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Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Adult ESL Classrooms: A Case Study of a University Intensive English Program

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the English as a second language (ESL) teachers' perceptions and implementation of the culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in an Intensive English Program (IEP) in Mountain University (pseudonym). IEPs are university-based language learning institutes for the pre-admission of English language learners (ELLs). The monolingual approach to ESL teaching does not fit the diverse language and cultural backgrounds of ELLs. It brings challenges for both ESL teachers and ELLs in IEPs. CRP encourages teachers to incorporate students' home cultures and first languages in their teaching and to bridge the gap between school culture and students' home culture, in order to improve students' academic achievement, nurture and support students' cultural competence, and develop students' sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Four full-time ESL teachers in an IEP participated in this study. The data was collected through classroom observations, face-to-face interviews, and documents review.

The ESL teachers perceive ELLs' L1 and home culture as an asset, and a facilitator for improving the ELLs' academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical thinking. The ESL teachers perceive ELLs' L1 as either a facilitator or a hindrance for ELLs' second language (L2) learning. The ESL teachers create an inclusive learning environment by connecting ELLs' cultures and educational experience to the U.S. educational culture academic experience. The ESL teachers are not familiar with CRP. They emphasize the importance of critical thinking skills for ELLs instead of critical consciousness. It sheds light on the importance of incorporating CRP in IEP curricula and teacher education programs with ESL endorsement. The ESL teachers improve ELLs' academic achievement through such pedagogical practices as a focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning. The ESL teachers cultivate ELLs' cultural competence through building on students' cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between schools and communities. The ESL teachers develop ELLs' critical consciousness through critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom.

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First Advisor

Maria Salazar, Ph.D.

Second Advisor

Mohammad Matin

Third Advisor

Richard Kitchen

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**CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY IN ADULT ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS—A CASE STUDY OF A UNIVERSITY INTENSIVE
ENGLISH PROGRAM**

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Arongna Borjigin

June 2017

Advisor: Maria Salazar

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Author: Arongna Borjigin

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Advisor: Maria Salazar

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

This qualitative case study explores the ESL teachers' perceptions and implementation of the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the Mountain University (pseudonym). English language learners (ELL) who are studying at IEPs are from different countries with different cultures. These characteristics require English as a second language (ESL) teachers implement a CRP to bridge the gap between ELLs' home culture and school culture, and to help ELLs succeed academically in the IEPs. The research questions addressed the challenges the ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs; the ESL teachers' perception about ELLs' home culture and first language (L1); the ESL teachers' description about their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' culture and L1; and the use of culturally relevant pedagogical practices in IEP classrooms. The sections that follow provide background on IEPs, explain the problem and the need for a study on IEPs, and provide an overview related to the research methodology and theoretical framework of this study.

International Students in U.S. Universities

The United States continues to lead the world in hosting millions of international students who pursue undergraduate or graduate studies. The earliest enrollment of international students “on American campuses can be traced back to 1784, when the first foreign student came to study at Yale University” (Liang, 2001, p. 10). Since World War II, the number of international students in American college campuses has seen a dramatic growth (Liang, 2001). According to the Open Doors Report of the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2016), the number of international students studying in IEPs in the United States during the academic year 2015-2016 was approximately 40,877. Top ten places of origin are China, India, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Canada, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brazil, Japan, and Mexico.

Students whose native language is not English are often described as an English language learner (ELL), dual language learner (DLL), and language-minority student (LMS) (Kim, Hutchison & Winsler, 2015). Fitzgerald (1995) characterizes ELLs as learners who (a) are not born in the United States; (b) have native languages other than English; (c) come from environments where English was not dominant; and/or (d) are American Indian or Alaskan natives from environments where languages other than English impact their English proficiency levels. Throughout the dissertation, the researcher uses the term ELL to describe students whose native language is not English.

Intensive English Program (IEP)

Historically, English as a second language (ESL) instruction was provided by volunteers from churches or civic organizations to immigrants. There was not a professional ESL discipline or professionally trained ESL teachers. With the increase of ELL population, ESL programs were set up rapidly in colleges (Kurzet, 1997). First developed at the University of Michigan in 1941, IEPs grew dramatically during the 1970s and the 1980s with the increasing number of international student population in the U.S. higher education (Hammill, 2014). In response to dramatic increase of international student populations, at the 1988 NAFSA (National Association for Foreign Student Affairs) convention, 65 directors from intensive English as a second language programs across the United States, representing both university-operated and independent IEPs, agreed to charter an official organization—American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP). The AAIEP has published standards and requirements to ensure quality of instruction in the member programs. According to the Membership Snapshot of AAIEP (2015), there are 456 member IEPs across the United States, among them 229 IEPs are university-governed which occupy 50% of the total IEPs.

IEPs are university-based language learning institutes for the pre-admission of ELLs. The primary objective of IEPs is to equip ELLs with the academic language and skills

they need to become successful in university degree programs (Vásquez, 2007). Stoller (1995) points out the characteristics of IEPs. He discusses:

IEPs are often considered non-traditional academic units because of their diverse organizational, administrative, and budgetary configurations. Organizationally speaking, IEPs do not have a conventional institutional “home”; they are either housed in academic units (e.g. English, Linguistics, Education, Extension), in non-academic units (e.g. Office of International Programs), or in separate and independent units. ...In addition, IEPs are not degree-granting units and they often employ non-tenure-track faculty. Finally, IEPs are often self-supporting, and are on local budgets rather than state or “regular” budgets. (p.179)

IEP director and faculty are professionally trained specialists in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (Barrett, 1982). Standardized language tests, such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), are used for admissions, placement, and monitoring student progress during IEPs (Barrett, 1982). Although IEPs vary slightly differently in its organization, administration, and budgetary configurations, they all share a common mission, i.e. “to develop and strengthen the English language skills of persons whose native language is not English” (Stoller, 1995, p. 179). IEPs guide “students to a level of mastery of the English language that will lead to eventual success in a degree or certificate program in an academic institution” (Staczek & Carlin, 1984, p. 294).

According to Cummins (1984, 2000) language proficiency involves two sets of skills: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to context-embedded speech (i.e., cues that assist comprehension, such as facial expression, experiential activities, and body language

visual elements); whereas CALP takes place in a context-reduced environment (i.e., the ability to manipulate concepts and solve problems). English language competence is a prerequisite for international students to succeed academically in American universities (Constantinides, 1992). Through IEPs, ELLs can not only develop their BICS, but more importantly their CALP (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006). IEPs aim to improve ELLs English proficiency in both interpersonal communication and academic tasks.

Some ELLs attend IEPs for the preparation of their English proficiency tests. Although ELLs can prepare for and take the English proficiency tests in their home country, many of them attend IEPs in the United States to improve their English in a short time while experiencing American life and culture (Chang, 2011). ELLs who plan to study in U.S. higher educational institutions have to demonstrate their English proficiency level through several English proficiency tests administered worldwide. The major English proficiency tests include TOEFL and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the United States; International English Language Testing System (IELTS) jointly managed by Cambridge English Language Assessment, the British Council and IDP Education Pvt Ltd. TOEFL scores are widely used for making decisions for college admission and placement of ELLs in IEPs due to its high reliability and accessibility. The purpose of TOEFL is to evaluate how well non-native English speakers comprehend and communicate with English in an English-speaking academic environment (Kokhan, 2012). The minimum requirement for

the college or graduate admission of North American universities is usually TOEFL iBT (internet-based test) score 79 or 80.

Other ELLs attend IEPs to improve their English proficiency in order to meet the minimum requirements of the university degree programs in which they have already been enrolled. English language proficiency is very important for international students' academic and social adjustment (Andrade, 2006). In terms of academics, adequate English proficiency facilitates ELLs' understanding of undergraduate- or graduate-level lectures, and their communication with professors and American classmates. For social adjustment, ELLs with adequate English proficiency have less difficulty in dealing with issues in their lives, such as creating a bank account, shopping, and communication with customer service. Therefore, IEP courses not only improve ELLs' BICS, but more importantly their CALP (Cummins, 1984, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

IEPs are supported by “a monolingual set of norms and ideals” (Levine, 2011, p. 4). Monolingual teaching approach is known in ESL research and instruction as English-only (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Şimşek, 2010). Monolingual approach to ESL instruction emphasizes minimizing translation from first language (L1) to second language (L2) and mixed use of both languages, and maximizing use of English in ESL instruction (Stern, 1992). The monolingual ESL instruction is informed by the

assumptions that English should be used exclusively in the classroom, and the first (L1) and second (L2) languages should be kept apart (Cummins, 2007) to avoid interference from the L1 (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

While it is not possible to generalize how L1 and L2 are generally used in university IEP classrooms in the U.S., a monolingual approach is noticeable in official documents of many IEPs, such as student handbooks (Broomhead, 2013). For example, the student handbook in the English Language Institute at the University of Alabama (2016) describes “English only” as:

In ELL classes, we have an informal rule for “English only.” This means that when an ELI class starts, the teacher will teach and answer questions in English only, even if he or she knows your native language. With lower-level classes, teachers may speak more slowly and carefully than usual, to help students understand. The “English Only” rule also means that during class, you should try to use English only, even if some or many of your classmates also speak your language. (p. 31)

In the introductory section of its student handbook, the Wilkes University (2017) IEP reminds new students that, “You are a part of a very strong and serious IEP, and we expect you to speak ONLY English while in Hollenback Hall.” (p. 2)

In some cases, a detailed rationale of English-only instruction is provided in some handbooks. The English Language Institute at Texas A&M University (2014) states its program policies in the student handbook:

The successful student is willing to be immersed in English both in and out of class. Our goal is to develop and strengthen English language proficiency. All course discussion and student conversations are conducted in English. Students speaking their native language in the classroom or reception area limit English practice for themselves and others. (p. 22)

In another example, the Missouri State University English Language Institute (2017) offers reasons for English-only in its “Only English Policy”. This is described in the following:

Students and instructors are expected to speak only English in the classroom buildings, including the hallways and labs. Likewise, only English will be spoken at all ELI sponsored activities outside of class. Here are some reasons you should speak only English:

1. to learn English more quickly
2. to make everyone feel comfortable
3. to make new friendships with students from different countries (p. 22)

A problem arises in IEPs when the instruction is monolingual, whereas, its students are from diverse backgrounds. On one hand, ELLs differ in terms of their home cultural experiences and their relation to the mainstream culture (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). ELLs in IEPs have diverse English accents, educational and cultural backgrounds, and prior experience. They have different communication styles, learning styles and strategies as well as different expectations for teachers and U.S. academic environment. On the other hand, IEPs are governed by “a monolingual set of norms and ideals” (Levine, 2011, p. 4) emphasizes instructional use of the target language (TL)—English to the exclusion of students’ L1. Similarly, IEP curriculum and teaching reflects and embodies the core values and cultures of English-speaking countries. English language classes place emphasis on promoting American culture without connecting to the culture of the ELLs (Ionescu, 2014). Furthermore, the monolingual practice is strengthened when “native English speakers [are] seen as the only appropriate conveyers” of the American cultural

values (Auerbach, 1993, p. 26). This monolingual teaching approach, curriculum, and teachers' demographic traits in IEPs could not match the diversity in ELL population.

The mismatch of diverse ELL population and monolingual practice of IEPs brings difficulties for ELLs in terms of the L2 learning and the adaptation to the American educational systems. ELLs usually have difficulty in understanding academic content which has little connection to their prior experience (Ortega, 2009). ELLs with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds are often marginalized in this monolingual (English only) educational context. While many of the ELLs have previously learned English in contexts, in which the use of the L1 is tolerated or encouraged (Ford, 2009; Kim & Petraki, 2009), in the U.S. they are likely to encounter a ban on L1 use (Turnbull & Dailey O'Cain, 2009). The monolingual approach to ESL instruction may slow the process of L2 acquisition. Prohibiting ELLs' use of L1 in ESL instruction may impede their L2 acquisition because it mirrors disempowering relations (Auerbach, 1993). An English-only policy may result in privileging students with higher English proficiency while discriminating against other students (Auerbach, 1993). In addition to difficulties in L2 learning, ELLs also face difficulties in adapting to the American educational context which is different from their previous educational experience (Cheng, 2000), in regards to, classroom norms, pedagogy, teachers' expectations, and teacher-student relationships. These difficulties influence ELLs' academic performance in L2 acquisition.

The mismatch also brings challenges for ESL teachers in IEPs. Issues of diversity pose a real challenge for teachers and educators (Banks, 1988). ESL teachers who are monolingual speakers of English are not well prepared for interaction with diverse ELL population (Hu & Jiang, 2011). They do not have much experience in living and working in countries where English is spoken as the second or third language, so they may lack empathy with ELLs to some extent (Kachru, 1992). It is challenging for teachers to identify the problem of students, and help the students who have different experience from teachers (Banks, 1988). Teachers in IEPs face many challenges in creating learning environments that address the needs and learning styles of learners from diverse backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). As the ethnic and racial backgrounds of ELLs often differ from the backgrounds of ESL teachers, it can be challenging for ESL teachers to incorporate students' native cultures into the classroom environment (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Also, it takes time and effort to prepare pre-service and in-service ESL teachers to embrace the notion of culturally responsive education and implement it in ESL or EFL teaching (Porto, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this single instrumental case study is to explore how ESL teachers conceptualize and implement the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) into IEP

curriculum and instruction to support ELLs' academic success. Ladson-Billings (1995a)

defines CRP as:

... a pedagogy committed to collective, not merely individual empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (p. 160)

CRP offers a way for teachers to acknowledge the home community culture of students.

CRP uses ELLs' home culture as a facilitator, finds a connection between the students' home culture and the target culture, fosters the students' confidence in their home culture, and helps ELLs succeed academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Besides CRP also aims to cultivate students' critical consciousness, knowledge and attitude toward the existing inequity in every aspect of school and society, also encourage them to become active agents to challenge and change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Research Questions & Data Sources

This study explored how ESL teachers implement the tenets of CRP in IEPs to support the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse ELLs. The research questions below informed the direction and focus of the study:

1. What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs?
2. How do ESL teachers perceive ELLs' home culture and L1 in the IEP?

3. How do ESL teachers describe their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' cultures and L1?
4. What culturally relevant pedagogical practices are enacted in IEP classrooms?

The data were collected through classroom observations, face-to-face interviews, and documents in the form of the curriculum, syllabus, handouts, and student handbook.

The Researcher in This Context

The researcher initiated this study primarily based on her own experience of teaching English as a second language (ESL) for Mongolian and Chinese undergraduate students in one of the universities in a northern province of China. Due to the differences between target language and culture, and the students' home language and culture, the researcher found that the students often struggled with learning English as a second or a third language. The researcher has been trying to find an effective ESL teaching pedagogy to motivate the students to learn English and to improve their academic achievement. Gradually, the researcher found that incorporating the students' home culture and language into the ESL teaching would facilitate their language learning.

During the first two years of her doctoral program, the researcher did not form a clear idea about what to write for her dissertation until she had an opportunity to attend the American Association of Teaching and Curriculum (AATC) annual conference held in Tampa, Florida, in 2014. One of the keynote speakers was Professor Gloria

Ladson-Billings, who delivered a speech about hip-hop as an element of African-American culture in the teaching of African-American students. She once again called for public concern for minority students' low academic achievement, and emphasized the importance of using students' culture as a bridge and facilitator for their learning. The researcher met Ladson-Billings for the first time, and learned about CRP which provided a theoretical support for the researcher's doctoral dissertation. That is the reason the researcher completed her dissertation about CRP in adult ESL classrooms.

The researcher was the principal investigator and the author of this dissertation. The researcher was a female who was born in China in the 1980s. Due to her previous educational and teaching experience as an ESL teacher, her research interests for the PhD degree lies in the field of ESL and multicultural education. As the principal investigator, the subjectivity "I" definitely affect the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation to some extent. Based on the researcher's previous experience as an ESL teacher in China, the researcher particularly focused on some aspects of the IEP class which are distinctly different from the ESL classes in China when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data, such as the physical arrangement of the classroom, the teacher-student interaction, the organization of class activities, the assignment for students, and the evaluation of students' performance.

The Research Site & Participants

The site of the research was the IEP at the English Language Center (ELC) in Mountain University (pseudonym). The ELC offers intensive English courses for international students. According to the student enrollment data (see Appendix IV) of the ELC in the 2015-2016 school year—winter, spring, and summer quarters—the top three countries of origin were China, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, although the number varies slightly among these three countries in each quarter. On the ELC website, it is stated that the mission of the ELC is to support the goals of the university by preparing English Language Learners with the necessary communicative and cultural competencies to be successful members of the university and other U.S. institutions of Higher Education. More details about the ELC will be provided in chapter three.

The participants of the research were four full-time ESL teachers in the ELC at the Mountain University. The participants were recruited through criterion sampling and snowball sampling strategy. The participants were assured that their names and school site would be kept confidential. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Significance of the Study

There are three major reasons why this study is meaningful. Firstly, this study will contribute to the literature about CRP. The synthesis undertaken by Morrison , Robbins, & Rose (2008) reveals that many studies on CRP are “about homogeneous classes of

students” (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008, p. 443), including African American (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007), all Latino/a (Gault, 2003; Irizarry, 2007), Native Americans (Cazden and Leggett, 1981; Erickson and Mohatt, 1982), Hawaiian children (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp, 1987), and ELLs (Cummins, 1986; Nieto, 2002; Richards, 2003). However, fewer studies have examined the teaching practices used to create a culturally responsive environment where ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity are the norm, truly multicultural classrooms, such as the IEPs for adult ELLs. In addition, compared with the large number of studies on international students (Chen, 2010; Mack, 2012; Rocca, 2010) in general, “the more specific crowd of ESL students in IEP settings is a less common topic in qualitative studies” (Gaulin, 2006, p. 16). Most of the studies about CRP were done in the K-12 school settings in the United States with students sharing a common American culture and core values despite their home cultural origins (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Therefore, this case study conducted in an IEP with adult ELLs from different countries of the world will contribute to the literature on CRP with unique perspectives and findings.

Secondly, the culturally relevant pedagogical practices applied by the teacher participants in this study will have a practical implication on the pedagogy ESL teachers use to improve ELLs’ academic achievement throughout the United States. ELLs differ significantly in terms of their home cultural experiences and their relation to the mainstream culture (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). ELLs enter into the IEP with diverse English

accents, and educational and cultural backgrounds, and prior experience. Making students academically successful is the primary objective of education. For ESL teachers, it is urgent to help ELLs succeed academically (Vacca-Rizopoulos & Nicoletti, 2009). “If teachers are to increase learning opportunities for all students, they must be knowledgeable about the social and cultural contexts of teaching and learning.”(Banks et al., 2001, p. 197), and value ELLs’ L1 and home culture in the IEPs.

Thirdly, the participant teachers’ beliefs about ELLs’ L1 and home culture, and their difficulties and challenges in IEPs will help teacher educators and policy makers reflect on the importance of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogical practices in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. The voices from the ESL teachers in this study should be taken into consideration when designing the curriculum for teacher education programs. More effective teacher education programs and practices should be developed to solve the problems and difficulties ESL teachers face in IEPs.

Definition of Terms

Intensive English Program (IEP): IEPs are university-based language learning institutes for the pre-admission of ELLs. The primary objective of IEPs is to equip learners with the academic language and skills they need in order to be successful in university degree programs (Vásquez, 2007).

English language learners (ELLs): Students whose native language is not English are often called as English language learner (ELL) (Kim, Hutchison & Winsler, 2015).

English as a foreign language (EFL): EFL refers to the teaching and learning of English in a country or territory where English does not play a significant socio-political role (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

English as a Second Language (ESL): ESL refers to the teaching and learning of English in environments in which English plays a dominant socio-political role (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

Input hypothesis: Humans acquire language in only one way--by understanding messages, or by receiving comprehensible input which contains structures at our next stage ($i+1$)--structures that are a bit beyond our current level of competence (i) (Krashen, 1985).

Zone of proximal development: The distance between the actual developmental 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).

Scaffolding: It is a metaphor that has been invoked to describe the process by which adults foster the transfer of responsibility for tasks from themselves to unskilled (and often young) learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: It is a pedagogy recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Culturally responsive teaching: Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as a way of teaching them more effectively to ensure their academic success (Gay, 2002).

Culture. Culture is also classified as Big C and little c culture. Big C refers to items deemed of great importance by society, such as literary classics or musical masterpieces, and little c referring to the ordinary ways that people lead their lives, such as forms of greeting or daily activities (Brooks, 1971; Nelson, 1972).

Critical pedagogy: It is a humanizing pedagogy which emphasizes critical dialogue between teachers and students which unveils the reality of the world through cultivating students' critical consciousness, and empowers students to take actions to challenge and transform inequity in both schools and society (Freire, 2000).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The rest of the study begins with chapter 2 that explains the theoretical framework which supports this study and provided the relevant literature on CRP. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used to conduct the research study. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings from the analysis of the data collected from the interviews, classroom observations, and

the documents. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the findings, implications for further research, limitations of the study, and conclusions.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Overview

This chapter explores the literature on sociocultural theory, second language acquisition (SLA), and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) which provide the theoretical framework for the analysis of the Intensive English Program (IEP) in this study. The sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1986) has a strong influence on contemporary ESL/EFL teaching and learning. It emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning a second language (L2). The literature on L2 acquisition provides different perspectives on L1 in L2 acquisition, reviews the development of L2 teaching pedagogy, and reveals the importance of culture in L2 acquisition. This may help audiences understand the importance of incorporating linguistic and cultural elements into IEPs, and increase educators' and teachers' awareness of taking a culturally relevant approach in multicultural IEPs. CRP will provide a basic lens to examine ESL teachers' pedagogical practices in the IEP in this study. The literature will also examine the connection of CRP to critical pedagogy. Literature on CRP will help audiences understand its development, the basic assumptions and tenets, the practical applications in K-12 settings, the difficulties and challenges of its implementation, and the gap in existing literature.

Sociocultural Theory

One of the most influential theories on the L2 acquisition which provides guidelines for the curriculum and pedagogy in the IEP is Lev Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory. The notions such as "zone of proximal development," "prior knowledge," "social interaction," and "scaffolding" have been exerting a strong influence on ESL teaching in IEPs. Vygotsky (1986) believes that children learn a language through social interaction. Their minds develop through constructing knowledge under the guidance of adults or more capable peers.

