fairly standard, and occurred yearly. The re-evaluation timeline is the same the adjustments that have continued to be made to these programs have been fairly different.

The first program has focused on introducing more flexibility into their program, while the second program has focused on improving their evaluation tests and updating their learning phases. It wasn't only these evaluations that were a changing force for these methods though. For the second program, it also had to do with updated documentation through the IB program, whereas the first program was more based on these re-evaluations.

The development of programs that benefit English language learners has been the focus in many schools for a few decades now; however, this has not always been well supported by programming in Ontario. A report from the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005) notes that over the last few years, ESL programs and support structures for immigrants have been steadily eroding though deep and damaging cuts (Basu, 2008, p.7). Even with these negative events occurring many still saw a need for proper support of these students and programs continued to be developed. However, Basu (2008) explains that there are a variety of class designs used in schools offering ESL support which depend on the school. There are also some schools that do not offer any specified ESL support (p.31). We see this variety in programming within the sample interviews that were conducted as well.

### **Specific Methods for Educating English Language Learners**

The second theme was a centralized theme which looked more specifically at the methods used to educate English language learners. This theme looked at the effective

and ineffective methods for English language learners. The interesting difference in this area is that there are similarities between the ineffective methods, specifically the use of a large amount of written materials; however, there is a significant difference between what is seen as effective.

In the first program the use of different written support materials are cited as being more effective, and in the second program the effective methods are very different in their approach. In the second program, they begin by treating all subject teachers as language teachers, and check in for real-time student feedback; as well as, coordinated planning referred to as “shoulder to shoulder planning”.

Faez (2012) cites several findings that address the ideas of effective and ineffective methods for teaching English language learners. However, Faez’s research does present some important elements that appear to contribute to the ineffective methods and practices. Faez cites that there appears to be a Eurocentric world view that could be contributing to some of the challenges faced by English language learners. Therefore, we could conclude that such methods would affect the successful acquisition of academic English by English language learners.

### **Successful Acquisition of Academic English**

The demonstration of successful acquisition of academic English was a theme of its own but also appeared in some other themes as an overlap. However, it was interesting that regardless of the differences in methods used there were similarities found between both programs regarding the acquisition of academic English. The use of a formal buddy program or an informal one saw similar success for both programs. Both programs also found success through transparency and comfortability in their language learning, because of this system.

This theme also brought about discussion about the time specifically dedicated to English language learning and changes to the programs to strengthen it. There are a number of similarities and differences when discussing time for a specific program, because it can be very complex. In the first program there is a different approach to time spent in specialized classes, in contrast to the second program.

In the first program students have flexibility to move between levels in specialized classes as they develop skills, and this flexibility includes the student's ability to opt not to attend specialized classes if they do not want. In contrast, students in the second program are enrolled in their grade-level English classes as well as specialised English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. These specialized ESL classes mirror the work of the English class curriculum to be more supportive for English language learners. In the second program, if a student feels she no longer requires these ESL classes she has the option to take an exit test, but cannot freely choose to opt out of these classes.

There is a very different stance on the programs' considerations of the average time an English language learner needs to acquire academic English skills. In the first program a timeline is not directly provided, but a restatement of the evaluations is. However, the ESL Coordinator of the second program cites the work of Jim Cummins, which is also used to support their school's methodology as well. The school's ESL Coordinator explained that Cummins' work states that it takes the average English language learner five years to acquire academic English skills. However, the second program's ESL coordinator also stated that on average, most students no longer required English as a Second Language support after four years. The ESL Coordinator for the second program also added that, even though this support isn't required anymore, students are usually still classified as English language learners due to the school clearly distinguishing between English as a Second language learners and English language learners. This is a distinction that the first program didn't make.

Both programs had ideas about how to help students shorten these timelines. In the first program, the suggestion of having extra periods of study, and focused study specifically on ESL is recommended. In the second program, students who are in extra ESL classes are also provided with 25% extra time for all assessments. These different approaches to dealing with the time required by English language learners can be supported through the strengthening of the program. However, as identified by both programs, it is also simply a matter of time, support, and experience for the students.

The Vice-Principal of the first program expressed a desire to shed the labels of beginner to advanced ESL students in favour of levels and to also enforce a mandatory attendance of the English Language Support classes provided. Similarly the ESL

Coordinator from the second program also expressed a desire to not label their students as ESL; and in turn help to remove the stigma that many of these students and their families identify. The second program's ESL Coordinator expressed a desire to see more visual clues that identify the school as an international school and are also reflected in the teaching materials. These reflections share similarities and highlight the importance of reflecting students' self-perceptions as learners and how the methods used, and educators alike, can affect these.

The discussion of language acquisition and the time required for it is a debated topic, "English language learners require at least five years to catch up to English-speaking students in the acquisition of academic language skills" (Cummins, 2007, p.1). However, this research refers to that of academic level English. English language learners are capable of acquiring a social level of English quite quickly. This is directly linked to the information provided from the second program in this research. Not only does the ESL Coordinator also cite the work of Jim Cummins when discussing time requirements; she also expressed that in her own experience, on average she has observed students taking approximately four years to achieve academic level English skills. Perhaps this minor discrepancy in the number of years could be attributed to the time that has lapsed and technological developments since Cummins' findings were originally presented in 2006.

### **The Criteria for Classifying Students as English Language Learners**

Another related theme is the consideration of how long students are classified as English language learners and the criteria that are used to determine this. This has been discussed a little previously; and there is a fair amount of agreement on the length of time a student is considered an English language learner. Both programs agree that ultimately students are almost always considered English language learners, even if they no longer require ESL support classes. The differences occur when looking at the criteria used by these programs.