Learning through social interaction. Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in people's cognitive development. He identifies three important elements for social interaction: adult guidance, peer cooperation and, instructor. Vygotsky indicates that learners' interaction with adults and peers, and engagement in instruction exert influence on their cognitive development. Construction of new knowledge occurs when people interact with social environment and communicate with others. The interaction between a L2 learner and an interlocutor fosters learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). It is evident that L2 acquisition is socially and culturally bound, which is educational experience and social event (Dornyei, 1999). Input that occurs in meaningful interactions in social context is essential for successful L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1999). People learn knowledge and develop competence in personal interactions in which they get assistance from more capable others. The optimal learning

environment for L2 learners is the one which provides a real, meaningful, and contextual situation in which learners experience low affective filters (Krashen, 1999). Lantolf (2002) and Ellis (2008) view interaction as a form of mediation, which enables learners to collaboratively construct new knowledge. Watson (2007) states that:

Mediated activity refers to activity or interaction that takes place with the help of physical and semiotic tools in a social environment. Semiotic tools are the tools in a society that involve the interpretation of a society's symbols and signs, such as the spoken or written discourse, drawings, and gestures of that society. (p. 19)

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the significance of social interaction as well as the internal process of cognitive development, such as the *internalization* process (Robbins, 2003). Internalization means that external actions are transformed by processing them inward into an internal cognitive operation (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky posits that internalization occurs in an interaction between social and internal domains (Robbins, 2003). Vygotsky (1986) claims that external social speech is internalized to become thoughts or inner speech. McCafferty (1994) explains that L2 learners, like L1 learners, experience three different stages of speech internalization – external speech (vocalized during interaction with an interlocutor), private speech (vocalized “thinking aloud” to oneself), and inner speech (abbreviated non-vocalized “verbal thought” within a learner). The crucial component in internalization is that external actions grow inward, which yields the formation of meaning at personal level (Robbins, 2003). This external-internal relationship is not dichotomous, but lies on a dialectic continuum (Robbins, 2003). Interaction is not only a means of sharing knowledge, but also a means

of helping learners develop new concepts and languages (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Ellis, 2008; Garcia, 2005; Nieto, 1999).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD). Another significant concept from the sociocultural theory is the ZPD, which later exerts a strong influence on Krashen's (1985) *input hypothesis*. ZPD is that place in learning which located somewhere between a child's present understanding and potential understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental 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). This collaborative process is called "scaffolding" (Ohta, 2000, p. 52) in which a learner is able to achieve his or her goal through interactions with assistance provided by another person. Lantolf (2000) and Robbins (2003) state the ZPD is not an actual and visible space or any point in time. Gergen (1995) points out that the ZPD is "a mental space between actual and potential cognitive functioning" (p. 25). Lantolf (2000) also asserts that the ZPD is a metaphoric space in which a learner is able to understand how mediators are used appropriately and are internally processed. Vygotsky argues that learners' ZPD is historically, culturally, and socially situated. The supportive assistance one receives from interaction helps to maximize his/her cognitive functioning. Vygotsky (1978) points out that educators and teachers should work on students' ZPD with the understanding that students' prior knowledge can be used as a

basis for knowledge construction to bring them up to their potential level of development with the scaffolding from teachers or more capable peers.

In recent years, some scholars have claimed that the notion of the ZPD is not limited to interactions between two people (Lantolf, 2000). Multiple people “working jointly are able to co-construct contexts in which expertise emerges as a feature of the group” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). People construct knowledge when they collaborate during learning process, which contributes to their cognitive development. ELLs can construct knowledge and reach their ZPD through interactions with ESL teachers who provide individual assistance to them, and with their peer classmates in collaborative tasks, such as pair work or group work.

Prior knowledge. Knowledge is gained as new skills are developed, and new knowledge is built on existing knowledge through adjustments (Garcia, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986). Gestwicki (1999) explains that people do not acquire knowledge by just getting information from the social environment, but by taking in knowledge and skills through a continuous process of construction, while modifying the prior knowledge. Learning is knowledge building through a constant construction and modification of prior knowledge. New knowledge is taken into a learner’s cognitive system, and through modification of the learner’s existing knowledge, his/her cognitive system is constructed and developed for a higher-order thinking ability.

Vygotsky (1986) asserts that students bring with them prior knowledge. He encourages teachers to use students' prior knowledge as a basis for their learning and to provide support to facilitate new learning. Prior knowledge is essential to language learning. ELLs in IEPs possess different kinds of prior experiences and knowledge, which should be treated as assets in L2 acquisition. Cummins (2000) stresses the importance of activating L2 learners' prior knowledge in instruction. He calls this process as *transferability*, in which students' prior knowledge assists in learning new information (Cummins, 2000). ELLs' prior knowledge is perceived as a platform for L2 cognitive development (Bialystok, 2001; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). ELLs use different learning strategies from prior knowledge to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge (Bialystok, 2001; Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Garcia, 2005; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005).

Knowledge construction happens when learners are engaged in meaningful interactions with their peers and teachers. Children construct knowledge when they are engaged in activities which help them to evolve from concrete to abstract thinking (Garcia, 2005). Cognitive reasoning develops when learners move from simple tasks to complex tasks (Fougère, 2011). Learning experiences should provide learners opportunities to engage in interactions with peers through which learners draw from their prior knowledge and construct new knowledge (Echevarria et al., 2008; Garcia, 2005). When ELLs are engaged in challenging tasks and communication involving negotiation

of meanings, language acquisition is fostered (Ellis, 2008). Effective interaction is promoted if teachers provide students with opportunities to experience goal-directed negotiation of meaning (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). Through their interactions in goal-directed negotiation of meaning with peers and teachers, ELLs create meaning collaboratively and construct new knowledge upon their prior knowledge in L1. “ELLs retrieve the language needed in L1 and adapt it to the new situation created, giving new meaning through communication with peers and the teacher.” (Fougère, 2011, p. 32)

Therefore, teachers should value students’ prior knowledge in developing new knowledge, and make use of students’ prior knowledge to promote learning (Chamot et al., 1999). In IEPs, ELLs’ L2 acquisition is facilitated if ESL teachers apply an appropriate pedagogy to connect the ELLs’ L2 learning experiences to their L1, home culture, and previous experiences. The pedagogy which connects ELLs’ prior knowledge to present cognitive tasks can promote ELLs’ intellectual and linguistic growth in L2 through interaction with peers and teachers.

Instruction is important for learning (Fougère, 2011). Teachers’ scaffolding is particularly important for students to solve tasks that require high cognitive and abstract thinking ability (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Garcia, 2005). Students are more likely to develop cognitive thinking abilities when teachers use strategies that allow them to move from concrete to abstract thinking (Garcia, 2005). Teaching strategies helps learners construct new knowledge that cannot be attained without assistance (Vygotsky,

1986). Vygotsky (1986) states that the systematization of instruction makes the development of scientific concepts possible, and that people's ability to learn from instruction is a unique trait of human cognition. Instruction serves as mediation between learning and learner's development (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). ESL instructions provide ELLs with rich and supportive L2 experiences through interacting with peers and teachers. Through interaction, learners go through a developmental process in which they are exposed to experiences that promote their growth and make connections with further knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Woolfolk, 2004). Gordon (2007) suggests ESL teachers scaffold instruction in order to facilitate L2 learning for ELLs. ESL teachers should assign ELLs challenging tasks and provide them with scaffolds to promote their understanding of the tasks and develop their L2 acquisition (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003).

Research on Second Language Acquisition

Input hypothesis. The strongest argument in favor of monolingual teaching in IEPs is based on the *input hypothesis*, which is one of the five hypotheses related to L2 acquisition proposed by Krashen (1982, 1985). His five hypotheses are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. The input hypothesis became popular in the 1980s, and argued that language acquisition results from extensive comprehensible

input in the target language (G. Cook, 2010; V. Cook, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Krashen (1982, 1985) claims that humans acquire language only by one way—by understanding messages, more specifically, by receiving comprehensible input which is defined as “language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$)” (Krashen, 1982, p. 21). He describes that we move from our current level “ i ” to the next level “ $i+1$ ” (I =information; plus one=plus one bit more). We do not teach speaking but give students comprehensible input. Speech will come on its own, when students feel ready. Early speech is not grammatically accurate, but accuracy develops as students obtain more comprehensible input. The best input is not grammatically sequenced. Rather, if students understand the input presented, and enough of it is made available through $i+1$, the structures will be automatically sequenced (Krashen, 1985). If sufficient comprehensible input is received, “ $i + 1$ ” will automatically be provided and proficiency will emerge over time. In support, Krashen (1982, 1985) points out that while LI caretaker speech is continually modified as child speech becomes more complex, it is never sequenced grammatically, and contains structures for which the child may not be ready. He states that we are able to understand language which contains unfamiliar grammar points with the help of context which includes extra-linguistic information, such as, our knowledge of the world and previously acquired linguistic competence (Krashen, 1985). Corder (1981) states that, as with LI acquisition, “it is the learner who controls this

input, or more properly his intake” (p. 9), taking note of those features salient to him as he tests his current hypothesis.

Acquiring a language is a natural process that occurs subconsciously with the provision of plentiful target language input (Cook, 2010). Krashen argues that classroom input facilitates acquisition if teachers provide learners with enough comprehensible input. In the classroom, target language teaching that makes the language comprehensible by means of contextual support and an input-rich environment for language acquisition (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Based on Krashen’s input hypothesis, Richard- Amato (1988) suggests ESL teachers that optimal input be comprehensible, interesting and/or relevant, not grammatically sequenced, and provided in a sufficient quantity. IEPs usually follow a total immersion model which places ELLs into all-English classrooms (Rennie, 1993). Students must be immersed in a language-rich environment (Francis, Rivera, Leseaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006) that affords them the opportunity to contextualize the linguistic skills learned and comfortably use the new language for social and academic purposes. ELLs need to be constantly engaged in authentic reading and writing activities (Echevarria et al., 2008) to develop L2 literacy skills. Long (1996) states that students are able to internalize the L2 input if they have the opportunity to interact with and negotiate the meaning with teachers and peer classmates in L2 input. Wong-Fillmore (1985) suggests that the negotiation of meaning between student and teacher is beneficial in the acquisition of a language.

Although the input hypothesis and the idea of comprehensible input may be accepted theoretically, it lacks reliable evidence from research. Moreover, there are a number of arguments against his input hypothesis. Scarcella and Perkins (1987) discuss several reasons why input hypothesis receives criticism: 1) The hypothesis is elegantly simple; 2) It does not involve operational definitions which permit assessment by empirical investigation; 3) Krashen should show how the “mental organ” processes input; 4) It is unclear whether Krashen applies his hypothesis to all aspects of language or whether he only applies it to the syntactic and morphological structures; By emphasizing the importance of input, Krashen is deemphasizing the importance of other factors such as universal grammar, markedness conditions, and cognition.

Monolingual approach in ESL teaching. The twentieth century language teaching methods are characterized by the philosophy that “the less the L1 is used in the classroom, the better the teaching” (Cook, 2008, p. 180). The monolingual approach is known in ESL teaching as English-only (Brooks-Lewis, 2009). It is an approach that excludes translation and the mixing of L1 and L2, and uses only English as a reference system (Stern, 1992). The English language teaching approaches and methods – notably the Audiolingual method, the Natural Approach, and Communicative Language Teaching – subsequently relied exclusively or primarily on the target language (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), with the L1 used only as a last resort if at all (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Monolingual practice in the language classrooms of English-speaking

countries can be traced back to the Reform Movement or Americanization movement of the late 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, which was a reaction against the widespread grammar-translation method (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Cook, 2010; Hall & Cook, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stern, 1983).

Grammar translation method (GTM). GTM was also called the Classical Method because it was used to teach the classical languages of Latin and Greek as foreign languages in Europe in the 1970s (Chastain, 1988). From the 1840s to the 1940s, GTM dominated ESL/EFL teaching, and it has been continuously and widely used today (Richards & Rogers, 2001). The primary purpose of GTM was to read and appreciate foreign language literature (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) or to learn to be scholarly (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The purpose was also to gain proficiency in reading in a foreign language (Brown, 2001) or “to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 4). GTM in ESL/EFL teaching emphasized the translation of disconnected sentences, rather than the practical use of language (Cook, 2010; Stern, 1992). Learners were taught by focusing on “grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugation, translations of texts, and doing written exercises” (Brown, 2001, p. 18).

GTM, however, did not take into account the complex nature of language and the skills needed to communicate effectively. The central feature of GTM is accuracy is valued over fluency, particularly in listening and speaking. Students only show their

competence in English writing with correct grammatical representations (De Silva Joyce & Burns, 1999) but not fluency in communication. Students had fewer opportunities to share their thoughts and interact with teachers and classmates (Goodlad, 2004). Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the method is still used in ESL/EFL classrooms today due to the development that has occurred within this method especially in terms of speaking, listening, and interactive communication.

Direct method/natural method. The Reform Movement encouraged teaching in the target language, but permitted reference to the learners' L1 (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). It was at this time that direct methods stressing oral English became popular, and "English-only" became the norm in ESL classes (Baron, 1990). Direct Method also called natural method, which gained popularity in the early 20th century (most famously by way of the Berlitz schools), was the first method that excluded the L1 as a reference system, and made learners form 'direct' connections between the target language and visual aids (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stern, 1983, 1992). ESL teachers can teach the target language through using demonstration, graphic, and visual aids (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). According to Stern (1983), the basic rule of this method is that students cannot use their mother language, in other words, translation is not allowed. Direct Method included "lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between L1 and L2, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules" (Brown, 1994, p. 55). Grammar should be taught

inductively. In the Direct Method vocabulary is emphasized over grammar. Therefore, students practice vocabulary by using new words in complete sentences (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Direct Method contains multiple limitations. Chastain (1971) states that there are many words that cannot be translated directly in L2, leading to wasting time in making attempts for this purpose. Chastain believes that in Direct Method significant attention is not paid to reading and writing.

Audiolingual method. It is an approach based on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology, which became dominant in the United States during the 1940s-1960s (Celce-Murcia, 1991). According to Biazar (2015):

Behaviorist psychologists were concerned with observable behaviors of humans and animals and maintained that through operant conditioning, behavior could be controlled. Prominent behavioral psychologist, B.F. Skinner, also known as the father of operant conditioning, held that following a stimulus and response, there should be reinforcement and punishment in order to create behavior change. Reinforcement would lead to repeating the behavior whereas punishment, or negative reinforcement, would lead to the behavior's cessation. (p. 37)

The audio-lingual method views language learning as a behavior of habit formation. Language learners should stop using the mother tongue and form a habit of using the target language (TL). Accuracy in TL would develop with positive reinforcement while errors would be avoided with immediate correction (Biazar, 2015). Language teaching through this method included oral drills with rote repetition of the teacher who is a native-English speaker or of the recorded dialogues of native speakers. Language labs

with cubicles and headphones were set up to practice listening and repetition. Similar to the direct method, TL was used in instructions and interactions. Grammar was not taught deductively, instead learners acquire grammar inductively from the authentic input (Biazar, 2015).

Grounded in behaviorism, the audiolingual method failed to bring about significant change in L2 instruction. Although it fostered better pronunciation, it only prepared learners for specific unrealistic conversations. Even though learners had memorized language chunks or sentences, they had a difficulty in comprehending (Krashen & Terrell, 2000). Hence, the natural shortcomings of audiolingual method precluded any true L2 competence from developing.

Communicative language teaching (CLT). The advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) helped to shift the emphasis of ESL/EFL education from structure to the overall effectiveness of communication. The CLT gained more attention in early 1980's (Stern, 1983) and the concepts of CLT have been emphasized in ESL/EFL teaching in many parts of the world. The emphasis of communicative approach is on functional communication, social interaction, and real-life language use (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). CLT focuses on meaning, receptive skills (e.g., listening comprehension), social aspects of language, interactional dynamics of the classroom, and communication among students and between students and their teacher (Stern, 1983). The goal of communicative approach is not only to help learners gain the ability to make grammatically correct,

propositional statements about the experiential world, but also to help them develop the ability to use the language appropriately. This requires both verbal and non-verbal interaction with others based on social norms, as well as knowing how to interpret messages effectively in a given social setting (Nunan, 1989).

CLT fosters learners' communicative competence (Hymes, 1979). Canale and Swain (1980) describe communicative competence as including a balance of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (verbal and non-verbal communication strategies). Hymes (1979) emphasizes that learners should know not only the linguistic structures of a language but also the appropriate social situations to use the structures. According to Hymes (1979), communicative competence contains both knowledge and ability for language use in terms of four factors—possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and accepted usage.

CLT requires a change in the role of both teacher and student. CLT is a learner-centered approach in which learners are active in learning process. They communicate with their classmates through pair/group activities and try to improve their communicative abilities in various English contexts (Derakhshan & Torabi, 2015). The teachers' role has evolved from drill leaders to facilitators for students' communication (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). The evolution of the theory of CLT fosters the development of two other approaches—task-based learning and content-based instruction, which were introduced to realize the primary goals of CLT in ESL/EFL classrooms.

Task-based learning. In task-based learning, the task becomes the driving force for learning as it provides meaningful purposes and a real-world context for communicative exchanges in ESL/EFL classroom. The task offers an answer to the unnatural classroom environment by providing learners with authentic practice opportunities (Nunan, 2004). In addition, task-based learning validates the communicative language teaching principles, such as, using activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks; using language that is meaningful and supports the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This method for L2 instruction bridges the gap between learning and application in the real world.

Teachers should bear several assumptions about task-based learning before designing a lesson. The assumptions of task-based learning include (1) focus on process rather than product; (2) basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning; (3) learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in the activities and tasks; (4) activities and tasks can be either those that learners might need to achieve in real life or those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom; (5) activities and tasks of a task-based syllabus are sequenced according to difficulty; (6) the difficulty of a task depends on many factors including the learner's prior experiences, the task complexity, the required language for completing the task, and the extent to which support is available (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The task represents the activity or goal that is accomplished using the TL. It can be solving a puzzle, giving directions, making a telephone call, or even reading given instructions and assembling a toy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Ellis (2003) further described a task as a “work-plan” that will incorporate an information gap, a reasoning gap, or an opinion gap that helps motivate the learner. Additionally, a well-designed task should seek to engage learners in pragmatic use of the language, rather than for mere display.

Content-based instruction (CBI). In essence, a CBI environment is one in which language is taught through core content. It is grounded in two vital principles: (a) Students learn a L2 more successfully when language is used as a means of acquiring information – not just an end in itself, and (b) CBI better reflects an individual’s needs for learning a second-language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Shrum & Glisan (2005) further suggest the principles that teachers be aware of when planning for CBI instruction. Teachers should combine language goals with content goals. Students should develop language competencies by studying the content. Cognitive skills and language skills are necessary to perform the tasks. Integrating cultural concepts and goals should be a part of CBI.

Learner-centered approach. Learner-centered approach becomes popular in contemporary ESL teaching. Advocates of the learner-centered approach believe that school education should embrace a learner-centered perspective in order to maximize

academic achievement for all learners (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). McCombs and Whisler (1997) define “learner-centered” as the perspective that combined a focus on individual learners with a focus on learning. They further propose that the learner-centered paradigm should emphasize that learners are different in their “emotional states of minds, learning rates, learning styles, stages of development, abilities, talents, feelings of efficacy, and other academic and nonacademic attributes and needs” (p. 10). Furthermore, the learner-centered approach also stresses that learning occurs best in a favorable learning environment that is supportive of learners. In such a process, learners can see the meaning of their study, and link new information with prior and future knowledge in meaningful ways. In other words, learning is a process of “discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through the learner's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings” (McCombs & Whisler, 1997, p. 5).

The learner-centered approach has affected ESL/EFL instruction in several ways. Under its influence, the role of both students and teachers in the process of ESL/EFL instruction has been changed. On one hand, in a learner-centered approach, students are able to perform a more active and participatory role than in traditional approaches (Tudor, 1993). Students are able to have more autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. On the other hand, teachers' roles in learner-centered approach changed accordingly. In traditional classrooms, teachers play the role as authority, knowledge resource, and organizer of class activities. Whereas, in a learner-centered classroom, teachers play

additional roles such as preparing learners, analyzing learner needs, selecting methodology, transferring responsibility, and involving learners (Tudor, 1993).

Reconsideration of first language in ESL/EFL instruction. In recent years, there have been calls for reconsideration of monolingual teaching, on political, methodological, psycholinguistic, and other grounds (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Cook, 2010; Levine, 2011). Stern (1992) proposes that the use of L1 and L2 should be seen as complimentary depending on the situation and level in which a language is being acquired. Students' L1 is beneficial to the acquisition of the L2 in many ways. First, students' knowledge is built on the basis of their prior knowledge, thus L1 should be involved in L2 learning.

Researchers (Cook, 2001, 2008; Levine, 2011; Stern, 1992) suggest that TL be constructed on the basis of ELLs' existing language(s), and strategies of switching between L1 and L2 be valuable in language classrooms. Learners' prior knowledge provides a foundation for all future learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). ELLs' prior knowledge is encoded in their L1. Activation and building on prior knowledge requires connecting concepts and knowledge in English to learners' L1 cognitive schemata (Cummins, 2001a, 2007; Garcia, 2008). Incorporating L1 in L2 instruction is a way of building on learners' prior knowledge to optimize their learning (Cummins, 2007, 2009a).

Second, students' use of L1 promotes the efficient explanation of meanings. L1 can facilitate communication and comprehension when ELLs cannot draw adequate

knowledge from L2. Macaro (2001) argues that it is impractical to exclude the use of L1 from the L2 classroom because it deprives learners of an important tool for L2 learning. L1 is “the greatest asset any human being brings to the task of foreign language learning and it provides an indispensable Language Acquisition Support System” (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009, p. 66). L1 has functioned as a means of conceptualizing the world, has equipped learners with power, has enabled learners to discern nuances in L2 grammar, and has functioned as a means of acquiring L2 reading and writing skills (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Cohen (1998) finds that Chinese students switch L1 and L2 both intentionally and unintentionally. Intentional language switch occurs when the students purposely use L1 to aid the understanding of difficult concepts in L2. Conversely, unintentional shift occurs when the brain automatically refers to L1 that makes learning and communication easier. Cummins (2009b) supported the use of translation for its role in promoting language awareness, as well as learners’ pride in their bilingualism.

Third, L1 reduces ELLs’ affective barriers in L2 classrooms, facilitates ELLs’ socio-communication and academic progress. L1 can help establish a good relationship between the teacher and the students (Cook, 2010). L1 can foster ELLs’ motivation and reassurance, reduce their affective barriers to L2, and help avoid ELLs’ alienation among other learners (Cook, 2010; Littlewood & Yu, 2009). L1 reduces ELLs’ affective barriers to L2 learning and facilitates a rapid progress in L2 learning (Auerbach, 1993).

Fourth, L1 proficiency and literacy facilitate ELLs' L2 acquisition. Fougère (2011) finds that adolescents' L1 literacy positively impacts their L2 acquisition. ELLs who have developed proficiency in their L1 acquire a L2 more quickly than those who have not. The L1 "can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2" (Cummins, 2007, p. 238). The L1 may scaffold students' L2 output, and facilitate their higher-order thinking skills (Cummins, 2009a). Legitimizing L1 as a cognitive tool in ESL/EFL classrooms affirms ELLs' identities, promotes their bilingual competence, and empowers them in L2 learning (Cummins, 2001a; Garcia, 2008).

Lucas and Katz (1994) conducted observations and interviews to investigate nine exemplary K-12 Special Alternative Instructional Programs which emphasize "English-only" in the United States. Even though the teachers did not have any knowledge about students' L1, they still incorporated the students' L1 into their classes (Lucas & Katz, 1994) to serve students of several language backgrounds. Students were permitted to communicate with each other in their L1; they also used bilingual dictionaries, and incorporated their L1 into the writing process. The L1 was found to serve a number of purposes, including giving students access to the L2 academic content and classroom activities, enabling teachers to demonstrate respect for the students' languages and cultures, and establishing rapport between teachers and students (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

Studies examining native English speaking teachers' attitudes to the use of L1 in English language classes yielded mixed results. In Ford's (2009) research in a Japanese university, he found that native English speaking teachers favored "English-only" in the classroom, emphasizing the need to provide as much comprehensible input as possible, which aligns with mainstream L2 acquisition theory and methodology. Only one teacher of his group of ten participants, taking a critical pedagogy stance, consciously allowed students' L1—Japanese to be used in the classroom. McMillan and Rivers (2011) found that native English speaking teachers favored appropriate use of students' L1 in English language classrooms in a Japanese university, which is contrary to the official policy promoting the use of English exclusively.

With the empirical research findings of the positive influence of L1 on L2, most ESL teachers and educators acknowledge the legitimacy of incorporating L1 in ESL classrooms in the United States. They are aware of the importance of L1 in L2 acquisition, and gradually changing their attitudes and pedagogy from monolingual (English-only) to communicative or task-based approach (Cummins, 2009a). An effective teaching strategy involves drawing learners' attention to similarities and differences between L1 and TL (Cummins, 2007). Scholars who value L1 as a potentially useful resource in L2 learning emphasize the strategically incorporation of L1 in L2 teaching, rather than exclusion of L1 (Hall & Cook, 2012). Therefore, in IEPs, ELLs' L1 should be encouraged whenever they need to refer to L1 to communicate with their peers in difficult academic tasks. With

the help of L1, ELLs can better understand class tasks, assignments, and instructions as well as get better grades.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) describes good teaching as the one that bridges the cultures of the home environment and the school environment. ESL teachers should take ELLs' prior knowledge of L1 and home culture as a facilitator for L2 acquisition. The pedagogy which utilizes the ELLs' home cultural background and prior knowledge may work as a bridge between what ELLs have already known and what they are going to learn. ESL teachers should use students' home culture as a basis for learning new contents (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). ELLs' home cultural experiences can be an effective facilitator for their L2 acquisition. When the ESL teachers understand the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of ELLs, it is more likely that the ESL teachers adjust the academic content and the pedagogy to the ELLs' competence (Porto, 2010).

Culture in ESL/EFL instruction. Culture plays an important role in ESL/EFL instruction. In order to discover the relationship between culture and language, culture and language learning, there is a need to understand what culture is. Brooks (1968) classifies culture into formal and deep culture. *Formal culture* refers to an individual's relationship to the esthetic expressions and systematic structures of the society. In this sense, culture refers to great works of art and literature, and a process of personal refinement. *Deep culture*, on the other hand, refers to the slow and life-long process of associating oneself with the other members of the society; it is a gradual process of

accommodating one's behavior to the environment that is around him/her. In this sense, culture refers to patterns of living and a way of life. Cognitive theorists regard culture not as physical objects or observable behavior but a group's "cosmology" (Goffman, 1974, p. 27) or how experience is classified and understood (Robinson, 1985). For anthropologists culture is the "way of life of a people" (Hall, 1959, p. 43). It is the different ways of "organizing life, of thinking, and of conceiving the underlying assumptions about the family and the state, and of the economic system and of man himself" (Hall, 1959, p. 51). Generally speaking, culture encompasses not only physical objects or observable behaviors on the surface level, but also perception and belief toward the world, society, and life in a deep level, with the slightly variation of emphasis on either side by scholars.

Culture permeates every aspect of our lives. We live and behave with distinctive cultural rules and marks consciously and unconsciously. As we are shaped by our culture so does culture shape how we view the world (Damens, 1987). We may find references in our cultures for our behaviors and utterances. But in our daily lives, we do not consciously refer what we did or what we said to our culture. Instead, we behave and think with unconscious cultural marks. In addition, people's native culture exerts an influence on their values, behaviors, the ways of thinking, and the learning and use of L2 (Gay, 2000, Qi, 1998; Yu, 1996). Porter and Samovar (1991) explain that culture influences "what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about" (p. 21). People are products of their native

culture in which they were born, raised up, and educated. Their behavior and thoughts bear distinct marks of their native culture. People from the Chinese culture may think about and act differently from people who were born and educated in Western culture on the same issue. Kaplan (1972) suggests that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize discourse differently. In terms of writing and speaking, people from the Chinese culture prefer introducing background information first before the main idea, while people from Western culture prefer get to the point directly. Therefore, “all thoughts, feelings, and human activity are not simply natural but are the result of historical and personal experiences that become sedimented as culture in habit” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 37).

Language and culture cannot be isolated (Jiang, 2000). Language is a carrier of culture, and a “medium of expression for human society” (Sapir, 1929, p. 209). Language represents the society and culture of a particular group of people, therefore “no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.” (Sapir, 1929, p. 209) Culture is imbedded and inscribed in language. It is impossible to learn about the culture of a particular group of people without the knowledge about their language. Sapir (1929) explains the relationship between culture and language as:

In a sense, the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expresses that civilization. It is an illusion to think that we can

understand the significant outlines of a culture through sheer observation and without the guide of the linguistic symbolism which makes these outlines significant and intelligible to society. (p. 209)

Jiang (2000) describes the relationship between language and culture using an iceberg metaphor, “The visible part is the language, with a small part of culture; the greater part, lying hidden beneath the surface, is the invisible aspect of culture.” (p. 328)

The culture, especially the hidden part of the culture has a great impact upon how people think.

Culture and learning are interconnected (Kozulin, 2003). Hymes (1979) contends that based on the language-as-communication theory, language will only become meaningful when it is realized as context-embedded social actions (Hall, 2002). Vygotsky (1986) emphasizes the role of social interaction in people’s cognitive development, and indicates that people construct new knowledge through interaction with the social environment and communication with others. Therefore, ELLs’ L2 development occurs in the process of interaction with their peers and teachers as well as with the target culture.

The more ELLs engaged in the interaction and communication with people in the language classroom or in the society, the more their L2 learning improved.

People in different cultures have a different view about schooling and the way of teaching and learning. With the difference of educational practices in the U.S. culture and in ELLs’ home culture, most ELLs experience *academic culture shock* in IEPs.

“Academic culture shock or learning shock” (Gu, 2009, p. 40) refers to “unpleasant

feelings and difficult experiences that learners encounter when they are exposed to a new learning environment” (Gu, 2009, p. 42). ELLs suffer from academic culture shock due to a new learning environment that causes them to “struggle with both insufficient [English] language ability and a contrasting teaching and learning tradition” (p. 42). An academic culture shock can be caused by the differences in learning environment, educational system, lecture style, class activities, assessment, teacher’s expectations, teacher-students relationship, and students’ attitudes towards school and class. Therefore, how to bridge the gap between target culture and ELLs’ home culture to help ELLs to overcome the academic culture shock and to help them succeed in the IEPs has been a major question confronting ESL teachers and educators. ELLs bring different cultures into the classroom; hence, understanding those cultures plays an important role in enhancing effective teaching in an ESL/EFL classroom.

Students’ home culture is a facilitator for their academic learning in a multicultural setting (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Social language is context-embedded, that is, comprehension is aided by familiar cultural context clues and modeling and/or demonstrations (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (2000) points out that the more the text or ESL context is congruent with ELLs’ home culture, prior experience or knowledge, the better the ELLs can understand and comprehend the text, and improve their L2 acquisition and literacy. ELLs’ home culture can bridge the gap between what ELLs have already known with what they are going to learn, and facilitate L2 acquisition in IEPs. In

this respect, culture can facilitate language learning. Besides, integrating cultural content in IEPs can also promote ELLs' knowledge about different cultures and mutual understandings, and reduce prejudice towards people from alien cultures. As the ELLs' English proficiency improved gradually, they become more willing to be involved in American culture, talk to American peers, and understand the American culture with fewer barriers. In this sense, improvement in language learning facilitates the cross-cultural communication and understanding.

In addition, in a multicultural setting, students' first language is also a facilitator for their academic learning. Language is a carrier of culture, and a "medium of expression for human society" (Sapir, 1929, p. 209). Language represents the society and culture of a particular group of people, therefore "no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality" (Sapir, 1929, p. 209). People's native language is a part of their culture (Jiang, 2000). In IEPs, ELLs' L1 is a valuable asset of their culture. Legitimizing ELLs' L1 as a cognitive tool in ESL classrooms challenges the subordinate status of minority groups, affirms the students' identities, and promotes their identities of competence (Cummins, 2001a; Garcia, 2008). The L1 "can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2" (Cummins, 2007, p. 238). ELLs' learning can be facilitated if ESL teachers incorporate their L1 into ESL teaching.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

Ladson-Billings (1994) proposes a theory of CRP from her research about the successful teachers of African American students. CRP bridges the gap between students' home culture and school culture by incorporating students' home cultural and linguistic knowledge. CRP aims to improve students' academic achievement, nurture and support students' cultural competence, and develop students' sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Ladson-Billings (1995b) outlines theoretical underpinnings that are critical to the development of CRP, including "the conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers; the manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers; and the conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers" (p.478).

Helping students become academically successful is one of the primary responsibilities of culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant ESL teachers hold high academic expectations and behavior standards for all students (Lee, 2010). Students' home culture is a facilitator for their academic learning in a multicultural setting (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In order to help students' succeed academically, culturally relevant teachers emphasize the importance of students' home culture as a facilitator for their academic learning—English proficiency for ELLs in IEPs. ESL teachers can incorporate ELLs' cultures through various pedagogical activities such as presentations, discussions, writing assignments, and field trips, which connect

language learning to the ELLs' cultures and include the practice of all four language skills. Through engaging these activities, ELL can develop their language skills with the support of their cultures.

To become culturally competent, students should cultivate “the ability to function effectively in their culture of origin” (Ladson Billings, 2000, p.210), as well as the willingness to be involved in school cultures, approach new cultures, and perform appropriately in cross-cultural communications. Academic success of minority students should not come at the “expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475), instead students' cultures should be utilized “as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 161).) CRP provides a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while accomplishing academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant ESL teachers value students' native cultures, and create strong ties with parents and the ethnic community (Osborne, 1996). Students' cultural competence can be supported if teachers acknowledge the legitimacy of the students' home language and culture as funds of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Morrison et al., 2008). Culturally relevant teachers provide students access to classroom knowledge by tapping into their experiences and culture—building bridges between prior knowledge and new content (Foster, 1992).

Critical consciousness is the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo and social inequities, and proactively try to change it

(Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In order for teachers to engage in activities that will lead to social change, they must understand their role as political beings (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRP “is about questioning the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). Culturally relevant teachers motivate students to learn the basic knowledge, and develop a set of autonomous skills to examine and criticize the existing social inequality through critical literacy and classroom dialogues (Leonard et al. 2009). Critical literacy goes beyond inquiry to encourage students to question, examine, and dispute the power relations that exist in their community and even the world at large (Gutstein, 2006). ESL teachers should provide ELLs with the opportunity to discuss the content of class materials and readings covering social issues and problems. Through critical discussions, ELLs will become more conscious about the social inequity, and more likely to take actions to challenge and transform it.

CRP is both sociocultural and sociopolitical in nature, prompting teachers to reflect upon their positions as change agents (Gutstein, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an equity pedagogy (Banks, 2006). Banks and Banks (1995) define equity pedagogy as “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society” (p. 152). They claim:

It is not sufficient to help students learn to read, write, and compute within our educational system without learning to question its assumptions, paradigms, and

hegemonic characteristics. Helping students become reflective and active citizens of a democratic society is the essence of equity pedagogy. ...An education for equity enables students not only to acquire basic skills but to use those skills to become effective agents for social change. (p. 152)

Teachers who embrace this social justice challenge of providing a democratic and equitable education must teach in culturally relevant ways or take into consideration and “use knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students” in order for them to experience school success (Banks, 2001b, p. 233). “Culturally relevant teachers create learning environments that support, develop, and draw from the students’ cultural and ethnic identities.” (Bales & Saffold, 2011, p. 961) CRP uses ELLs’ home culture as a facilitator, finds a connection between their home culture and the target culture, fosters their confidence in their home culture and self-identity, and makes them succeed academically as their White peers (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Besides CRP also aims to cultivate students’ critical consciousness, knowledge, and attitudes toward the existing inequity in every aspect of school and society, and encourage them to become active agents to challenge and change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In these sense, CRP is liberatory—a pedagogy of empowerment (Giroux & Simon, 1989). It is not necessary to be an expert in every culture of the world. What matters is that teachers and students should work together to cultivate and develop multicultural willingness and awareness to respect and explore different cultures (Benavides, 1992). “Teaching is a calling, a responsibility not only to students and families but to the community.” (Lipman, 1995, p. 206) In the context of English-only instruction in IEPs, ESL teachers still have choices in

the structure of the classroom interactions, and the messages about identity they communicate to their students (Cummins, 2001b). “The extent to which ESL teachers value ELLs’ linguistic resources in teaching is a measure of our willingness to address basic inequities in the broader society.” (Auerbach, 1993, p. 30) ESL teachers individually and collectively have the potential to create a context of empowerment (Cummins, 2001b).

Critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire is the father of culturally relevant pedagogy. He is known for his powerful book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which is one of the foundational texts in the field of *critical pedagogy*. In the book, he criticizes the “banking” model of education, and proposes “a problem-solving education where the oppressed are educated and empowered to perceive critically their situation, and to transform their current status actively through the dialogue with the oppressor” (Freire, 2000, p.12). “The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness, and anesthetizes and inhibits creative power; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.” (Freire, 2000, p.81) Freire (2000) provides a clear contrast of the two kinds of education:

...banking education attempts, by mythicizing reality, conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing. Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. *Banking education* treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and

historical vocation of becoming more fully human. *Problem-posing education* bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation. In sum, banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take the people's historicity as their starting point. (pp. 64-65)

He argues that the term "oppressor" and "oppressed" are related not only to political struggle. These terms can also be used to describe and analyze the relationship between teacher and students. The oppressors usually have more power and privilege to dehumanize or oppress the oppressed. In schools, teachers usually have more power, authority, and knowledge compared with their students. Teachers are the oppressor, students are the oppressed. Students, the oppressed, have no purpose and say in what they should learn except those their teachers, the oppressor, prescribe for them to learn (Freire, 2000). The struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed is to liberate both sides, and transform the world to become more democratic and humane. Similarly, our pedagogy in schools should aim at liberating both teachers and students, and to empower students to transform our schools for more democratic community since "political action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the world, and, therefore, action with the oppressed" (Freire, 2000, p.48). Freire (2000) describes such kind of pedagogy as "humanizing pedagogy":

...humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed. In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teachers (in this instance, the revolutionary leadership) can manipulate the students (in this instance, the

oppressed), because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves. (p. 50-51)

Humanizing pedagogy emphasizes critical dialogue between teachers and students which unveils the reality of the world through cultivating students' critical consciousness, and empowers students to take actions to challenge and transform inequity in both schools and society. Teachers should take the role as a revolutionary leadership, in which "teachers and students (leadership and people) co-intent on reality, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 2000, p.69). Freire's (2000) work and subsequent studies and teaching innovations on critical pedagogy provide inspiration to educators searching for possible solutions to problems in culturally diverse classrooms.

Comparing CRP and critical pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy shares many similarities with critical pedagogy, which, according to Giroux and Simon (1989):

... refers to a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations. It can be understood as a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular "moral character." As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. (p. 239)

Another point of convergence between critical and culturally relevant pedagogy is that both "strive to incorporate student experience as 'official' content" (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 250). Both critical pedagogy and CRP value the importance of minority students' culture as a facilitator in their academic learning, and developing critical consciousness

for students to critically examine inequalities in both schools and society. Ladson-Billings (2000) claims that:

Culturally relevant teachers recognize that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum. The individual traits of achievement and cultural competence must be supported by sociopolitical critique that helps students understand the ways that social structures and practices help reproduce inequities. (p. 210)

It is essential to cultivate teachers' critical consciousness on sociocultural and sociopolitical issues, and engage them in an endeavor which aims to develop students' critical consciousness.

Literature on the implementation of CRP. There is an extensive amount of research about the implementation of CRP in classroom settings, and how CRP impacts students' academic learning (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Camangian, 2010; Gay, 2010; Hefflin, 2002; Lee, 2006; Rickford, 2001). Most of the studies on CRP are case studies, ethnographies, or descriptive studies, thereby employing data collection strategies such as interviews, observations, journaling, and examination of documents (Morrison et al., 2008). Hefflin (2002) proposes a CRP framework for teaching literacy, which focuses on culturally conscious themes in the literature, uses call-and-response interaction patterns with the students, makes communal connections with the students' experiences, and makes individual linkages to the literature. Lee's (2006) Cultural Modeling Project is "a framework for the design of curriculum and learning environments that links everyday knowledge with learning academic subject matter, with a particular focus on racial/ethnic minority groups, especially youth of African descent" (p. 308). Leonard, Napp and

Adeleke (2009) examine a case study of two teachers implementing CRP for ninth and tenth grade ELLs in a math classroom. They find that CRP provided ELLs with the opportunity to learn mathematics and to develop critical consciousness. CRP changed two teachers' beliefs about teaching mathematics and their roles in the mathematics classroom. In Morrison, Robbins, and Rose's (2008) meta-analysis of 45 classroom-based research studies from 1995 to 2008, less than one third of the classroom teachers utilized CRP as a way to promote academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Therefore, more research effort is needed to examine teachers' implementation of CRP in classroom settings to empower the students from different backgrounds to promote their academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

Throughout the literature, however, there were limited studies of CRP with adult ELLs, such as university IEP, or adult ESL programs (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). Shaw (2001) concludes that culture and diversity played a significant role in the adult education ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classroom. Both teachers and students make positive or negative generalizations about people from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers adjusted the teaching strategies to the cultural backgrounds of students. Rhodes (2013) conducts a survey to 134 ESOL and EAP (English for academic purpose) teachers for their frequency of use and perceived importance of the 17 items of culturally responsive teaching practices. The study found that adult education ESOL and EAP teachers did not support or include contents about anti-immigrant discrimination or

bias in regular classes. Rymes (2002) studied an innovative approach to an ESOL methods course. Throughout the course, pre-service teachers completed a practicum requirement by teaching ESOL in the homes of a Spanish-speaking, largely Mexican community. The pre-service teachers' feelings and attitudes were transformed by the experience, and they became more skilled to incorporate the students' native language in teaching.

Many studies have discussed the difficulties that pre-service and in-service teachers have in implementing CRP in their teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 1995; Gay & Howard, 2000; Nasir et al., 2008; Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004). Young (2010) reveals the challenges of incorporating CRP in teaching include the need to (a) raise the racial consciousness of educators and encourage them to confront their own cultural biases, (b) address systemic roots of racism in school policies and practices, and (c) adequately equip pre-service and in-service teachers with the knowledge of how to implement CRP theories into practice. Sleeter (2012) discusses three factors that contribute to the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy: (a) a persistence of faulty and simplistic conceptions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is, (b) too little research connecting its use with student achievement, and (c) elite and white fear of losing national and global hegemony. Nasir et al. (2008) emphasize that one of the major threats to culturally relevant teaching is routinizing it. CRP is not simply making connections to everyday experiences. It is crucial to understand the teaching-learning

process where the lives of teachers and students with different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds intersect. Young (2010) and Sleeter (2012) both recommend more evidence-based research on utilization of the theory of CRP in classroom instruction as well as the connection between the theory and the students' outcome including academic achievement.

The synthesis undertaken by Morrison , Robbins, & Rose (2008) reveals that many studies on culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy are about homogeneous classes of K-12 students (p. 443), including African American (King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007), all Latino/a (Gault, 2003; Irizarry, 2007), Native Americans (Cazden and Leggett, 1981; Erickson and Mohatt, 1982), Hawaiian children (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp, 1987), and ELLs (Cummins, 1986; Nieto, 2002; Richards, 2003). However, fewer studies have examined the culturally relevant teaching practices used to create a culturally responsive environment where ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity are the norm, truly multicultural classrooms, such as the IEPs for adult ELLs. In addition, compared with the large number of studies on international students (Chen, 2010; Cheng, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Mack, 2012; Rocca, 2010) in general, adult ELLs in IEPs are less studied in qualitative research (Gaulin, 2006). Therefore, this qualitative case study bridges the existing gap in the literature about CRP by providing a thorough examination of the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers encounter in IEPs,

their perceptions about ELLs' L1 and home culture in IEPs, and how they incorporate ELLs' linguistic and cultural background knowledge in ESL teaching.

Chapter Three: Method

Overview

The researcher employed the method of single instrumental case study to explore the ESL teachers' implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in an intensive English program (IEP) at an English Language Center (ELC) affiliated with Mountain University (pseudonym)—a research university in the American west. Through the investigation of ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in an intensive English program, this study will provide insights for teachers in IEPs serving diverse learners. This study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs?
2. How do ESL teachers perceive ELLs' home culture and first language in the IEP?
3. How do ESL teachers describe their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' culture and first language?
4. What culturally relevant pedagogical practices are enacted in IEP classrooms?

The participants are four ESL teachers in the ELC at the Mountain University. The participants were recruited through criterion sampling and snowball sampling strategy.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, nonparticipant observations, and document analysis. The data collection process lasted for five months.

The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews of four participants for a duration of forty minutes to one hour for each interview. The researcher observed each participant's class for minimum of three times for two hours each time. The researcher drew situational maps (Clarke, 2005) (see Appendix XI) in the observation field notes to present a basic layout of the classrooms. In addition to interviews and observations, the researcher collected relevant documents of the IEP from the ELC director, the ELC admission office, the participant teachers, and ELC website. Relevant documents included: curriculum, syllabus, handouts, student enrollment data, and student handbook. The researcher kept memos to record her reflections after interviews and observations.