For the first program the Vice-Principal explained that the criteria that is used to evaluate students' language acquisition is based on teacher evaluations, and report

cards, but officially the school states that after three years students are usually no longer identified as English language learners. The second program's ESL Coordinator explained that the criteria are based on the Middle Years Program (MYP) language phases, which contain six levels. This lack of an exact time line for how long a student could and should be considered an English language learner also makes determining classroom make-up and statistics challenging.

Faez (2012) uses the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) as an example for this. Based on the TDSB's 2011 published statistics, they state that almost half (47%) of their students speak a language other than English at home. However, they avoid directly stating that all of these 47% of students would be classified as English language learners. Norton and Toohey's (2001) research adds to this issue by also highlighting the other elements that affect English language learners outside of the school environment. They discuss the fact that some of these English language learners also have opportunities for language development within their communities, outside of school. This would also have an influence on the rate at which an English language learner's proficiency would develop, ultimately affecting one's classification and time requirements.

### **Perceptions of English Language Learners**

The final theme is the perceptions held of English language learners. The first perception discussed was the self-perception that English language learners have. The first program's Vice-Principal presented his understanding of students' self-perceptions as a loosely based gender divide. As the Vice-Principal explained, many male students often consider themselves to be more skilled than they are. Whereas, most female students don't consider themselves as skilled as they actually are. This is in contrast with the explanation provided by the ESL Coordinator of the second program. She explained that English language learners' self-perceptions are often determined by the learner's experiences, cultural background, and how long they've been in Canada. This is only one form of perception. There are also the perceptions that administrators and educators hold, with which both programs reported very similar issues.

These issues were described as either a form of ignorance or misconceptions of English language learners. There was also a described lack of patience and placing limitations on English language learners. These programs also discussed the understanding of why these perceptions exist and more interestingly, the agreement of how these perceptions could be rectified. There is a continual consensus that these perceptions held by some educators and administrators are simply a lack of knowledge. Both interviewees agreed that to rectify this problem you need to educate. Educating educators and administrators who hold these perceptions can help to change the mindset and provide a more successful learning environment for English language learners.

The findings discussed here highlight some of the perceptions held, and the primary reasons behind these perceptions as identified by these educators. However, as Folinsbee (2007) suggested, a potential start to helping with these perceptions is further support and professional development for educators in all areas. This was also suggested by the ESL Coordinator of the second program. Another suggestion from Folinsbee (2007) is the establishment of a mentoring system where experienced educators in the field of teaching English language learners could help and offer support to those educators new to this field. Faez (2012) cites the importance of educators having empathy for English language learners, but this cannot be a guaranteed trait in educators; therefore, support is a must.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

These findings and the supportive literature provide a clear picture of the current research that has been completed. However, I have discussed there is a lack of research in this field specifically regarding private education in Ontario. However, there is also only a small body of work that discusses ELLs at the elementary level in Ontario schools. Therefore, the identified themes would benefit from further investigation, and potentially a well-designed long term research project that could follow the development of English language learners and their growing English language skills over a period of time. The current literature would also benefit from further research that focuses specifically on English language learners in elementary schools, in order to contribute to the body of work that these programs use in their development. After this research, the potential to conduct a larger scale study is of great interest to me.

Both programs that voluntarily participated in this sample research were asked if there was any other information they would like to provide for the benefit of this research. Both chose to provide other understandings of programs provided for English language learners. The vice-Principal of the first program explained that it is imperative that educators and parents alike keep in mind that there is no magic bullet. We cannot expect sudden results for any English language learners. The ESL Coordinator of the second program reiterated the importance of the research and materials that their program is based on. She referenced the previously discussed phases found in the school's Middle Years Program.

A final determination is that more research focused specifically on the development of English language learners at the elementary school level would aid in the improvement of programs for these students. With further research regarding the methodologies being implemented in both public and private schools for elementary English language learners, there would be a more solid body of evidence to further develop and improve the programs currently in use. If these programs could be further developed we could see improvements for English language learners in the time required for acquisition of their academic English skills. With more research the Ministry of Education would be able to further develop documentation and resources to support

educators in the classroom. This would also benefit educators, because they could have a larger variety of tools and supports to use in order to better support English language learners. By developing the supports provided to elementary English language learners, we could see more success in the development of academic English skills.

## Glossary

The following is to provide clarification of terminology used, including terms found regularly within the field of education.

*Best Practice:* “In their book *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan... define as existing practices that already possess a high level of widely-agreed effectiveness” (Alber, 2015).

*Canadian born English language learners:* “...born in Canada and raised in families or communities in which languages other than English are spoken” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p.8).

*English as a Second Language Program:* “...which are for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p.22).

*English language learners:* “...are students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English... and who may require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p.8).

*English Literacy Development Program:* “...students whose first language is other than English... Students in these programs are most often from countries in which their access to education has been limited, and... had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p.22).

*Homeschooling:* “No government funding or oversight, a parent or tutor teaches children at home” (Settlement.org, n.d.).

*Immigrants:* “...someone who has moved from their country of origin... to another country, for example, Canada, to become a citizen of that country” (Newyouth.ca, n.d.).

*L1:* “...indicates the first language... of English language learners...” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p.13).

*L2:* “...the second language is learned within the environment of the target language” (ESL Professional Development, n.d., p.3).

*Private school:* “No government funding or oversight, generally, students have to pay tuition” (Settlement.org, n.d.).

*Public school:* “Open to all students” (Settlement.org, n.d.).

*Refugee:* “...people needing protection are people escaping being persecuted in their homeland” (Newyouth.ca, n.d.).

*Standardized Tests:* “...which take a total of six hours, measure math and literacy skills of students in Grade 3, 6, 9 and 10” (Ross, 2015).

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