The data were analyzed through following procedures: a) read the data and begin interpreting it through memo writing, b) manage the data and identify the units for analysis, c) classify the data into meaningful categories as a means to begin to interpret the data, and d) synthesize and report significant patterns or themes found in the data. The researcher entered all the data from interview transcripts and observation field notes into the Nvivo—a qualitative data analysis software, to organize the data under the nodes to explore the emerging themes.

Case Study Method

Yin (2009) states that, “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context.” (p. 18) An instrumental case study is intended to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern (Stake, 1995). Case studies that reveal the nuances of enacting culturally relevant pedagogy with diverse ethnic and language minorities can help the educational community to understand “some of the enabling and disabling conditions...and move us toward a more just and equitable society” (Gutstein, 2006, p. 41).

The site selection, teachers’ demographics, and students’ demographics contributed to the uniqueness of this case. The intensive English program (IEP) in the English Language Center (ELC) of Mountain University established in 1975. The ELC currently employed seven staff, has five Lecturers, five Senior Teachers, and ten Teachers. According to the student enrollment data (see Appendix V) of the ELC in 2015-2016 school year, the number of students enrolled in the winter quarter is 178, in the spring quarter is 157, and in the summer quarter is 106. The top three countries of origin are China, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait although the number varies slightly among these three countries in each quarter. There are ELLs from ten other countries, but their population is comparatively small.

The participants were four ESL teachers from the IEP (see Table 1) All the four participant teachers have Master’s degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of

Other Languages), TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), or ESL (English as a Second Language). The participants were recruited through criterion sampling and snowball sampling strategy. In criterion sampling, all cases must meet some criteria which are useful for quality assurance. The criteria for selection were: (a) full-time faculty in the IEP; (b) educational background in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language); (c) minimum of three years of teaching experience at the ELC; and (d) minimum of one year ESL teaching experience abroad. In snowball sampling, researchers identify cases of interest from people who know people who are information-rich (Creswell, 2013, p.158).

Setting

The site of this research is an intensive English program (IEP) in an English Language Center (ELC) affiliated to Mountain University (pseudonym). The ELC was established in September, 1975. Its purpose was to fulfill the needs of international students who wished to study at the university, but were without adequate English language skills to begin their studies. The vision of the ELC is to develop a collaborative program committed to high-quality English language instruction, community engagement, and global citizenry. The mission of the ELC is to support the goals of the university and to prepare its students with the necessary communicative and cultural competencies to be successful members of the university and other U.S. institutions of Higher Education.

The instructors are highly qualified professionals with Master's or Ph.D. degrees. Most faculty have lived and taught in other countries, including France, China, Taiwan, Korea, Chile, Ecuador, South Africa, and Senegal. The ELC currently has five Lecturers, five Senior Teachers, and ten Teachers.

The ELC accepts year-round enrollment. According to the student enrollment data (see Appendix V) of the ELC in 2015-2016 school year, the number of students enrolled in the winter quarter is 178, in the spring quarter is 157, and in the summer quarter is 106. The top three countries of origin are China, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait although the number varies slightly among these three countries in each quarter. There are ELLs from ten other countries, but their population is comparatively small. The configuration of ELLs population explains some of the ESL teachers' concern about creating an inclusive classroom environment and facilitating cross-cultural communication. The ELC provides new and current students with a variety of services and learning experiences to enrich student lives academically, culturally, and socially. Each new ELC student is assigned an advisor, a Teacher or Senior Teacher, when they are enrolled in the ELC, they have an advisor throughout their stay in the ELC. The advisor assists students with course registration, academic applications, letters of support or recommendation, and any other academic questions or concerns the student may have.

The ELC completed a curricular overhaul, updating most of the IEP in 2013-2014. The program moved to a content-based curriculum with integrated skills courses modeled

after international language proficiency standards (see Appendix XII). The ELC began offering the fully redesigned curriculum in Fall Quarter 2014. The IEP curriculum at the ELC (see Appendix VI) is divided into five levels— foundations, intermediate low, intermediate high, advanced low, and advanced high. Each level consists of twenty class hours each week. Focus classes are electives. The students are required to take at least one. Students learn language skills, content, and culture in focus classes. The ELC provides credit-bearing level of courses called the *Launch Curriculum*, which includes such courses as Speaking Strategically (4 credits), Writing that Matters (4 credits), and Exploring US Culture (4 credits). By taking these courses, ELLs can earn up to 12 undergraduate credits that will count toward graduation.

Participants

The researcher contacted the Director of the English Language Center (ELC) to explain the purpose of the research and the process of data collection. The researcher requested a letter of support which is required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Mountain University. The researcher obtained IRB approval on 5/9/2016.

The participants are four ESL teachers from the ELC affiliated with the Mountain University. The demographic information about the participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information about the Participants

Name	Gender	Ethnic identity	First language	Number of languages spoken	Highest level of education	ESL certification	Number of years at the ELC	Number of years teaching ESL abroad & level
Amy	Female	Caucasian	English	4	Ed.D	M.A. in TESOL	7	10, university
Tyler	Male	Caucasian	English	3	MA	M.A. in TESOL	4	6.5, post-secondary, university
Isabella	Female	Russian	Russian	2	MA	M.A. in TESL	6	1, middle school
Nicole	Female	Caucasian	English	3	MA	M.A. in ESL	7	3, post-secondary

The participants were recruited through criterion sampling and snowball sampling strategy. In criterion sampling, all cases must meet some criteria which are useful for quality assurance. The criteria for selection were: (a) full-time faculty in the IEP; (b) educational background in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language); (c) minimum of three years of teaching experience in the ELC; and (d) a minimum of one year ESL teaching experience abroad. In snowball sampling, researchers identify cases of interest from people who know people who are information-rich (Creswell, 2013, p.158). The researcher sent a recruitment email to the ELC Director who helped to forward the email to the ELC faculty (see Appendix I). Two teachers responded, and expressed their willingness to participate. One of them helped the researcher connect with two other teachers who would be interested in the study. All four of the ESL teachers agreed to participate in the research project. The participants were assured that their names and school site would be kept confidential.

Pseudonyms are used for all participants. Since the IEP accepts student enrollment in four quarters—fall, winter, spring, and summer, the teacher participants teach all year around.

Amy. Amy (pseudonym) is in her 40s, about 5.7 feet tall, with shoulder-length curly brown hair. She is energetic. She has a positive and optimistic attitude toward life, even though she has been struggling with breast cancer. She identified herself as a Caucasian. She grew up in California. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California in film writing. Her graduate degree is from Monterey Institute of International Studies in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). She is currently studying at the College of Education of the Mountain University for Ed.D degree in the Curriculum and Instruction program. She lived eight years in Finland and two years in Japan. She has taught ESL in Finland, both in company and university settings. She has taught ESL at a private women's college, in Nagoya, Japan. She has taught ESL in the US for three years. She speaks four languages with different degrees fluency—English, Finnish, French, and Japanese.

She started teaching at the ELC in 2010. She was teaching integrated skills class in intermediate high level, a business writing class, and a focus class—sports at the time of the interviews. She usually teaches 12 hours a week, which is considered full time. She develops her own syllabus, course outlines, essential questions, learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments.

She indicates that her language learning experiences and teaching experience abroad positively influence her current teaching at the ELC, and help her understand the students' struggle and frustrations better. She thinks language learning process does not go just up, it goes like "stairs", sometimes it goes back a little, and sometimes it stays the same. She states that she sees the importance of culture for learning a language.

Tyler. Tyler (pseudonym) is in his late 30s, about 5.9 inches tall. He is active and talkative. He considers himself White. He was born in Denver. He speaks English as his mother tongue, and is fluent in Spanish. His wife is from Venezuela, so both languages are spoken at home. He learned Arabic briefly for a few semesters. He states that his language learning experience make him more empathetic to the students, and enable him to help the students overcome the difficulties. He received a BA in Spanish with minor in French from the University of Colorado; a MA in English with emphasis in TESOL from San Francisco State University, and a MA in Professional Communication from the University of Denver. He shares that his formal educational background facilitates his teaching and helps him understand students' second language acquisition.

He has been teaching ESL for 8.5 years in the U.S. in the Intensive English academic language programs for San Francisco State University, Florida International University, and University of Denver. He also taught at two private language schools in San Francisco. He has been teaching in the ELC for four years. He taught every level except for the beginning level. He has taught writing, oral communication class, and the focus

classes—service learning and pronunciation. In the future, he wants to focus on creative writing, like poetry, because all of they do here is academic writing.

He taught for 6.5 years in Chile, Venezuela, and South Korea. He learned how to become a teacher when he taught abroad. He states that one of the biggest things he picked up overseas was not just how to be a good language teacher, but also to better understand cultural elements and learn how to manage classrooms.

Isabella. Isabella (pseudonym) is in her late 30s, about 5.7 feet tall. She is energetic and active. She was born in the Soviet Union. Her mother was half Russian and half Belorussian, and her father was half Russian half Ukrainian. She considers herself Russian. She immigrated to USA in 2004 from Almaty, Kazakhstan. Her first language is Russian. English is her second language. She has a Bachelor's degree in Teaching English and Translation from Kazakhstan, a Master's degree in Teaching ESL from the University of North Texas. She has been teaching ESL for 8 years in the US, 2 years in a Community College in Texas, and 6 years at the ELC. She has taught almost everything, except for the advanced high level. She was teaching advanced low level at the time of the interview.

She states that her educational background is helpful for her teaching. She learned not only English, but also pedagogy and methodology. For her Master's program, she was able to observe university IEP classes and do practicum in different places with refugees and immigrants. She is currently working on a graduate certificate in Global Affairs at the University of Denver. She has taken classes on World Religions, War and Terrorism,

Community and Cooperation, and Competition and Conflict. The classes help her teaching at the ELC. She can relate to her students on many levels. She indicates that the classes help her understand what topics might be sensitive to discuss in the ELC. She does not see her role limited to being a language teacher. She feels that oftentimes teachers are liaisons between the students and the university community as well as community at large.

Nicole. Nicole (pseudonym) is in her mid 30s, and is about 5.5 feet tall. She identifies herself as a Caucasian. She was born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Her mother tongue is English, her second language is Spanish, and her third language is Portuguese. She received her B.A. in English Literature, and Spanish Literature. She has an M.A. in Adult ESL Education from the University of Colorado. She taught ESL in Mexico, New Zealand, and Brazil. She has been teaching ESL in the U.S. since 2005, and in the ELC for five years. In the past two years, she focused almost exclusively on the advance high integrated skills classes. She is teaching the advanced high oral communication, writing workshop, and sustainability at the time of the interview. She believes that she has strong foundational training in both her Master's program and teaching overseas. She states that her teaching experience in New Zealand makes her more thoughtful about teaching to students from various kinds of cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, nonparticipant observations, and document analysis (curriculum, syllabus, handouts, student enrollment data, and student handbook). Data from multiple sources complement each other, and enable the researcher to explore the IEP in detail. What the researcher observed about the ESL teachers' implementation of CRP aligned with the ESL teachers' perception of CRP which aims to promote ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, and ESL teachers' description of their culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The data collection began at the end of April, 2016 and lasted for five months. The data collection is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Data Collection

Research questions	Unit of analysis	Data source	Research methods	Data analysis	Timeline
What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs?	ESL teachers' difficulties and challenges	Interview transcript	Semi-structured interview	Codes and themes, descriptive, explanation, synthesis of themes	April 2016
How do ESL teachers perceive ELLs' home culture and first language in the	ESL teachers' beliefs on students' culture and first language	Interview transcript	Semi-structured interview	Codes and themes, descriptive, explanation, synthesis of themes	May 2016

IEP?					
How do ESL teachers describe their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' culture and first language?	ESL teacher's description about their pedagogy; ESL teachers' knowledge about culturally relevant pedagogy	Interview transcript, documents	Semi-structured interview, document analysis	Codes and themes, descriptive, explanation, synthesis of themes	July-August 2016
What culturally relevant pedagogical practices are enacted in IEP classrooms?	ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in IEPs	Observation field notes, documents	Non-participant observation, document analysis	Codes and themes, descriptive, explanation, synthesis of themes	July-August 2016

Interviews. Interviewing is the primary data collection technique in naturalist inquiry. An interview is “a conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149). The most common purpose is “to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Kavale (1996) states that, “interviews are powerful tools for obtaining knowledge about human experience and behavior” (p. 72). Interviews enable researchers to understand the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of those experiences (Seidman, 2006). Patton (2002) proposes that in-depth data collection such as interviews can discover important themes and patterns.

In-depth interviewing is a conversation between the researcher and participant and can include structured to open-ended questioning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher selected the semi-structured interview method to narrow down the topics. A completely unstructured interview has the risk of not eliciting the topics or themes more

closely related to the research questions under consideration. The interview protocol (see Appendix III) includes open-ended questions. The researcher conducted a pilot interview to test the validity of the protocol and to refine the interview questions and the procedures.

Pilot interview. The researcher sent an email to the ELC Director to request his recommendation of one ELC teacher to participate in the pilot interview. The researcher got connected to Amy with the recommendation from the ELC Director. The researcher conducted two pilot interviews in Amy's office and in the library at the ELC on 4/23/2015 and 5/1/2015. The researcher interviewed the participant about her educational background and teaching experiences, her current teaching at the ELC, and the difficulties she experienced in the IEP. The pilot interview led the researcher to rethink the research questions, and make revisions to some of the interview questions, and understand the specific details that the researcher need to pay attention to during the interview. Some questions were too broad, for example, "What do you think about students' culture?" The researcher made revisions to the interview questions to make sure that they were more specific and clear, and the interviews would produce high quality data.

Establishing a rapport with the interviewee and creating a comfortable interview environment make the interview more productive. As an interviewer, one must have a good knowledge and preparation of the questions to ensure the flow of the interview. Member checking is important to improve the quality of the transcripts. Transcription is

hard for people who are not native-English speakers. In the transcription process, the researcher had difficulty hearing clearly and understanding the meaning of some words. Therefore, it was necessary to take the recordings or transcripts back to the interviewee, and ask his/her help to clarify some words.

Semi-structured participant interview. The researcher sent emails to the participants to collect their background information before the first interview (see Appendix II). This included information such as ethnic identity, hometown, educational background, and previous work experiences. This background information enables the researcher to know the participants beforehand, and facilitates the interview. The participants signed the informed consent form (see Appendix XII) voluntarily before the first interview. The informed consent form contains the purpose of the study, compensations, benefits and risks involved in the interview and observation, time length of the interview and observation, and how the results of the research will be used. The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant (see Table 3) in their office in the ELC, or a location that is quiet and convenient for them. Each interview lasted about forty minutes to one hour. The interviews were recorded and saved by voice memos on iPhone. The voice recordings were copied and pasted to a lap-top computer right after each interview for further transcription.

Table 3

Interview Timesheet

	Amy	Isabella	Nicole	Tyler
First interview	4/28/2016	4/29/2016	4/26/2016	4/25/2016
Second interview	5/2/2016	5/13/2016	5/12/2016	5/18/2016
Third interview	7/21/2016	7/25/2016	8/12/2016	8/2/2016

The first interviews were completed in April, 2016. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked a few follow-up questions about the participants' background information. The researcher collected data about ESL teachers' challenges and difficulties in teaching ELLs. The researcher also asked probing questions about the participants' current teaching at the ELC, the ELC students, the relationship between the teacher and students, and the knowledge and skills that the teachers thought were most important for students to learn in the IEP.

The second interviews were completed in May, 2016. These interviews focused on the participants' thoughts and attitudes about ELLs' home culture and first language in ESL learning. In order to get more information about the research questions, the researcher asked probing questions about how they incorporate the students' cultural and linguistic background knowledge into their teaching, what difficulties they encounter, and what they do when students' speak the first language in class.

The third interviews were completed in July-August, 2016. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the participants' description about the inclusion of ELLs' cultural and linguistic knowledge in their pedagogical practice. The probing questions

related to the rationale of the pedagogical activities, how the activities related to course objectives, and the participants' understanding of the culturally relevant pedagogy.

After each interview, the researcher wrote memos about her reflections, feelings, thoughts, confusions, and initial interpretations. Memos provide qualitative researchers with the opportunity to engage in self-reflection. John Dewey (1938) argued that self-reflection is essential for intellectual development. In the memos, the researcher documented the strengths and weaknesses of each interview, which helped the researcher to improve subsequent interviews. The memos helped the researcher recall the details of the interview environment, the participants, the interaction between the participants and the researcher, and the researcher's psychological activities during the interview.

Observation. Observation is defined as “the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98). Researchers write field notes to describe the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspective of those observed (Patton, 1990). The advantage of observations is that they maximize the researchers' ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, and customs (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Nonparticipant observation requires that the observer remain as unobtrusive as possible at the observation site and avoid being involved in any interactions with the

participants under study. Hence, events or behaviors of participants may be recorded as they actually occur; this maximizes discoveries and descriptions (Gredler, 1996). In nonparticipant observation, researchers are independent and non-judgmental outsiders who do not form part of the group under observation; they can step in and out of the group at any time, interacting and conversing with the group, and developing productive relationships with the participants (Schneider et al., 2007).

Pilot observation. The researcher conducted a pilot observation of one of the participant teachers' classes to get a general understanding of the IEP classroom dynamics on 2/11/2016. The researcher used the synthesis of culturally relevant pedagogy in the K-12 classrooms (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008) as an observation protocol (see Appendix IV). It includes three principles of the culturally relevant pedagogy—high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Each principle further includes characteristics of teachers' pedagogical practices in K-12 classrooms. The researcher observed the ESL teacher's pedagogical practices in the IEP, and noted if these pedagogical practices match the ones in the protocol. The researcher also noted the pedagogical practices that did not fall within the protocol in order to examine overall patterns and trends.

Non-participant observation. The researcher observed each participant's class three times for an entire class period (approximately two hours) to collect the data about teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The researcher conducted the

observations in July-August, 2016. The researcher observed intermediate low level writing class, intermediate high level integrated skills class, intermediate high level oral communication class, advanced low level integrated skills class, advanced high level oral communication class, and one focus class on sustainability. The researcher completed a total of 22 observation hours (see Table 4).

Table 4

Observation Timesheet

Name	Dates	Classes	Length (hours)
Amy	7/11/2016	advanced low integrated skills	2
	7/12/2016		2
	7/14/2016		2
Isabella	7/18/2016	intermediate high integrated skills	2
	7/19/2016		2
	7/20/2016		2
	7/26/2016	intermediate high oral communication	1
Nicole	7/25/2016	advanced high oral communication	1
	7/27/2016		1
	7/28/2016	advanced high oral communication	1
		sustainability class field trip	1
	8/1/2016	advanced high oral communication	1
Tyler	8/2/2016		1
	7/26/2016	intermediate low writing	1
	7/27/2016		1
	7/28/2016		1

Effective observation means “seeing” as much as possible in any situation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Emerson et al. (1995) distinguish between *descriptions (or inscriptions)* that portray the physical environment, people, actions and smells which make up a setting,

and *dialogue (or transcriptions)* which is the written representation of something that was said. Mulhall (2003) suggests that field notes should include structural and organizational features (what the actual buildings and environment look like and how they are used); people (how they behave, interact, dress, move); the daily process of activities, special events, dialogue; an everyday diary of events as they occur chronologically (both in the field and before entering the field); and a personal/reflective diary.

The researcher wrote detailed field notes related to the procedure of the pedagogical activities, interactions between and among teacher and students, and verbal and nonverbal communications. While typing the field notes, the researcher connected the particular classroom activities or teacher-students interactions to the research questions. During and after observations, the researcher wrote memos about “personal reflections, insights, ideas, confusions, initial interpretations, and breakthroughs” (Creswell, 2013, p.167); these were related to how the particular pedagogical practices foster ELLs’ second language acquisition, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

In the observation field notes, the researcher also drew *a situational map* (Clarke, 2005) (see Appendix XI) portraying the layout of the classroom, teachers and students’ positions in the classroom, and students’ seating arrangement, and descriptions of the physical setting of the IEP classrooms. The researcher drew sketches, and used symbols to represent people and objects in classrooms. The main function of a situational map is to provide the researcher with a visual aid for the observation. With situational maps, the

researcher can recall the layout of the classrooms, and other details which might be missed only by field notes. Situational maps and/or pictures serve a threefold purposes (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016). First, they provide an overview that helps researchers examine the situation being observed. Second, they help researchers remember spaces and artifacts. Third, they provide the readers with visualizations.

Document review. In addition to interviews and observations, the researcher collected relevant documents of the IEP from the ELC director, the ELC admission office, the participant teachers, and the ELC website. Erlandson et al. (1993) state that the term document refers to “the broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any available materials and data” (p.99). Documents are important resources for data triangulation, and increase the comprehensiveness and validity of any study (Patton, 2002). Researchers review or evaluate documents, and they find out, select, make sense of, and synthesize the data in documents (Bowen, 2009).

Relevant documents in this study include the student enrollment data, overview of the program, the IEP curriculum, course syllabus, handouts, and the student handbook. These documents allowed the researcher to examine how ELLs’ cultural and linguistic background knowledge is reflected and incorporated in the IEP. The ELC overview provides readers the information about the history of the ELC, its faculty, student services, and administration. The ELC student handbook includes information about the mission and vision of the IEP, registration and enrollment, academic requirement, and student life.

The ELC curriculum overview contains information about the required courses and credit hours for each proficiency level; proficiency scale is a description of each proficiency level, which is a reference of how ELLs should be placed in different course levels. Course syllabus, in-class handouts, and assignments provide information about course objectives, content, learning activities, and grading policy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is “the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.154). According to Stake (1995), “In a case study, there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations.” (p.71)

In this study, the data collection and analysis took place simultaneously. The data sources included transcription of the participants’ interview recordings, field notes from classroom observations, and documents related to the IEP courses. Using multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) helped the researcher to ensure that the codes developed created a rich, thick description of the results (Merriam, 1998).

Transcription process began as soon as the researcher completed each interview. During the transcription process, the researcher listened to the recordings multiple times. Once the transcription was completed, the researcher engaged in member checking by having the participants review the transcript for clarification of meanings. After each classroom

observation, the researcher typed the written field notes into separate Word documents labeled under the name of each participant.

Data analysis is an iterative process resembling what Creswell (2013) refers to as the data analysis spiral. In this process, researchers a) read the data and begin interpreting it through memo writing, b) manage the data and identify the unit(s) for analysis, c) classify the data into meaningful categories as a means to begin to interpret the data, and d) synthesize and report significant patterns or themes found in the data.

In the initial phase of interpreting the data, the researcher wrote memos for both transcripts and typed field notes. Memos provide qualitative researchers with the opportunity to engage in self-reflection. The memos helped the researcher recall the details of the interview and observation as well as the researcher's thoughts during the interviews and observations. In this way, the researcher could write down some details from the interview and observation that might have been missed.

In the second phase of analyzing the data, the researcher coded the interview transcripts and typed field notes to categorize the data into units for analysis. Data from the transcripts yielded the following eight units: 1) teachers' challenges, 2) current teaching in the IEP, 3) teachers' perceptions about students' culture, 4) teachers' perceptions about students' first language, 5) teachers' knowledge about the CRP, 6) teachers' description about their pedagogical practices/activities incorporating students' culture, 7) teachers' perceptions about a good teacher, and 8) teachers' reflections about

their pedagogy. Since the purpose of the study is to explore ESL teachers' implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in IEPs, which aims to promote ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, the researcher examined the typed field notes, and coded ESL teachers' pedagogical practices and activities to into three broad units: academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

In the third phase, the researcher imported the data from transcripts and typed field notes into the Nvivo—a qualitative data analysis software, to code and categorize large amount of narrative text under the nodes (Yin, 2009). The researcher searched the codes from the narrative text (both transcripts and typed field notes) and categorized them under the nodes, i.e. the units from the initial analysis. The codes were highlighted so that the researcher would know which part of the narrative text had already been coded. When the researcher ran the Query function of Nvivo, all the codes from different participants were organized under one node. This helped the researcher identify themes and subthemes.

In the final phase, the researcher exported the data from Nvivo and studied the outputs to determine the emerging themes and patterns (Yin, 2009, p. 128). In order to get a high quality case analysis, the researcher attended to all the evidences, addressed all major rival interpretations, and focused on the most significant aspect of the case study (Yin, 2009). The researcher also analyzed the codes under two additional nodes—teachers' perceptions about a good teacher and teachers' reflections about their

pedagogy—which were not directly related to the research questions, but would provide some useful information for the emerging themes. For the document analysis, the researchers applied constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to discover the central themes across the IEP curricula and syllabi which provide further evidence to the themes and subthemes emerged from the interview and observation.

Anticipated Ethical Issues

According to Creswell (2013), ethical issues apply to different phases of the research process. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher received the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and permission and support from the director of the English Language Center (ELC). At the beginning of the data collection, the participants read and signed the informed consent form which includes the purpose of the study, potential risks, harms, and benefits, and how the research findings would be reported and distributed. The researcher provided compensations for the participants, such as Starbucks coffee, gift cards, and handicrafts from Mongolia as rewards for their time and effort.

The risk in this study was that participants would become nervous and uncomfortable when talking about their privacy during the interview. In order to avoid the risk, the researcher contacted the participants through email to establish mutual understanding and rapport with the participants. For the interview, the researcher tried to create a relaxed interview environment. In addition, the interviews would have the risk of

being dominated or led by the interviewer. The researcher tried to avoid “power imbalances” (Creswell, 2013, p.60) between the researcher and the interviewee. The researcher avoided asking leading questions, sharing personal impressions, and disclosing sensitive information. Furthermore, for the observations, the risk would come from the *Hawthorne effect*. The Hawthorne effect refers to the tendency for people to behave differently when they know they are being studied (Chiesa & Hobbs, 2008), in an attempt to present a “good face” to the researcher (Payne et al., 2007). It is suggested that the longer the researcher spends in the field and begins to blend in, the less significant this effect becomes (Chiesa & Hobbs, 2008). In order to minimize the Hawthorne effect, the researcher attended the classes three times or more, as well as chatted with the teachers and students casually before and after class to establish a rapport.

The researcher kept the privacy of the participants and the site anonymously throughout the research. The researcher described and analyzed the data from the observations and interviews anonymously in order to protect the participants' privacy; maintained confidentiality and privacy during and after data collection through methods such as placing the documents in the secure place to only allow the access of the primary investigator, and proper disposal and destruction of the documents; focused on collecting data related to research questions, and tried to avoid collecting data about the participants' privacy and other unrelated private information; placed and stored the data from both interviews and observations in a password-protected personal laptop to make sure it is

secure; reported multiple perspectives and results other than the positive ones. When reporting the data, the researcher avoided plagiarism and the information that would bring negative effects to the participants; wrote the research report with clear, straightforward language which is appropriate for the readers; provided copies of the report to the ESL teacher participants, the ELC director, the researcher's advisor, and the researcher's dissertation committee members.

Validity of the Study

In order to strengthen the validity of the study, the researcher used such techniques as triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking.

Triangulation. *Triangulation* is an important technique used in qualitative evaluation to achieve credibility. According to Patton (1990), triangulation refers to “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs” (p. 187). The use of multiple sources of evidence in a case study allows an investigator to develop a “*converging lines of inquiry*” (Yin, 2009, p. 115), in which the case study findings or conclusions will be more convincing and accurate. The researcher triangulated the data from interview, observation, and documents to increase the validity of the study (Creswell, 2013). Through analyzing data from interviews, observations, and documents, the researcher can find more evidence to support and explain teachers' implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in the IEPs.

Peer debriefing. A peer is a person outside the context who has professional knowledge and some general understanding of the study to analyze materials, test working hypothesis and emerging designs, and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns (Erlandson et al., 1993). Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest that:

The debriefer must be someone who is in every sense the inquirer's peer, someone who knows a great deal about both the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues.... [and] should not be someone in an authority relationship to the inquirer. (p. 308-309)

The researcher's dissertation advisor played the role of debriefer for this study. The researcher discussed the draft of the proposal as well as the dissertation with the academic advisor for peer review who helped the researcher refine the literature review, methods, findings, and interpretations. With expertise, the debriefer made a significant contribution to the quality of the study.

Member checking. *Member checking* was another technique used in this study to enhance the credibility of the findings. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), member checking is a process "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (p. 314). The primary purpose of member checking is to verify the accuracy by which the participants' constructed reality was represented by the researcher.

The informal member checking was conducted in this study to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2013). Informal member checks took place either during or after interviews. On these occasions, the researcher attempted to clarify or

verify any point that was ambiguous or may have led to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, and provided opportunities for participants to correct errors or challenge interpretations. The researcher also took advantage of informal conversations with the participants to double check the accuracy of some information obtained from interviews, observations, or document review.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the intensive English program (IEP) at the English Language Center (ELC) of Mountain University. In order to get an overall picture of the IEP, the researcher collected data through interviews, observations, and document review. The researcher analyzed the data using four steps suggested by Creswell (2013): a) read the data and begin interpreting it through memo writing, b) manage the data and identify the unit(s) for analysis, c) classify the data into meaningful categories as a means to begin to interpret the data, and d) synthesize and report significant patterns or themes found in the data.

In this chapter, the researcher describes the major findings in themes and subthemes (see Table 5) which answer the research questions:

1. What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs?
2. How do ESL teachers perceive ELLs' home culture and first language in the IEP?
3. How do ESL teachers describe their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' culture and first language?

4. What culturally relevant pedagogical practices are enacted in IEP classrooms?

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes from the Data Analysis

Themes	Subthemes
The Challenges for ESL Teachers in IEPs	Understanding cultural differences Taking individual differences into consideration Speaking in first language (L1) Creating an inclusive learning community
Integrating Students' Home Culture in ESL Teaching and Learning	Building cultural competence Linking culture with academics
The Role of Students' First Language in ESL Teaching and Learning	Facilitate L2 Hinder L2
ESL Teachers' Knowledge about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)	Academic skills (language, communication, learning) Cultural competence Critical thinking skills
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Intensive English Program (IEP)	Academic excellence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A focus on learning strategies ● Providing students with structure, clear directions, and support ● Enriching the curriculum ● Encouraging cooperative learning Cultural competence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building on students' cultural experiences ● Creating an inclusive environment ● Encouraging relationships between school and communities Critical consciousness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using critical literacy strategies ● Engaging students in social justice work ● Sharing power in the classroom

The Challenges for ESL Teachers in IEPs

The interviews of the four teacher participants revealed common themes about the challenges ESL teachers face in IEPs. The teacher participants described challenges in the IEP that related to cultural differences, individual differences, speaking in L1, and creating an inclusive learning community.

Understanding cultural differences. For anthropologists culture is the “way of life of a people” (Hall, 1959, p. 43). It is the different ways of “organizing life, of thinking, and of conceiving the underlying assumptions about the family and the state, and of the economic system and of man himself” (Hall, 1959, p. 51). ELLs come to the IEP classrooms with unique cultures, including religion and educational experiences, and first language. As the ethnic and racial backgrounds of ELLs often differ from the backgrounds of ESL teachers, it can be challenging for teachers of ELLs to incorporate students' native cultures into the classroom environment (Collard & Stalker, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Since there are a large number of students from China, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait in the ELC (see Appendix V), the ESL teachers feel that it is challenging to accommodate the students' different cultures. All of the ESL teachers stated that students may feel embarrassed or reluctant to participate in class activities because of their cultural and religious differences. For example, Muslim women do not typically communicate with

males in their culture, especially when their husbands and families are present. People's native culture exerts an influence on their values, behaviors, learning, and use of a L2 (Qi, 1998; Yu, 1996). In other words, culture shapes the thoughts and behavior of people who live in it. The common practice in the ELC is to place Muslim husbands and wives in different classes, so that the Muslim women are able to take part in class activities (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016). Amy described other measures that the ESL teachers take to accommodate the students' cultures and religion. Amy said:

For the field trip, we have to think about what field trips the Muslim women are able to participate [in]. Sometimes they can't eat in front of others, so we will think about if they eat in [a] separate room. [We have to] take all the cultures and values respectful, so that everyone can participate as much as possible. Sometimes their phones start playing in class, is a call, time for prayer. But they are very respectful, they just turn it off. They don't leave the room. They just take a minute in class praying quietly. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Cultural differences also create tensions in the classroom. The ESL teachers described that ELLs feel it is interesting and exotic to hear about different cultural practices from their peers. They ask a lot of questions about different cultures. Isabella (personal communication, April 29, 2016) described a moment when a Chinese student shared his experience of dating with four girlfriends at the same time, and the Arab students were shocked. At the same time, the Chinese students were shocked when the

Arab students talked about their culture in which women are not allowed to drive, and men can marry with more than one wife.

When talking about challenges from cultural differences, Nicole (personal communication, April 26, 2016) expressed that the students sometimes offend each other without intention. They do not have much experience with different cultures, so they may say something or ask questions which could be considered rude. Nicole (personal communication, April 26, 2016) stated that this would cause tension among students which did not last long because they had to work together in the classroom.

All the ESL teachers expressed that they keep classrooms neutral. They do not encourage ELLs to discuss sensitive topics about politics and religion. They encourage students to respect each other. Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) described that she had Libyans from the east and the Libyans from the west in the same classroom when Libya had a revolution three or four years ago. It was very tense. Amy allowed the students to sit in different groups making sure that they did not say something to offend each other (personal communication, April 28, 2016). The researcher observed Amy's effort to make the classroom neutral in one of her classes. When a Chinese boy asked her opinion about the issue covering the South China Sea, she replied:

I don't often watch the news about Asian countries, [I watch] mostly about European countries and America. Yesterday, I was too busy, and had no time to watch any

news. News is often reported differently by different media, so you can't tell the truth or fact.

All the ESL teachers expressed that the challenges also come from differences in educational cultures. The ELLs have completed secondary or post-secondary education in their home countries. They have experienced teaching and learning styles unique to their culture. When they come to U.S. classrooms, some of their behaviors and practices are considered unacceptable or a violation of academic policy, for example, cheating and plagiarism. Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) expressed that cheating and plagiarism are hard concepts for some students to understand. In some cultures, cheating on tests or exams is not taken seriously. Sharing answers with friends is considered honorable. However, in the U.S. culture, it is a serious violation of academic policy. The ESL teachers help the ELLs understand the concept of cheating/plagiarism and the consequence of violating it in order to help them to transition into their university academic programs.

Due to the differences in educational culture, it is a challenge for the ESL teachers to help the ELLs adapt to the American classroom dynamics and the teachers' expectations. All the ESL teachers thought that Chinese students are not actively raising questions and participating in class discussions. Tyler (personal communication, April 25, 2016) mentioned that his Chinese students never came to him to talk about their grades and ways to improve their grades. In Chinese culture, a teacher is viewed as an absolute

authority, students should always respect their teachers, and knowledge is transmitted to students through lecturing. Asking questions in class is seen as questioning the teacher's authority, which breaks the climate of harmony (Chen, 2010). On the contrary, in American culture, oral participation is strongly encouraged, and expectations from graduate-level students are much higher compared to ELLs (Tatar, 2005). In American classrooms, Chinese students are usually uncomfortable with classroom activities including participating in group discussion, asking questions in class, and engaging in critical argumentations (Durkin, 2011).

Tyler (personal communication, April 25, 2016) thought that it is hard for the ESL teachers to make ELLs examine their own cultures, and compare different cultures. From his experience, he believed that critical thinking skills are important for ELLs when they get to the American university classrooms. He stated that the ELLs should learn to see things from different perspectives, listen to different voices, and critically evaluate social and cultural issues, including their own cultures and values. Tyler described the challenge in one of his group discussion activities:

The group discussion in my oral communication class today was about "values", they [talked] about what their cultural values are. It is probably something they have never done before. I ask them do that in English. To get with another culture to compare those values, that is challenging. The knowledge about their culture is so superficial, they don't look deeper. (personal communication, April 25, 2016)

Taking individual differences into consideration. All the ESL teachers thought that individual differences of the ELLs such as age, personality, experiences, English proficiency level, learning styles, interest, and motivation can cause challenges. In the ELC, the youngest students are 17 or 18. They have completed high school in their home country; the oldest students are over 30 or 40. Many of them are married. They have children, and work experience in their home country.

Isabella (personal communication, April 29, 2016) said that if the class is not a good mix of students, for example, with younger students and older students, the older students may feel isolated because they do not share the same interests with the younger students. She mentioned that once during her class break, when she played hip-hop music, the young Chinese students were excited; whereas, an Arab student who was over 40 was the only one who frowned. However, she said that with carefully planned lessons and activities, students with different ages and experiences can also learn from each other. Younger students can benefit from the depth of thought that older students bring in, while older students can benefit from different perspectives that younger students bring in.

Tyler (personal communication, April 25, 2016) mentioned that communication with the ELLs, especially in lower levels is a challenge for him. He has to adjust his rate of speech, content, and teaching methods for the students with lower English proficiency. He stated that this ensures the students understand the directions, instructions, and task

assignments. Moreover he added that for the students in higher levels, it is challenging to give them right kind of feedback in their advanced writing assignments.

People's native culture exerts an influence on their values, behaviors, learning and use of a L2 (Qi, 1998; Yu, 1996). Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) thought that students from different cultures have distinct strengths and learning styles. The theory of learning styles focuses on the fact that individuals perceive and analyze information in different ways (Tulbure, 2011). Some are oral-based and thus, stronger at listening and speaking. Others are stronger at grammar, reading and writing. Some are visual learners who prefer learning by seeing; others are kinetic learners who prefer learning by doing. ELLs learn in certain styles which could be different from teaching styles of American teachers (Holtbrugge, & Mohr, 2010). It is difficult for ESL teachers to address students' individual differences in class. Teachers in IEPs face many challenges in creating learning environments that address the needs and learning styles of diverse learners (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) expressed, "Students with different strengths and learning styles are comfortable doing certain types of activities. It is challenging to provide a variety of activities and tasks to address the students' different learning styles."

All the ESL teachers stated that they face constant struggles and challenges when motivating students to learn English. Nicole (personal communication, April 26, 2016) said that most of her students are young. She stated that they are passionate about fashion

and pop culture, whereas, not very interested in their studies. They are not motivated to take responsibility for their learning. Gardner (1985) defines second language (L2) motivation as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 10). Motivation plays an important role in the success of students’ learning a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Integrative motivation sustains long-term success when learning a second language (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Ellis, 1994), and make students integrate into English-speaking society.

Speaking in first language (L1). The ESL teachers do not encourage ELLs to speak their L1 in class. Nicole said:

Using their L1 in class is a constant battle for me. The students and I reach an agreement on whether or not to speak in L1 in class at the beginning of a class. The agreement helps when I start showing their points go down. In our agreement, English is always on there. In theory, I have a zero tolerance of their L1 in class.
(personal communication, May 12, 2016)

The ESL teachers indicated that the ELLs’ constant speaking of their L1 distracts others who speak the same L1, and excludes other students. Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) said, “The biggest problem is that they continue speaking their native language in class, which distracts the students who can understand, and excludes the students who can’t.” Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) stated that in a

homogeneous group in which all group members speak the same L1, the students may speak the L1 to discuss their tasks or projects. However, speaking L1 in a heterogeneous group in which not all the group members share the same L1, is seen as a sign of disrespect to those students. Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said, “In a heterogeneous group, speaking of L1 is not helpful for the group project, and may result in communication failure within group members. In a group work, the students should respect each other, and take others’ feelings into consideration.”

Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) and Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) stated that the ELLs’ speaking of L1 in a group work results in teachers’ loss of control over the class, affects the class as a whole, and makes the class ineffective. Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said, “When the students keep speaking their first language, which makes my class ineffective, I have to be more authoritative to stop the class, and to talk about their behavioral problems.” Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) expressed that when her students keep speaking their L1, she feel that she is losing control of the class since she has no idea about what they are talking about and whether they are keeping on track of the class task. Nicole said:

When they speak their first language, the challenges are that I don’t know what they are talking about. I have to trust that they are staying on target. That is a challenge for me to lose control of their discussion. The challenge comes from when I should

[emphasize] “English only”, and when I [should not] care about it, and how I keep it so that it doesn’t take over the class. (personal communication, May 12, 2016)

All the ESL teachers stated that the ELLs’ constant speaking in L1 hinders their L2 learning. When the sentence pattern of L1 and L2 is different, language learners make common mistakes on syntax structure, such as word order, negative sentence, interrogative and relative clause (Wang, 2014). Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) expressed that L1 can cause difficulties in rhetorical styles in L2 writing. She explained that every language has a different logic and rhetoric system. The main idea comes in different parts of the essay. She adds:

Every language, in contrast to rhetoric, has different writing styles. Some are initial focused, some are final focused, and others are circular. The Chinese write in a different logic style than the Arabic speakers and Spanish speakers. The Chinese students put the main idea at the end of their writing, whereas in English, the main idea comes at the beginning of an essay. (Amy, personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) and Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that when the ELLs translate directly from their L1 to L2, they could make some common errors in L2 grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure. L1 use has a detrimental effect on L2 text quality (Wang & Wen, 2002). Wang (2014) claims that,

“L2 learners’ pronunciation is deeply influenced by their L1 and deviate the pronunciation of the native speakers.” (p. 58) Isabella said:

Arabic speakers always overuse the definite articles. Chinese students usually have pronunciation issues. Chinese students write long and complicated sentences, and sometimes they lose tracks, sentence structures, and issue. Or they overuse the word “let”, instead of “allow”. I have already had a list of practice activities or exercises for Chinese speakers and Arabic speakers. (personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) explained that when people are immersed in L2, they are more likely to learn L2 quickly. If people constantly switch between L1 and L2 and translate from L1 to L2, it is not helpful for L2 acquisition. IEPs usually follow a total immersion model which places ELLs into all-English classrooms (Rennie, 1993). Students must be immersed in a language-rich environment (Francis, Rivera, Leseaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006) that affords them the opportunity to contextualize the linguistic skills learned and comfortably use the new language for social and academic purposes. Carroll (1975) finds that the most important factor for increasing L2 proficiency is the amount of instructional time that the students received. Isabella said:

There is a lot of research about immersion, in which you are surrounded by the same language. Psychologically, your English will sink deeper if you surround yourself with it. If you constantly switch back and forth, your language acquisition is not profound. (personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) expressed that constant translation from English to the ELLs' L1 will not help them improve their English. Good English proficiency is required if they want to complete the university coursework successfully. He said:

They use translator for even simple things on their computers. Language has a function, which is to transfer knowledge and information. If they are not using the second language to discuss meaning or issues, they are not going to develop a comfortable relationship with the second language. The more English they use, the easier they are going to be when get into the university classrooms. (Tyler, personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016), Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016), and Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) explained the reasons why the ELLs constantly switch to their L1. One reason is that the IEP at the ELC is not diverse enough, with only two dominant groups—Chinese and Arabians. They indicated that students, especially Chinese students always huddle with their groups and speak their L1. Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) said that diversity is helpful for second language learning. She continued that the students who constantly speak their L1 with their peer classmates make less progress in learning English than students who cannot communicate with any other classmates except in English. The second reason is that, as Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) thought, students are not

mature enough. Isabella said that the ELLs do not take their English study seriously. They are lack of self-control and self-discipline. Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said that the ELLs cannot see the long-term benefits of learning English. He drew an analogy between speaking of L1 and smoking. He said:

This is just human nature, it is not cultural. We tend to not think so far ahead. It just like people quit smoking. When you first take a cigarette, it is not going to kill you right away. It is probably going to kill you in 30 years. So people are not so worried about that. It is the same thing. Students speak their first language, they just want to finish this quarter. They are not thinking about what's going to happen in two quarters, three quarters. (Tyler, personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Creating an inclusive learning community. It is a challenge for the ESL teachers to create an inclusive learning environment in which the ELLs from different cultures have an opportunity to communicate and interact with each other. Tyler (personal communication, April 25, 2016) expressed that in the IEP, the two dominant groups of students are Chinese and Arabians. They sit next to their group members in class, and hang out with their group members out of class. The two groups of students do not integrate with each other. He thought that the ESL teachers often struggle with grouping the students from different cultures with diverse abilities together. He said that it is difficult to make the students step out of their comfort zone. He added that it is important

to create an inclusive environment in which students from different cultures study and work collaboratively. He stated:

The challenge is how to integrate these students. If you are not going out, meeting people, and developing new relationships, you are probably defeating the purpose of why you are here. This is a college. Once they leave the ELC and go into the American universities, they may become isolated. That is the biggest challenge, getting them out of their comfort zone to take risks. (Tyler, personal communication, April 25, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, April 29, 2016) expressed that it is challenging to break the barriers of the ELLs' expectations for American classrooms, teachers, and the relationship between teachers and students. She added that it is challenging to establish a rapport with them, as well as to create a cooperative and inclusive environment. She said that the ELLs had different expectations for teachers and different views of how English should be taught when they came to the IEP. Some students do not participate in class activities until they feel safe and comfortable to do so. She respects the students and tries her best to make them feel comfortable. She described how she creates a comfortable and inclusive learning environment for all students to participate in class activities. Isabella said:

For Chinese students, they feel more comfortable when they are quiet. I need to allow them more time to raise their hands to volunteer to do things in class. For Arab

students, they take time to ease out being paired up with female especially from Arab.

It is not [the] best arrangement to pair up Arab men and Arab women [in classroom activities]. (personal communication, April 29, 2016)

It is also challenging for the ESL teachers to create an inclusive learning environment through connecting the academic learning to the ELLs' culture and experience. It is a challenge for ESL teachers to connect the academic learning to ELLs' cultures and individual differences as well as to make them see the connection between the current study in IEPs and their future academic study in American universities. ELLs' are motivated and engaged in academic tasks which are relevant to their own experiences/prior knowledge (Egbert, 2003). Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) takes the ELLs' individual differences into consideration when choosing class materials and organizing class activities. She applies different teaching methods to cater to the students' diverse learning styles. She provides students with audio/visual materials as well as handouts. She also offers students opportunities to choose whether they like to work individually or in a group. Amy said:

They have different learning styles, some are visual learners who prefer learning by seeing; others are kinetic learners who prefer learning by doing. Some prefer to work individually, some prefer group work. So I try to provide them as many varieties of activities as possible to cater to their different learning styles. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

The ESL teachers help the ELLs see the connection between what they are doing and their future study by explaining the rationale of the activities, the importance of participating in the activities, and the benefit of the activities for their future academic study. Tyler explained:

The most challenging is that how to make academic materials, which can be tedious or boring, more interesting, how to connect the academic skills that we are teaching here with their interests, and how to help them see what they are learning here is actually supposed to help them when they get to the university. (personal communication, May 18, 2016)

When the ELLs are not interested and motivated to learn, Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) explains the reason why they are doing the particular activities, and why they are required to actively participate in those activities. She helps the ELLs understand that the class activities are beneficial for their English learning. She tells students that they are here to help each other, to learn language and have a discussion. They bring in different perspectives, and they should value each other's input. She added:

I always try to refer to their experience in a university or college, because they are all college-bound. The ELC is a little bit of a protective environment, but we always try to prepare them to be a part of the American classroom in terms of interaction, participation, and comprehension. (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Summary. The challenges facing ESL teachers come from understanding cultural differences and individual differences that ELLs bring into IEPs, ELLs' use of the first language, and creating an inclusive learning community for ELLs through making learning relevant to ELLs' cultures. Teachers in IEPs face many challenges in the creation of learning environments that address the needs and learning styles of learners from diverse backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In the following sections, the researcher analyzes ESL teachers' perceptions about ELLs' cultures and first language in ESL teaching and learning, and ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in IEPs.

Integrating Students' Home Culture in ESL Teaching and Learning

Building cultural competence. The ESL teachers expressed that ELLs' home cultures add richness to class discussions, facilitate cross-cultural communication, and build cultural competence. Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) said that the students are very interested in hearing about different cultures and perspectives, which makes them adept at cross-cultural communication. Knowing about different cultures makes the students empathetic to other cultures. She added that both ESL teachers and ELLs benefit from the diversity of cultures in the classroom. She said:

They bring new ideas to the class. I learn about them, other students [also] learn about them. For all the teachers [at the ELC], the best thing is learning from students,

their cultures, their country, their likes and dislikes of food, music, sports, etc.. There is always diversity in the classroom [that] you can learn from. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) also believes that students' talk about their culture could deepen their cross-cultural understanding and foster their cross-cultural communication. He expressed, "We encourage cultural diversity within the classroom. Having the students made those comparisons and contrasts, they recognize the similarities and differences, and they are able to be a little bit successful when they encounter people from different cultures." (Tyler, personal communication, May 18, 2016)

To become culturally competent, students should cultivate "the ability to function effectively in their culture of origin" (Ladson Billings, 2000, p. 219), as well as the willingness to be involved in school cultures, approach new cultures, and perform appropriately in cross-cultural communications. Document analysis revealed that one of the course goals of the Advanced Low Curriculum (2015) is to further develop students' awareness of the U.S. academics and culture. The researcher found that this goal is consistent across all five levels. Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that class discussions, presentations, reading materials, and field trips provide the ELLs with the first hand opportunity to reflect on their home cultures, and experience the American culture and community. Diversity of cultures in IEPs makes both teachers and students culturally competent in their own culture as well as new cultures. She said that

the students are eager to talk about things that are familiar to them and have personal relevance. She connects academic content with students' cultures. She asks the students to make presentations about an item or an object which has personal relevance with them. She explains:

When I think about a project, I don't want them to just go and Google something. I try to make it more personal, like valuable object in their family or something passed down from generation to generation. A student talked about a jacket that his grandfather wore. One girl from China talked about a cabinet, a piece of furniture. It was expensive, because it was antique. I think they feel that their cultures are valuable, and try to integrate their cultures. (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Linking culture with academics. ELLs' cultures inform ESL teachers of students' behavior and performance in class. Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) said that students from different cultures have different strengths in language learning. She stated:

Some cultures are more oral based. For Middle Eastern students, their listening and speaking skills are stronger than reading and writing. On the other hand, some cultures are focused on grammar. Their grammar and writing are very good, but they are afraid of speaking. Students with different strengths are comfortable doing certain types of activities. (Amy, personal communication, May 2, 2016)

In terms of the students' attitudes toward homework, Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that Chinese students get frustrated if there is no homework. They are used to homework and organizing their time better; while the Arab students hate homework. They celebrate every time when there is no homework.

Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) and Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said that both Chinese and Arab students come from cultures which do not encourage critical thinking. In Chinese culture, a teacher is viewed as an absolute authority, students should always respect their teachers, and knowledge is transmitted to students through lecturing. Asking questions in class is seen as questioning the teacher's authority, which breaks the climate of harmony (Chen, 2010). In the Middle East, the teacher is regarded as an absolute authority; teachers and professors lecture to students or read directly from textbooks; students learn individually rather than with partners (Mostafa, 2006). In the Middle Eastern countries, students are restricted to rote memorization of facts, and they never have an opportunity to participate in class discussions, conference presentations, and publish articles in professional journals (Mostafa, 2006). They do not feel comfortable defending their positions, asking questions, or challenging professors in classrooms in the U.S. (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). Due to these cultural differences, it is hard for both Chinese and Arab students to adapt to the American classroom culture which is characterized by student-centered learning and

critical thinking. Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said that it is difficult for them to participate in class discussion. Nicole said:

In terms of academics, my Chinese and Arab students both come from cultures where they are not encouraged to do a lot of critical thinking. So, it is hard to activate their minds to [transform] them [from] the consumers of their education [to] the owners of their education. (personal communication, May 12, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) and Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) believe that Chinese students who are from a collectivist culture are shy, and they do not take risks beyond their group. Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that they do not actively raise their hands to participate in class activities. Tyler explained:

In China, I think for so many years, they come from the culture that tends to value the group or collectivism. The Chinese students are such a tight in a group and they are so large that they don't take risks beyond their group, they don't try to develop relationships outside their group. (personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) said that Chinese students are likely to share their answers with their peers, which is called plagiarism in American academic culture.

Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) and Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) thought that Middle Eastern women tend to be passive participants in class,

due to the male-dominated culture. Tyler said that some of them have never had any encounters with men outside of their family, not even with male teachers. Nicole said:

[For] Middle Eastern women, they never have opportunities to be in co-ed facilities.

A lot of them are passive and shy at the beginning. They don't want to speak up or contradict men. When doing group work or presentations, they can be seen as non-active participants, because culturally they are told to stay back to let men in.

(personal communication, May 12, 2016)

Summary. Culture and learning are interconnected (Kozulin, 2003). ELLs' cultures play an important role in teaching and learning of a second language. ELLs' cultures facilitate cross-cultural communication between and among teachers and students, and help them build cultural competence in both home culture and new cultures. ELLs' cultures inform ESL teachers of students' behavior and performance in class. With the knowledge about the students' cultures and individual differences in mind, the ESL teachers choose appropriate materials for the students, assign different tasks for them, diagnose their challenges, and provide individual assistance for them.

The Role of Students' First Language in ESL Teaching and Learning

All the ESL teachers thought that the ELLs' L1 can either hinder or facilitate the ELLs' L2 learning. The negative role of L1 in L2 learning has already been discussed in the earlier section when the ESL teachers talked about their difficulties and challenges in

the IEP. Therefore, this section mainly focuses on the positive role of L1 in L2 learning. The ESL teachers expressed that L1 can facilitate L2 learning if L1 shares similarities with L2 in terms of spelling, grammar, and pronunciation. Odlin (1989) states that Spanish speakers find English acquisition comparatively easier in terms of vocabulary and grammar structure compared to speakers whose L1 have significant differences from English. French students feel easier than Chinese students when both of them are studying English, because in English, there are many words borrowed from French (Wang, 2014). Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) thought that the students' knowledge about grammar and proverbs in L1 greatly facilitates the understanding of grammar and proverbs in L2. Both Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) and Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) indicated that if the ELLs' L1 are one of the Indo-European languages, which share similar alphabets and writing systems with English, it will be easier for the students to learn L2. Amy explained:

[If] students' first language [is] closer to English, it is a benefit for them. If the students' first language has the same writing system as English, for example Spanish, Portuguese, French, or Norwegian, [and if] they have already known the alphabet, that is easier for them. They don't have to learn how to write the letters. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) said that the ELLs' L1 facilitates their note-taking in L2. Instead of figuring out an English word to represent a concept in note-taking, the L1 will help the ELLs to represent that concept. She added:

My Chinese students start taking notes in English, and on the sides they take notes in Chinese really quickly. Their notes [are] both [in] English and Chinese. They are more proficient in Chinese. They can write one character for a concept, while they might write a longer word in English. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

All the ESL teachers thought that the ELLs use L1 as a tool for explaining more complex topics or abstract words in L2. Students' use of the first language promotes the efficient explanation of meanings (Cook, 2010). Cohen (1998) finds that Chinese students shift languages both intentionally and unintentionally. Intentional language switch occurs when the students purposely use L1 to aid the understanding of specific features of L2. Conversely, unintentional shift occurs when the brain automatically resorts to the language that possesses more command. Nicole (personal communication, May 12, 2016) said, "They speak the first language when they are doing more complex work, when they can't express it in English." Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) also said, "They use first language as a tool to understand more complex meanings in English."

ELLs who have developed proficiency in their first language acquire a second language more quickly than those who have not (Fougère, 2011). Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) said, "If students are well educated in their native language,

they are able to attain a higher level in a second language. If they had trouble reading in their native language, they often had trouble reading in English.” She continued,

My Libyan students are all doctoral students. They are very well educated in their native language, they have critical thinking skills, and they have a pretty broad vocabulary in their native language. They already know some concepts of their native language. It is very easy for them to plug in the English words. (Amy, personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Summary. The ESL teachers believe that the ELLs’ first language can either facilitate or hinder second language teaching and learning. If L1 shares some common features such as alphabet, grammar, and pronunciation with L2, it will be easier for them to learn L2. The ESL teachers agree that L1 is helpful in understanding difficult concepts in L2 through direct translation. L1 has functioned as a means of conceptualizing the world and a means of communication, has provided learners with a voice, has given learners an intuitive grasp of grammar, and has functioned as a means of acquiring reading and writing skills (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). The ESL teachers also believe that L1 literacy facilitates L2 acquisition. Fougère (2011) finds that adolescents’ first language literacy positively impacts their second language acquisition. In the earlier section, the ESL teachers mentioned that one of the challenges they face in the IEP comes from the ELLs’ constant speaking in their L1 in class. The ESL teachers thought that the ELLs’ constant speaking in L1 hinders the ELLs’ L2 learning. The ESL teachers worry

that translation from L1 into L2 frequently influences rhetoric in L2 writing in general, causes common errors in L2 grammar, pronunciation and, sentence structure, as well as affects the ELLs' future university academic study.

ESL Teachers' Knowledge about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

All the ESL teachers expressed their own understanding about the CRP during the interviews. They are aware of the importance of students' cultures in ESL teaching and learning. They believe that the ELLs' cultures and prior knowledge should be incorporated into the ESL teaching to facilitate their learning. They expressed that it was impossible not to take the ELLs' cultural background into consideration when selecting content, organizing activities, giving assignments, and providing feedback. When asked about her understanding about the CRP, Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) expressed that as a teacher, one has to honor students' cultures, connect academic content to students' cultures, and apply students' cultures in the classroom. Isabella described her understanding about the CRP:

I probably learned it (CRP) in my graduate studies. I haven't studied and read about it recently. It is important to take into account of different cultures. I think it is mainly about you are not teaching students, you are teaching people who represents their countries and their cultures. You have to take them into account. You can't teach a bubble. You have to be culturally sensitive to use those cultures and

knowledge to your advantage of reaching your goals for them. (personal communication, July 25, 2016)

Tyler (personal communication, August 2, 2016) stated that it is impossible not to consider students' backgrounds. He indicated that teaching in a multicultural IEP classroom requires teachers make a lot of effort to cater to each individual student's differences and needs. He said:

For example, in writing class, having an understanding of their language rhetorical writing style is important. When giving feedback to their writing, noticing some of those cultural differences is important... So in that sense, I can call that culturally relevant pedagogy. (Tyler, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said that the ultimate goal of learning a language is to communicate and to understand the culture. She thought that ESL teaching should be responsive to ELLs' cultures and prior knowledge. She (Amy, personal communication, July 21, 2016) expressed that, "The ESL teachers should build on the ELLs' cultures and make a connection between the new knowledge and the prior knowledge." She said:

I haven't read very much about culturally relevant pedagogy. The ultimate goal is to communicate. To understand the culture is a big piece in communication in English or any language. It has to be relevant to students. I am trying to build on what they know and the culture they know. When I say culture, I don't mean just music or

religion. I mean how we do things, what the value of a culture is, and what educational culture is. I don't want to ignore the culture. (Amy, personal communication, July 21, 2016)

Although the ESL teachers in this study indicated that they were not familiar with the construct of CRP, they describe how they apply some of the tenets of CRP in their classrooms, including: academic excellence and cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). However, due to the lack of knowledge about critical consciousness, the ESL teachers discussed the importance of critical thinking skills instead. Since cultural competence has already been discussed in the previous section when ESL teachers expressed their perception about ELLs' cultures in IEPs, this section mainly focuses on the ESL teachers' perception about the importance of promoting ELLs' academic excellence and critical thinking skills in the IEP, and how academic excellence and critical thinking skills are described in the documents.

Academic excellence. Helping students become academically successful is one of the primary responsibilities of culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). ESL teachers who apply the culturally relevant pedagogy hold high academic expectations of students (Lee, 2010; Osborne, 1996). Culturally relevant teachers “insisted on high academic and behavior standards and worked to help children achieve them” (Lipman, 1995, p.206). All the ESL teachers thought that the primary goal of the IEP is to improve

ELLs' academic excellence in regards to language skills, communication skills, and learning skills that are essential for their success in university academic programs.

Language skills. All the ESL teachers believe that it is important for the ELLs to improve their language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Document analysis revealed that the Intermediate High Integrated Skills course (2016) focuses on helping students improve their reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar skills while participating in a variety of activities. In the Advanced Low Integrated Skills course syllabus (2016), its primary objective is written as:

To familiarize students with high intermediate academic strategies by incorporating all language skill areas to generate authentic communication practice within theme driven content that replicates a typical course of an American university environment. (p. 1)

Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) said that the ELC curriculum progresses from easy to difficult. Students learn English—the four skills, basic grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure at lower levels. In intermediate levels, the curriculum focuses on accuracy, and trying to illuminate *fossilization* through improving the quality of language that ELLs produce. Fossilization refers to the certain stage in language learners' process of leaning L2 when they do not make further progress toward the target language regardless of the amount of exposure and instruction they receive in the TL (Selinker, 1972). In higher levels, the curriculum focus moves from discrete language teaching to the appropriate use of language to achieve other goals. Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) expressed that the ELLs progress to form critical

thinking skills expressed in their essays and presentations in higher levels, which are essential in university academic study. Tyler described the skills the ELLs obtain from his writing class:

My number one objective for that writing class is to help them produce a very well-structured written academic paragraph. On top of that, another goal would be for them to understand the U.S. rhetorical style. Another goal would be helping them with the revision process. (personal communication, August 2, 2016)

Communication skills. Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) and Tyler (personal communication, August 2, 2016) thought that it was important for the ELLs to improve not only their language knowledge and skills but also their communicative competence, i.e., the ability to communicate properly in different situations with different people from different cultures (Hymes, 1979). Tyler (personal communication, August 2, 2016) describes communication as, “I don’t mean communication in talking. I mean communication in becoming a better and active listener, or being able to communicate beyond cultural barriers, being able to become a good will ambassador in the world, and become leaders.”

Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said that the ultimate goal of language learning is communication. She (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said, “Misunderstanding and miscommunication would arise if ELLs do not have the cultural knowledge of what to say, when to say, how to say, in different situations to different

people even if they have mastered perfect grammar and pronunciation.” She (personal communication, July 21, 2016) explained, “There is a piece about being successful in American academic environment, which is all about communication, being able to effectively communicate both in written and spoken language in American academic environment.”

Learning skills. All the teacher participants thought that the ELLs need to utilize *cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies* (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990) to succeed in university academic study. Cognitive strategies are mental activities that operate directly on incoming information, and manipulate the language to enhance learning (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). Document analysis revealed that the cognitive strategies listed in the IEP curriculum (2015) and syllabus (2016) include: skimming/scanning; making predictions; previewing; annotating a text; determining meaning from context; using an English-English dictionary; active reading; improving reading speed; textbook marking; making inferences; using the context to guess meaning of unfamiliar words; and note-taking. For reading strategies Isabella (personal communication, July 25, 2016) said, “We learned reading strategies, skimming and scanning, and inferencing. We always try to have them guess meanings from the context, parts of speech, and main ideas.”

Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) and Isabella (personal communication, July 25, 2016) indicated that the ELLs also need to understand the

academic policies and expectations in American universities, such as the APA (American Psychological Association) formatting style and plagiarism. Document analysis revealed that in the Advanced-Low Integrated Skills course syllabus (2016), plagiarism is defined as:

... a representation of another's work or ideas as one's own in academic submissions. Plagiarism includes using the work of someone else (words or ideas) in your own work without properly giving credit or recognition to the source. (p. 6)

Isabella (personal communication, July 25, 2016) said she talks about plagiarism with the students. She tells the students that they cannot copy something without giving a reference and quotation marks. Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said that she gives the ELLs a variety of assignments to do which they will encounter in their university degree programs. She said:

Students write response papers [and] summary papers, so they know what they look like, what the formatting looks like, [such as] double spaces. We are an academic preparation program, so if they want to go to the university, they need to know how to study, and understand expectations. (Amy, personal communication, July 21, 2016)

Metacognitive strategies refer to higher order executive skills that involve planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the process of learning activities (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). All the ESL teachers said that the ELLs need to use metacognitive strategies such as taking responsibility, being autonomous, being self-disciplined, and effective time

management. Isabella (personal communication, July 25, 2016) said, “They need to learn how to [become] organized. The deadlines are important. They have to take care of their assignments, deadlines, and appointments, so it doesn’t affect their grades.”

Socio-affective strategies represent a broad range of activities that involve either interaction with another person or affective control in language learning (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). It includes strategies such as cooperation and question for clarification. Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said, “The students need to know how to interact with the study group, understand what the professors asking them to do, and communicate their needs to the teachers.”

Critical thinking skills. Critical consciousness is the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo and social inequities, and proactively try to change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). However, due to their lack of knowledge about the CRP, all the ESL teachers thought that critical thinking was one of the most important skills for ELLs to succeed in the U.S. academic environment.

Data analysis from documents revealed that the importance of critical thinking skills is stated in the IEP curricula and syllabi. In the Advanced Low Integrated Skills syllabus (2016), one of the student learning outcomes is “to critically read, listen to, analyze, discuss and write about various academic texts and topics” (p. 1), one of the learning outcomes is described as, “Students are able to write responses to questions about texts, including those requiring critical thinking and analysis (e.g., making inferences, drawing

conclusions, identifying the writer's support)." (p. 2) The Advanced High Oral Communication syllabus (2016) describes the course as, "...You will learn how to analyze and synthesize ideas on academic topics that you have read about or listened to. You will use these ideas to develop arguments and participate in group discussions. Additionally, you will work on improving your fluency, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation."

All the ESL teachers provide the ELLs opportunities to cultivate their critical thinking skills. Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that she would ask students to compare and contrast the American culture with their home culture, to find the similarities and differences, and encourage the students to express their ideas. She said:

I will ask students to provide an example, or compare and contrast what we have here with situation in their country, or think about what are the similarities and differences in previous readings. We encourage students to express their ideas. We teach them that you have to have your own opinion. (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) said that when ELLs come into the university classroom with other freshmen, if they do not have critical thinking, they will become immediately alienated from those students who were academically motivated, and had better grades in high school. She added that when the American students hear one of their international classmates say something not thoughtful or on a superficial level, it

is very hard for them to connect with the international students, and work with them. In advanced levels, critical thinking skills are very important for the advanced high level students. Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) said that the ELLs should learn to express their own opinion, analyze a problem or an issue deeply, and argue and persuade someone with evidence. She (Nicole, personal communication, August 12, 2016) continued, “We push critical thinking as number one skill. We ask students to actively express their ideas and thoughts. The entire Advanced High level curriculum is about opinion and persuasion.” Tyler (personal communication, August 2, 2016) expressed that critical thinking skills are important for the ELLs especially when they start their university degree programs. He said:

You see very little critique about their own culture. Critical thinking skills are hard to teach. The reason why we encourage students’ critical thinking skills at the ELC is that it is something they will experience when they get to the university and they have to be prepared for that. (Tyler, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

However, Tyler (personal communication, August 2, 2016) worried that incorporating critical thinking skills in the IEP classroom may colonize and dehumanize ELLs who are from cultures that do not encourage critical thinking skills. Tyler explained:

We are talking about “colonizing classroom” and “dehumanized classroom,” the idea that teachers are authority figures. If I [am] taking that Western ideal of

“decolonizing the classroom,” and putting it into my classroom, I am actually colonizing the classroom. For example, students from China are used to a teacher-centered classroom. To change that into a student-centered classroom, you are promoting the Western ideal. So it is “colonizing” itself. I think in the ELC, it is a little bit different from teaching K-12 in the U.S. There are definitely more other factors you need to consider. (personal communication, August 2, 2016)

Summary. The ESL teachers indicated that they do not have a strong knowledge base about the tenets of CRP, although they described the importance of including students’ cultures in teaching and learning in the IEP. The ESL teachers thought that the ELLs’ cultures and prior knowledge should be incorporated into the IEP to facilitate academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical thinking skills.

However, interview and document analysis revealed that the ESL teachers did not align with the tenet of CRP related to the development of critical consciousness. Instead, they asserted that the critical thinking skills are important for the ELLs. Critical thinking skills involve reflection about the actual thinking process (Lampert, 2011), making judgments based on using rational reasoning skills (Halpern, 2014), being skeptical about an individuals’ skills and dispositions to reach a desired outcome (Ku, Ho, Kau, & Lai, 2014), and creating new knowledge (Dondlinger & Wilson, 2012). With critical thinking skills, students are able to understand what they have read or been shown as well as to ask independent questions about what they have learned (Fahim & Masouleh, 2012). On the

contrary, critical consciousness derived from Freire's (2000) notion of "conscientization," which is "a process that invites learners to engage the world and others critically" (McLaren, 1989, p. 195). In the classrooms of culturally relevant teachers, students are expected to engage in broader sociocultural and sociopolitical issues (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Critical thinking skills emphasize students' posing a question from a critical stance; whereas, critical consciousness emphasize students to engage in broader sociocultural and sociopolitical issues. Since the ESL teachers do not have a good knowledge base about critical consciousness and the distinction between critical thinking skills and critical consciousness, they put emphasis on the former concept throughout the interviews.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Intensive English Program (IEP)

In this section, the researcher will illustrate ESL teachers' pedagogical practices responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity in the IEPs. The interviews of the ESL teachers and the observations of their classes provided information about how the ESL teachers utilize CRP in the IEP. Ladson-Billings (1995b) claims that:

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy would necessarily propose to do three things—produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order. (p. 474)

The researcher analyzed the ESL teachers' enactment of the tenets of CRP, including: academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

Academic excellence. Helping students become academically successful is one of the primary responsibilities of culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). ESL teachers who apply culturally relevant pedagogy hold high academic expectations of students (Lee, 2010; Osborne, 1996). Culturally relevant teachers “insist on high academic and behavior standards and worked to help children achieve them” (Lipman, 1995, p.206). CRP emphasizes the importance of students’ home culture as a facilitator for their academic learning—English proficiency for ELLs. ELLs’ proficiency in English plays a crucial role in successfully completing their studies in an English-speaking learning environment (Wardlow, 1999). The ESL teachers improve the ELLs’ academic excellence through such pedagogical practices as the focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning.

A focus on learning strategies. The ESL teachers incorporate learning strategies in the IEP teaching, such as guessing meaning from context, prediction, skimming and scanning, which aims to help the ELLs succeed academically in the IEP and in their future university academic programs. Instead of explaining the meaning of new words to the students, Isabella asked the students to guess the meaning and parts of speech from the context, and fill in the blanks of each sentence. After that, she organized a speaking activity (see Appendix IX). Isabella (personal communication, July 25, 2016) said in the interview, “By doing this, I can force them to think more about the context, trying to

predict both the meaning and parts of speech. I introduce the words after they are presented with the text.” After completing all the sentences, the students stood up to form two lines facing each other. Students in line A asked the questions on the handout, and students in line B answered. After one minute, students in line B took one step right to practice speaking with students in line A. After the students in line A interviewed three people, it was time for students in line B to ask questions, and students line A answered.

In one of the observations of Isabella’s class, the students were studying a reading text. Isabella did not explain it to the students word by word. Instead, she used reading strategies—skimming and scanning. Applying reading strategies is important for ELLs when they have a lot of materials to read in a limited time. The students have to use different reading strategies to complete the tasks on the handout (see Appendix X). Isabella asked the students to predict the sequence of the events that happened in the reading, and use skimming strategy to check their answers in the reading text. Through skimming strategy, the students were able to understand the general information and main idea of the reading text. After that, Isabella asked the students to use scanning strategy to find the specific information to answer the questions on their handout. While reading, students need to circle unfamiliar words and highlight or underline relevant sentences in the text.

The goal of the IEP is to prepare the ELLs for the university academic study (Vásquez, 2007). All the ESL teachers equip students with academic skills that are

required for their university academic study, for example: how to make a presentation, how to express one's opinions and ideas in a discussion, and how to write an academic paper. Amy required the students write their essays in APA (American Psychological Association) format, which is an academic formatting standard for most American universities. In one of the observations of her class, Amy corrected the students' essays with APA standard, and emphasized the details the students need to pay attention to when structuring and formatting their essays. She also showed the students how to access an online APA formatting resource. Amy put all the students' written summaries on the big screen through the overhead projector so that the students can see and read each other's summary. She showed the students how to insert page numbers. She said, "Usually in APA, page number comes at the top right corner. Your written text should be double-spaced. One sentence is not a paragraph in English writing." When she was correcting text structure, she said, "In academic writing, don't use 'there is/are...' structure, instead, you can paraphrase the sentences. In academic writing, quotes from the original text should be less than 10%." She opened the Purdue University online APA formatting website and told the students that it was a good resource to refer to in their academic writing. For the students' overuse of "for example" in their writing, she suggested they use "for instance" and "similarly" to reflect variety in their writing.

Providing students with structure, clear directions, and support. All the ESL teachers provide the ELLs with feedback for their assignments, clear directions for the

assignment and project, and assistance to help the students both in and out of class. The ESL teachers also work as the students' advisors to assist them with course registration, academic applications, letters of recommendation, and any other academic questions or concerns the students have.

All the ESL teachers provide structure by writing the objectives of a lesson on the whiteboard at the beginning of each class so that the students have a clear idea of what they are going to do. Putting the lesson plan on the board is another way to help both teacher and students keep track of the lesson. It also helps "to create a sense of security and predictability, both necessary for relaxed learning" (Clarke, 2007, p. 122). They also provide students clear directions, and repeat and write the directions on the whiteboard whenever necessary. During an observation of Isabella's class, she provided clear instructions on homework, and wrote them on the whiteboard. She said, "Bring the outline of your summary tomorrow. I will give your writing assignment back. Look at my comments on your paper. Your homework is: fill the questions and answer them. Tomorrow, we will practice talking about the questions." Isabella wrote the homework on the whiteboard: Two thesis statements, direct and indirect for your essays; Answer the questions using new words. When a student asked her for the PPT slides of the class, she said, "I will upload the PPT slides on Canvas." Before the end of the class, she once again emphasized that, "Upload your revised thesis statement, so that I can continue giving you

feedback.” When Isabella provided students with suggestions for the upcoming listening test,

“How can you prepare for the listening test tomorrow?” she asked.

“[We] don’t have to write complete sentences,” the students replied.

“First time, don’t write anything, just listen. Second and third time, you start to take notes. You can review the vocabulary in the book. Thursday, we will have a real discussion!” she said.

Nicole also provided clear directions to the students. During one of the observations of her class, she said:

Tomorrow, we have the last listening test for the quarter. Wednesday you will analyze the data. Looking at the column, look all the answers, find similarity, and identify patterns. Thursday, [you are going to do] the PPT presentation of your interview. Homework tonight: finish your data and Excel sheet. Tomorrow is the last day to prepare the PPT presentation. Take time to think about the transition of each person in your group, who talks about what, and spare equal time for each person to speak.

All the ESL teachers provide individual assistance to students’ class work. Realizing the students had some difficulties writing a thesis statement, Isabella set aside some time in class to help the students correct their thesis statements. During the transcription process of the interview project, Nicole provided assistance to the students whenever they

had uncertain or unfamiliar words in their recordings. She wrote the words on the whiteboard with parts of speech and meanings provided. Nicole helped the students with revising their interview questions. She explained:

That is the big key step I have realized. I really spend a lot of time thinking about the questions that I am going to give them. The questions should be written in a way that native speakers are going to understand what that information is really asking.

(personal communication, August 12, 2016)

During the observation of Nicole's class, she provided assistance and guidance to the students on each stage of the presentation project. She said:

When I see patterns (a PPT slide), I am looking at similarity. It's about juvenile justice. If you were to identify this, the majority of the pattern should be NO. Let's look at the demographic data to find similarity. One thing for your presentation is you have to generalize data, you have to show me a pattern, and take one minute to explain it. You need to make some charts to visualize the data, so that I could easily see majority and minority. We have a pie chart.

"What else?" she asked.

"Bar chart," a student replied.

"Don't use too much color. Be insistent with your PPT. Keep one style. You can divide the task, say, one is responsible for PPT slides, one is for demographic data, the other is for charts, etc. It may be efficient for time," she said.

“Can we do it on our own laptop and upload the PPT online?” a student asked.

“Yes. The students in the past did that,” she replied.

Nicole logged into Canvas, and reviewed the interview project presentation requirement with the students. She also showed the interview project scoring rubric to the students, including both the individual grade and the group grade.

Enriching the curriculum. The ESL teachers enrich the IEP curriculum by incorporating modern technology and authentic materials, connecting the academic learning to ELLs’ cultures, making adjustments to the curriculum or creating a new one individually or collaboratively, and sharing ideas on both informal and formal meetings.

Amy enriched the curriculum through incorporating modern technology and authentic materials to make the class more interesting and relevant to the ELLs’ culture and life. Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) thought that the ELLs would become more interested and engaged in the class and the assignment if technology is incorporated. Better engagement results in better academic achievement. She described an activity in which the students videotaped each other’s self-introduction using their iPhone or other i-devices, and transferred their videos into her phone, using Airdrop, a software application which can transfer files between i-devices. Using the Airdrop made her grading of the students’ speaking performance easier. She explained:

For speaking assessments, we usually record them. It’s really difficult to assess speaking when it’s live. Teachers try to write down quick words and what they say,

[such as] the mistakes, and assess their organization and their global meaning. And nowadays it is so easy. The students all use i-devices [for] videotaping. I can slow down, and I can listen to it once for pronunciation, listen to it again for content, and again for grammar. It is so easy. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

During the observation of her class, Amy asked students to incorporate the media sources for their presentations.

“Send me an email with your media source for your presentation, link for video, songs, or pictures. You have to record/self-video your presentation and upload it. You can show a little piece if you want,” she said.

“I record myself?” a student asked.

“Yes. iMovie (App) on iPhone is easier. Record a little piece of it, and upload it,” she replied.

Amy enriches the curriculum by offering the students with authentic language input from images, video clips, movies, songs, and TV commercials to improve their L2 learning. Authenticity means that, “Teachers present meaningful, authentic activities through which students can learn because they connect in meaningful ways with their experiences, needs, and aspirations.” (Clarke, 2007, p. 112) Since Amy got her undergraduate degree in film writing, she uses a lot of movie/video clips and images in her class to help the students understand new words or difficult concepts. She explained:

Film is very powerful. I actually use a lot of film and video clips in my classes.

Oftentimes, [when I help] students figure out vocabulary words, and try to explain difficult concepts, I just Google it and pull up the image, and have the image projected while I am talking about. I am trying to keep them in English. The images and the videos can prevent them from translating into their L1. They will try to understand the explanation in English. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Amy also incorporated Super Bowl commercials in her sports class. She analyzed the commercials with the students, and compared and contrasted the commercials with the ones in the students' cultures. She explained:

In my sports class, we look at the television commercials at the Super Bowl, [which is a] huge television event that people watch live. Everyone on that day is also watching television commercials. The students talk about why it is successful, what they are trying to sell, how they are trying to sell, and who the target audience is. They are doing comparison and contrast of commercials both in U.S. and in their home countries. I think students learn a lot from each other. Comparing and contrasting U.S. culture and their own cultures helps them understand both cultures better. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Additionally, the ESL teachers enrich the curriculum by making adjustments to the curriculum or creating a new one individually or collaboratively. When talking about the

focus class, Amy said that she had taught some focus classes before, and she had made a new class about American music. She said:

We create our own course outlines, essential questions, learning outcomes, assignments, assessments, and find all the materials. I just made a new one (focus class), it is American music, which I will start teaching in fall. I am excited. It is fun to make a new class. I don't make all the materials, but I find all the materials, especially for music. I will teach it for two quarters. I will get it ready, I put all the materials together, and after two quarters, I can hand it to other teachers. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Tyler thought that the field trips are usually followed by a presentation or a discussion. He thought about creating a focus class which combines the field trip and writing. He said:

I actually have an idea of focus class. I want to support the writing class. The students go off and visit places, and they are going to write about it. They can practice writing after their visit to the places. One thing we miss in the focus classes is writing. It is a lot of listening and speaking. (Tyler, personal communication, April 25, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, April 29, 2016) said that the ESL teachers who teach the courses on the same level meet regularly to share their ideas about the curriculum and the syllabus. The ESL teachers can learn from each other and make their class more interesting. She explained:

There is always a level point person [who] organizes the meeting. Teachers teaching the same class at the same level often meet. Sometimes we communicate by email. But we do meet face to face. We have both formal and informal meetings all the time. We talk about our plans and future tasks. (Isabella, personal communication, April 29, 2016)

Encouraging cooperative learning. All the ESL teachers encourage cooperative learning among the ELLs through group work and pair work. In Isabella's oral communication class, she organized a role play activity after the students watched a video about "bad impressions in the job interview". The students were paired randomly to perform how people made bad impressions with their assigned roles—co-workers, teacher & student, a man & his future in-laws, and a pair of dating couple who were on their first date. It was impromptu. Isabella thought that it could help students strengthen the vocabulary, and practice their thinking and communication skills. She described, "They have to make some meaningful exchanges with words and physical activities. They create their own pace. It can help recycle students' vocabulary, create their own content, and even practice their thinking skills and communication." (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Another example of a pair activity that Isabella organized in class was an interview based on the video and the reading about social responsibility. The video was about Tom's Shoes. One student was a journalist, the other was Blake Mycoskie, the founder of

Tom's Shoes. They switched roles. Students prepared three interview questions based on what they had learned from the reading and the video. They also needed to create three questions of their own. Isabella thought that this activity helped the students recycle the information they had learned, and made them more creative in writing their own questions. She said, "It was very applicable because they could recycle the information they listened and watched. They had to be creative." (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

Amy (personal communication, July 21, 2016) said that the ESL teachers who taught integrated skills classes organized book clubs every week. It lasts about fifteen to twenty minutes. The students who choose the same novel form a group/book club. Each week, the students meet in class to discuss the chapter(s) they read. In each book club, the students switch roles between a discussion leader, a summarizer, and a person who is in charge of vocabulary study. The students have to be responsible for their assigned roles, contribute to the group members' learning, effectively communicate with the group members, and work collaboratively towards a presentation about their book at the end of the quarter.

In one of the observations of Amy's class, she organized a book club in the second period of her class. The novel the students were reading was Harry Potter. One student facilitated the discussion; another student summarized the chapter(s) they read; the third student was responsible for the vocabulary exercise (see Figure 1).

“What is the main idea?” one Arab woman asked.

An African-American woman was making the summary of the chapter eight. She read the chapter, and explained to the other two students. After her explanation,

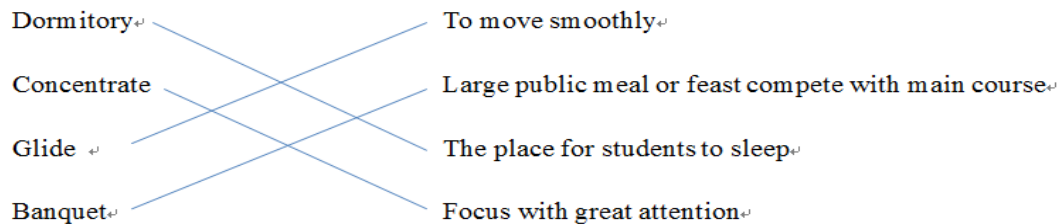
“Do you understand?” she asked.

The students in the group discussed the main ideas of the chapter. After their discussion,

“What is your vocabulary task?” the Arab woman asked a Chinese man.

The Chinese man wrote the vocabulary task on the whiteboard. After they studied the vocabulary together, Amy asked the students to continue watching Harry Potter from last week.

Figure 1. Matching the Vocabulary with the Definitions.



Cultural competence. To become culturally competent, students should cultivate “the ability to function effectively in their culture of origin” (Ladson Billings, 2000, p.219), as well as the willingness to be involved in school cultures, approach new cultures, and perform appropriately in cross-cultural communications. Academic success of a minority student should not come at the “expense of their cultural and psychosocial

well-being” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475). “Culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically.” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476) The ESL teachers cultivate the ELLs’ cultural competence through such pedagogical practices as building on students’ cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between school and communities.

Building on students’ cultural experiences. The term “cultural experiences” assumes a broad range of elements in a child’s life ranging from tangible cultural or family experiences, events, or artifacts, and equally important, the intangible cultural or family ways of being, as in values, feelings, language, and identity (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). All the teacher participants connect the academic content with the students’ cultures. This helps to cultivate the students’ cultural competence in their home culture as well as alien cultures.

All the teacher participants provide the students opportunities to discuss different cultures. The students would become competent in both their home culture as well as alien cultures through comparison and contrast. Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that the students would become more focused and motivated when they talk about different cultures. She said, “Students are contributors to the class. They are the ones who are teaching everyone in class.” Amy connected the academic content to the

students' cultures by providing them with opportunities to compare and contrast their home cultures and American culture. Amy said:

Right now, I am teaching them values. I put them in groups by their home cultures.

They have to tell the whole class about the important values in their home country.

They have to explain and give examples. We will discuss what the important values are in the U.S. We will find out which ones are the same, and which ones are

different. We constantly do comparison. It helps them to understand how different [it] is here, and why it is different here. (Amy, personal communication, May 2, 2016)

If the ESL teachers understand the students' cultures, they can take a responsive way to connect the students' cultures to the academic content. Amy (personal communication, May 2, 2016) said that the ESL teachers took students' cultures into consideration when selecting authentic materials and content in order not to offend the students' cultures and religion. The ESL teachers place Muslim husbands and wives in different classes, so that the Muslim women can take part in class discussions with other students. The ESL teachers have to think about what kind of field trips the Muslim women are able to participate in. The teachers allow some Muslim students to have their lunch in a separate room. The teachers allow Muslim students to pray in class without leaving their seats. Tyler (personal communication, May 18, 2016) said that with the knowledge about students' cultures, he could diagnose the students' problem, and provide them with individual assistance. Tyler said:

I look at individual students and their problems, and then I might take their culture and language into account. In the beginning, if I see one particular student is struggling, I start evaluating what those problems are, and determining whether it is a cultural thing or mostly language issue. (personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Chinese students are usually uncomfortable with classroom activities including participating in group discussions, asking questions in class, and critical argumentations (Durkin, 2011). Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) gave Chinese students a longer wait time before they raise their hands to participate in class activities. She said, “For Chinese students, they feel more comfortable when they are quiet. I need to allow them more time to raise their hands to volunteer to do things in class.” (Isabella, personal communication, May 13, 2016)

All the teacher participants use the students’ L1 as a facilitator for their L2 comprehension. Students’ use of the first language promotes the efficient explanation of meanings (Cook, 2010). In Amy’s integrated skills class, when she was discussing disabilities with the students, she asked the students if they had ever heard of “Down’s Syndrome”, and how it was translated into their language. A Chinese student translated it into Chinese immediately.

“How about disability? What kinds of disabilities people might have?” she asked.

“Blind, deaf, wheel chair...,” students answered.

“Yes. These are all physical disability. Have you heard about Down’s Syndrome? It

is mental disability. How do you translate it in your language?” she asked.

“唐氏综合征 (Tang Shi Zong He Zheng),” a Chinese student said.

Creating an inclusive environment. All the teacher participants thought that it was important to create an inclusive environment in which the ELLs feel safe and relaxed to participate in class activities. The teachers keep the classroom neutral. They do not encourage ELLs to discuss sensitive topics about politics and religion, and to say something unkind or disrespectful. They encourage students to respect each other. They take the ELLs’ cultures and religion into consideration in every aspect of the ESL teaching, such as organizing field trips, selecting authentic materials, and grouping students for collaborative tasks.

The students may feel embarrassed or reluctant to participate in class activities because of their cultural and religious practices. Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) said that Muslim women are not used to talking to males in their culture, especially when their husbands and families are present. The common practice in the ELC is to place Muslim husbands and wives in different classes, so that the Muslim women are able to take part in class activities. Amy described other measures that the ESL teachers take to create an inclusive environment for all the students:

For the field trip, we have to think about what [kind of] field trip the Muslim women are able to participate in. Sometimes they can’t eat in front of others, so we will think about if they [can] eat in [a] separate room. [We have to] take all the cultures

and values respectful, so that everyone can participate as much as possible.

Sometimes their phones start playing in class, is a call, time for prayer. But they are very respectful, they just turn it off. They don't leave the room. They just take a minute in class praying quietly. (Amy, personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Amy (personal communication, April 28, 2016) said that she takes students' cultures into consideration when selecting authentic materials. The ELLs' cultures also determine what questions the teacher should ask, how much explanation the teacher should provide, and what discourse markers the teacher should use to communicate with the students.

Amy explained:

For the students from Muslim cultures, I always think whether this video is OK for them, what song I am going to play, whether the lyrics are OK for them. [I also think about] the reading content, and how the students are going to react. I want them to feel safe, I am not trying to bring out controversy in the classroom. Oftentimes, you don't even know what kind of questions to ask, how much explanation I need to give them. I also adjust my own speech, and my slang, my grammar to match the level they are in. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

When the ESL teachers understand the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of ELLs, it is more likely that the ESL teachers adjust the academic content and the pedagogy to the ELLs' competence (Porto, 2010). Tyler (personal communication, May

18, 2016) said that the ESL teachers would create a comfortable environment and manage the class well if they knew some values of students' cultures. He said:

Trying to manage the classroom becomes [a] key. You have to know your culture, people, and your students in order to create a comfortable learning environment. You don't have to know the specifics of every culture, but it does help knowing a little bit about the values. (Tyler, personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Encouraging relationships between school and communities. Developing the relationship between school and communities is another way of building students' cultural competence. The ELLs are from different countries, many of them do not have any relatives in the U.S. or do not know anybody from their countries in the city where they are studying. Therefore, it is not possible to invite any of their families or community members to participate in school activities as suggested by Morrison, Robbins, & Rose (2008).

However, the ELC offers ELLs a variety of learning and cultural experiences to connect the school and community. In the student services section of the Overview of the Program or Language Institution (2015), it is stated that the field trips provide students with the opportunity to explore the outdoors in Colorado or participate in other local attractions such as museums, the State Capitol, sporting events, musical and theatrical productions, IMAX and bowling. In addition, class visits and service learning projects to local schools, businesses, TV stations, newspaper offices and supermarkets provide the

students beneficial learning experiences that coordinate with in-class assignments. The Conversation Partner Program provides opportunities for the students to practice their speaking and listening skills with English speakers. Furthermore, the students can participate in the university's intramural teams, such as volleyball, soccer, and basketball to develop friendship with American students. The ELC also holds interesting, larger-scale activities and events such as picnics, a Halloween party, ice skating, student-led cultural celebrations, and potlucks to build friendship among the students, and to facilitate communication between the students and the faculty and staff.

All the ESL teachers connect the ELLs school experience with communities through field trips. The field trips provide the ELLs opportunities to learn about the American society, people, history, and culture. Tyler said:

We took students to the Colorado History Museum. There was an exhibit called Colorado Stories. [The students could] hear different people talking about their lives there. [When] the students came back, they did a little video project on that, which was very nice. The experiential learning is very big here at the ELC. [We] take students out of the classroom as much as we can. (personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Placed-based education describes teaching and learning that is situated in local community and culture (Williams, 2003), with a focus on real-world relevance. Field trips can provide ELLs with various kinds of real-world learning experiences, which can be a

complement to IEP curricula, because “building a strong school-community relationship will help open doors for curriculum ideas” (Uhrmacher and Bunn, 2011, p. 70).

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo and social inequities, and proactively try to change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant pedagogy “is about questioning the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). Culturally relevant teachers motivate students to learn the basic knowledge, and develop their autonomous skills to examine the existing social inequality through critical literacy (Leonard et al. 2009). The ESL teachers cultivate the ELLs’ critical consciousness through such pedagogical practices as using critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom. These pedagogies to develop students’ critical consciousness align to the pedagogies applied by the K-12 teachers as summarized by Morrison , Robbins, & Rose (2008).

Using critical literacy strategies. Critical literacy in educational practices refers to a strategy of critiquing social issues through posing questions on reading activities (Luke & Freebody, 1997). All the ESL teachers use critical literacy strategies to encourage the ELLs to think critically and to express their thoughts in class.

One of the critical literacy activities is the critical interview presentation project in Nicole’s Advanced High Oral Communication class. It is a three-week project. In small groups, the students interviewed twelve native speakers of English about one of the four

topics which were related to the criminal justice system they were studying—alternatives to prison, for-profit prison, inhumane punishment, and juvenile punishment. As a group, the students collected the data, analyzed the data, and gave an oral presentation with visual representations at the end of the project. For the interview questions, the students designed their questions first, and the teacher provided them feedback for revision in order to help them get a deeper understanding about people's opinions about the questions. When the students were engaged in the process of revising the questions, analyzing the data, and presenting the findings, the students developed a critical understanding of the topics about the American criminal justice system. As they became more conscious about the topics, they proposed a conclusion and a call for action about the critical issues.

Nicole said that the objectives of the project were interaction with native speakers of English; making a data-driven project; and practicing speaking skills and critical thinking skills. She explained:

Our thinking behind it was [that] we really want to give them an opportunity to not only connect with Americans, [but] I also want to really put in some data-driven projects for the majority of the students who are engineering or business [majors].

Also we built discrete skills, like PowerPoint, Excel. I found that making it data-driven also requires them to speak more. This project is more aligned with what is happening in the College of Business, or what is happening in the STEM (science,

technology, engineering, mathematics) programs. (Nicole, personal communication, August 12, 2016)

Debate is another activity that Nicole organizes to cultivate the students' critical consciousness about socio-political issues. Nicole (personal communication, August 12, 2016) described a debate activity about the refugee crisis. Each group of students had to prepare both pros and cons about a subtopic. The students had to research about these topics, and form their own critical understandings and thoughts about the action and solution to the issues. Nicole explained:

We did debates today. There are four debate groups. One group did whether or not the U.S. should give asylum to refugees who do not have any educational, economic benefits or advantage. Another group did whether U.S. states should get to choose whether or not to accept refugees. The third group did whether or not refugees should have to change their cultural identity to match the new home country. They have to prepare for both sides. (personal communication, August 12, 2016)

All the teacher participants use critical literacy strategy in communication with the students in class. The students are encouraged to pose questions about social controversial topics. Posing questions helps the students develop critical thinking ability, and deepen their critical understanding of the text. The teachers and the students contribute to each other's understanding through comparison and contrast of different cultural practices in students' home countries and in the U.S.

During the observation of Amy's integrated skills class, she and the students discussed how genetic information indicated whether a person was likely to become ill in the future; how people got insurance in America; whether or not to raise insurance for everyone or just smokers or Marijuana smokers; and whether or not people with AIDS could become U.S. citizens.

"What is GINA? Would you like to read this part?" she asked.

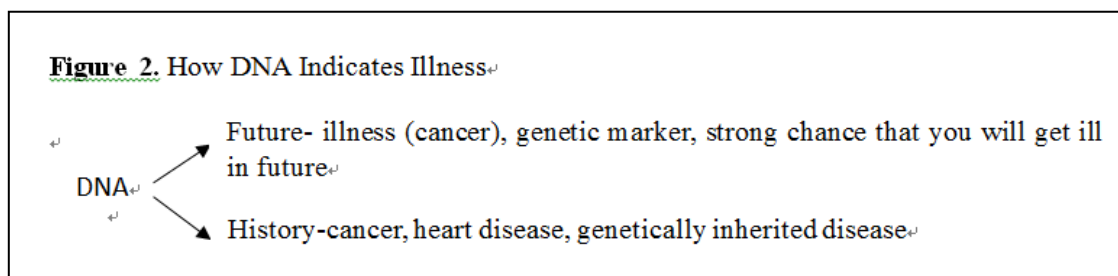
A student reads.

"What is the main idea?" she asked.

"Genetic information can indicate if a person is likely to become ill in the future," a student answered.

"Please repeat it. OK, it is main idea," she said.

Amy wrote on the whiteboard about how DNA indicates illness (see Figure 2).



"Why do insurance companies refuse this kind of people?" she asked.

"The insurance companies will pay a lot," a student answered.

"Yes. I was in hospital 24 hours for my surgery. With surgeon, nurses...that cost me \$50,000. Luckily, I have insurance. The insurance company paid most part of the cost.

How do people get insurance?” she asked.

“From their jobs?” a student asked.

She explained:

Yes. For a couple, you have to decide whose job offers the best insurance, because insurance is as important as salary. In the past, insurance companies discriminate against people based on their genetics. Obama changed it. They will ask you whether or not you smoke. If you tell a lie, you will get zero insurance. If you say “yes,” you will have to pay more. There is an argument about raising insurance for everyone or just smokers. And also there is a state level and national level debate about whether or not to increase the insurance rate for Marijuana smokers.

“If you have Ebola, or AIDS, you can’t become U.S. citizen. There is also a debate about why people with AIDS can’t become U.S. citizen,” she said.

“They can transfer AIDS or Ebola to other people,” a student said.

“You have to show you have a lot of money,” she said.

“How about the retired people?” a student asked.

“After 65, the government gives you social security,” she replied.

“My mom is 65, but she doesn’t work in the U.S. How do I buy insurance for her?” a student asked.

“She can buy private insurance. It depends on your age, smoking history, illness, etc.,” she replied.

Engaging students in social justice work. The ESL teachers provide the ELLs opportunities to engage in social justice work through field trips. In the sustainability class syllabus (2016), the course is described as:

Students will participate in experiential learning opportunities by visiting various offices on the DU campus as well as within the Denver community to learn about environmental sustainability, energy, transportation, food and health topics locally and globally. Students will listen to and speak with native English speakers, ask questions, and prepare a presentation on a sustainability topic.

The learning outcomes are described as (1) Students will improve listening skills through authentic lectures, activities, service learning, and video related to the topic of sustainability; (2) Students will be exposed to cultural issues about sustainability on an American college campus through experiential learning activities and events; (3) Students will learn about cultural, environmental, local, global, and historical issues related to sustainability; (4) Students will build academic vocabulary related to the theme of sustainability; (5) Students will better understand cultural norms related to sustainability issues in American society; and (6) Students will improve listening through experiential learning activities involving sustainability on an American campus.

In addition, the sustainability class offers the ELLs a variety of class activities: class discussion, the story of stuff, visit to a recycling center, a tour of the Ritchie Center (gymnasium), lecture by a guest speaker, and visit to a community garden. The class provides students a good opportunity to interact with native English speakers, to better understand cultural norms related to sustainability issues in American society, cultivate

critical consciousness about socio-environmental issues through in-class discussions and online discussions, and to propose a further action for environmental protection and sustainability.

For one field trip, the students went to Grow Haws—a small planting house in the center of the downtown Denver, which used to be a deserted land. The students experienced and learned how people applied the idea of sustainability to growing plants, serving the community, and maintaining the ecosystem. Modern acuaponic and hydroponic technology is used to grow plants in which water is recycled and reused. The fresh fruits and vegetables from the planting house serve the neighborhood residents. Children who visit the planting house have the experiential opportunities to feed the animals, and learn about the animals. The ecosystem is maintained through using animal waste and fish waste to grow plants. Visiting the compost making area of the planting house made the students understand how compost was made and the differences between finished compost, active compost, and inactive compost, which supplement their knowledge in their textbooks. The students' critical consciousness was cultivated through active engagement in the field trip, and communication with the educational tour guide.

“...how we grow mushroom to keep sustainability and ecosystem...Mushroom cultivation and production industry...One mission is to expand and influence as many people as possible...Flower of the fungus...,” the tour guide introduced.

“How long does it take to grow from fungus to mushroom?” a student asked.

“Some grow 13 days, some 90-110 days, it depends on different environment...,”
the tour guide replied.

Sharing power in the classroom. The ESL teachers who implement the CRP share power with the ELLs, and provide opportunities for the ELLs to become autonomous and responsible for their learning. *Power* is defined as the state of having or exerting control over the actions and thoughts of others (Fairclough, 1989). ESL teachers create a context for ELLs to develop their critical consciousness by challenging traditional roles of teacher and students. In traditional roles, teachers are regarded as absolute authority, and have more power over their students (Freire, 2000). Teachers have an absolute power to decide what and how the students are going to learn. The ELLs will have an opportunity to engage in reflective and creative socio-cultural and socio-political activities, and “become effective agents for social change” (Banks and Banks, 1995, p. 152) if they are given more powers over their learning.

Instead of providing all the answers to students, Amy provided opportunities for the ELLs to analyze the reading texts, write summaries, and teach their fellow classmates about their reading texts. Dewey points out that “students learn best by doing, not by sitting in rows and being talked to” (Dewey, 1938, p. 99). In Amy’s advanced low integrated skills class, she asked students to give a one sentence summary of the reading text Equal Rights and Protection for All. The students were divided into three groups. Each group discussed and wrote down three questions about the different parts—Gender,

Disability, and Ageism. After group discussions, the students began writing their summary sentences and questions on the whiteboard, and asked the rest of the class to answer the questions. Amy expanded students' vocabulary, corrected their pronunciation, and discussed with students about gender, disability, and ageism issues both in the U.S. and in their countries.

In order to cater to the students' individual differences, all the teacher participants provide as many choices as possible for the ELLs to do class activities, quizzes, and assignments. Amy provided the students an opportunity to choose to work individually or in a group. Amy provided two options for the students to do the vocabulary quiz. Option one was two small quizzes on two days; and option two was one big quiz at a time. The students raised their hands to decide. For an oral presentation assignment about the American culture in Amy's class, the students had an opportunity to choose the media sources that reflect the American culture. The media sources include poems, stories, pieces of art, books, songs, music, and TV shows. The students would record their oral presentation and send it to the teacher.

The ESL teachers provide the ELLs an opportunity to create the vocabulary list and choose reading materials. Amy allowed each student to choose one word from the reading passage every week. The students provided the part of speech, the definition of the word, and the example sentence, and posted it in the discussion board on Canvas. Amy

combined all the words, and created the vocabulary quiz (see Appendix VIII) with tasks such as dictation, making sentences, or a word puzzle. Amy explained:

I have them choose the words from the reading. It is a part of learner-centered curriculum. I want them to be involved in their own learning. They have more power over their learning. They are adults. If I give them a choice, they are more engaged. They participate with some power and some choices in their learning. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Isabella (personal communication, May 13, 2016) said that for excessive reading (ER) materials, the students were allowed to choose different books which were appropriate for their ability levels. Students need to read one to two pages of the book, upload the difficult words on Canvas, tell the class why they chose the book, what they read about, and present their reading with visual representations.

The ESL teachers use authentic assessment—self-evaluation and peer evaluation to promote the ELLs’ autonomy. Authentic performance-based assessments engage students in their own learning, measure meaningful outcomes, and provide opportunities to demonstrate highly valued knowledge and skills (Neil & Medina, 1989). Self-evaluation encourages students to judge the quality of their own work and approach their work critically (Zapitis, 2011). Self-evaluation makes students reflect on their performance, the strengths and weaknesses, and what they need to improve. In one of her observations, Amy asked each student to fill a self-evaluation form (see Appendix VII) after their

presentation in class. The students need to reflect on themselves, write about their strengths and weaknesses, and further actions that they take to improve their performance.

Feedback is an important component for learning (Thorndike, 1927), and instruction (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1992). Peer feedback is beneficial for students' academic improvement since they can get useful suggestions from their peer classmates. In one of her observations, Amy asked the students to provide feedback on a writing assignment to each other. The students underlined the topic sentence, summary, and conclusion on each other's writing. They marked the main points, examples, and details at the margins of the paper. They had to think about whether these points and examples were logical, or in the right order. Amy told the students:

Now, I will give you your classmate's writing assignment. You have to underline their topic sentence, summary, and conclusion. Mark their main points, examples, and details at the right side margin of their paper. You also have to think about whether these points and examples are logical or in the right order.

The students were correcting their peer classmates' writings. After a few minutes, Amy said, "Now, go to your partner, point out their three grammar mistakes, and correct them."

Nicole asked the students to fill out the feedback form on Canvas after each group's presentation. She emphasized that the feedback should be specific and thoughtful, she said, "The more specific the feedback is, the more benefit your classmates will get for their final projects."

Summary. The ESL teachers are not familiar with CRP, and they do not align with the tenet of CRP related to the development of critical consciousness, instead, they use critical thinking skills. However, the researcher found that the ESL teachers apply pedagogical practices which incorporate the ELLs' cultures into the IEP teaching to improve the ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The ESL teachers improve ELLs' academic achievement through such pedagogical practices as a focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning. The ESL teachers' pedagogical practices to improve ELLs' cultural competence include: building on students' cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between schools and communities. ELLs' critical consciousness is developed through critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom. The next chapter will present a detailed discussion of the findings.

Chapter Five: Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this single instrumental case study is to explore how English as a second language (ESL) teachers implement the culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in intensive English programs (IEP) to support the academic success of English Language Learners (ELLs). The study aims to explore the following research questions: (1) What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching ELLs? (2) How do ESL teachers perceive ELLs' home culture and first language in the IEP? (3) How do ESL teachers describe their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' culture and first language? (4) What culturally relevant pedagogical practices are enacted in IEP classrooms? The participants were four full-time ESL teachers who were teaching ELLs in an IEP affiliated with Mountain University (pseudonym). The research methods included face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, and document review. This chapter includes a detailed discussion of the themes emerged from the findings, a summary of the findings, and the implications and limitations of the study. The suggestions for further research are presented at the end of the chapter.

Discussion of Emerging Themes from This Research

Ladson-Billings (1995b) claims that:

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy would necessarily propose to do three things—produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order. (p. 474)

Culturally relevant ESL teachers value students' native cultures and first language (L1), and create strong ties with parents and the ethnic community (Osborne, 1996). CRP encourages ESL teachers to value ELLs' culture and L1 as an asset and incorporate ELLs' culture in IEP curriculum and instruction. The academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse students should not come at the "expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475); instead, students' home cultures should be utilized "as a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 161). In order to understand the ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in IEPs, there is a need to explore how they perceive ELLs' culture and L1, how they create an inclusive learning community, how familiar they are with CRP, and how they implement CRP in IEP classrooms.

Perceiving ELLs' culture as an asset. Teachers who utilize CRP perceive students' home culture as a facilitator for their academic learning in multicultural settings (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). The ESL teachers acknowledge the importance of ELLs' culture in academic learning and incorporate that culture in their instruction to improve the students' academic achievement, cultivate the students' cultural competence, and

develop their critical consciousness. Academic success of minority students should not come at the “expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475), instead students’ cultures should be utilized “as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 161). Students’ cultural competence can be supported if teachers acknowledge the legitimacy of the students’ home language and culture as funds of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Morrison et al., 2008). The ESL teachers expressed that ELLs’ home cultures add richness to class discussions, facilitate cross-cultural communication, and build cultural competence in both home culture and new cultures for teachers as well as students. To become culturally competent, students should cultivate “the ability to function effectively in their culture of origin” (Ladson Billings, 2000, p.210), as well as the willingness to be involved in school cultures, approach alien cultures, and perform appropriately in cross-cultural communications. ELLs’ cultural competence is cultivated through such learning activities as presentation and discussion in which they can talk about things they are familiar with and have personal relevance, and compare and contrast different cultures. CRP provides a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while accomplishing academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant teachers gave students access to classroom knowledge by connecting to their experiences and culture—building bridges between their prior knowledge and new content (Foster, 1992).

In addition, the ESL teachers believe that ELLs' cultures inform them of the students' behavior and performance in class. They can explain the students' behavior and performance related to their culture. All the ESL teachers expressed that the ELLs' cultures helped them better understand the ELLs' behaviors, and strengths and weaknesses in the class. People's native culture exerts an influence on their values, behaviors, ways of thinking, and the learning and use of L2 (Gay, 2000, Qi, 1998; Yu, 1996). For example, people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize discourse differently (Kaplan, 1972). With the understanding of students' culture, teachers are able to design and select appropriate instructional materials for the students (Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1994), make informed decisions about when to use culturally relevant pedagogy, and decide when to focus on the individual characteristics of students (Nieto, 1994). The more knowledge ESL teachers have about ELLs' cultures, the better the ESL teachers understand the ELLs' academic performance and behaviors, and strengths and weaknesses in L2 learning. It is not necessary to be an expert in every culture of the world. What matters is that teachers and students should work together to cultivate and develop multicultural willingness and awareness to respect and explore different cultures (Benavides, 1992).

Perceiving ELLs' L1 as both facilitator and hindrance for L2. The ESL teachers perceive ELLs' L1 as a facilitator for L2 learning. However, they do not encourage ELLs' use of L1 and perceive L1 as a hindrance for L2 due to several factors. Firstly, the

primary objective of IEPs is to equip learners with the academic language and skills they need in order to be successful in university degree programs (Vásquez, 2007).

Additionally, IEPs are governed by “a monolingual set of norms and ideals” (Levine, 2011, p. 4) which put emphasis on English-only (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Şimşek, 2010) in class. Furthermore, the monolingual idea of teaching is further supported by Krashen’s (1982, 1985) input hypothesis which legitimizes teachers’ use of authentic materials containing comprehensible target language input for ELLs (Echevarria et al., 2008; Francis, Rivera, Leseaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). The ESL teachers believe that it is important for the ELLs to improve English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. With these factors, the ESL teachers are more likely to prefer English as their only means for classroom communications and interactions.

L1 as a facilitator for L2. With the empirical research findings of the positive influence of L1 on L2 (Cook, 2010; Cummins, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Fougère, 2011; Littlewood & Yu, 2009; Meiring & Norman, 2002), most ESL teachers and policy makers acknowledge the legitimacy of incorporating ELLs’ L1 in L2 learning. They are aware of the importance of L1 in ELLs’ L2 acquisition, and gradually change their attitude and pedagogy from monolingual (English-only) practice to some form of communicative or task-based language teaching (Cummins, 2009a). Students’ use of L1 promotes the efficient explanation of meanings and affective factors that is essential for establishing a

good relationship between and among teachers and students (Cook, 2010). The ESL teachers thought that ELLs' L1 is helpful in understanding difficult concepts in L2 through direct translation because the first language "can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2" (Cummins, 2007, p. 238). L1 literacy level is positively related to L2 literacy acquisition (Fougère, 2011). Students' use of L1 also promotes their motivation and reassurance, and reduction of affective barriers in L2 learning. Due to socio-cultural differences, when ELLs come to the U.S., they do not have frequent encounters with people other than their group. They are likely to feel alienated in American society. Speaking of L1 in their group makes ELLs feel at ease and comfortable in American classrooms. Students' use of L1 helps them avoid their alienation among learners (Cook, 2010; Littlewood & Yu, 2009; Meiring & Norman, 2002).

L1 as a hindrance for L2. All the ESL teachers favor the monolingual approach which excludes translation and the mixing of languages, and uses only English as a reference system (Stern, 1992). The monolingual approach in IEPs is supported by Krashen's (1982, 1985) Input Hypothesis, which argues that language acquisition results from extensive comprehensible input in the target language (G. Cook, 2010; V. Cook, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Students must be immersed in a language-rich environment (Francis, Rivera, Leseaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006) that affords them the opportunity to contextualize the linguistic skills learned and to comfortably use the new

language for social and academic purposes. Students should be constantly engaged in authentic reading and writing activities (Echevarria et al., 2008) to develop L2 proficiency and literacy. In the classroom, target language becomes comprehensible to students by means of contextual support and an input-rich environment (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). In IEPs, ESL teachers may create an input-rich environment in which the use of L1 is minimized whereas the use of English is encouraged as the only means of communication. The ESL teachers thought that ELLs' speaking in their L1 hinders their L2 acquisition. In addition, all the ESL teachers thought that the ELLs' constant speaking in their L1 distracts and excludes other students when they engage in a task in groups as well as results in teachers' loss of control over the class.

Creating an inclusive learning community. IEPs are multicultural in nature with ELLs from different cultures. ESL teachers who embrace multicultural perspective may build an inclusive learning community by connecting ELLs' cultures to IEP curriculum to provide an equal opportunity for all ELLs to succeed academically. The ultimate goal of multicultural education is to empower every student through equity pedagogy, and transform current school and social structure (Banks 1993; 2001a). Equity pedagogy in multicultural education refers to teachers' decisions in the classroom that are based on high academic standards for all children (Banks, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial for ESL teachers to create an inclusive learning environment for ELLs to have an equal opportunity for success.

The ESL teachers create an inclusive learning environment by connecting ELLs' cultures and educational experience to the U.S. culture and academic experience. In IEPs, ELLs are from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, and display distinct individual differences. When the ESL teachers understand the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of ELLs, it is more likely that the ESL teachers adjust the academic content and the pedagogy to the ELLs' competence (Porto, 2010). Social language is context-embedded, that is, comprehension is aided by familiar cultural clues and demonstrations (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (2000) points out that the more ESL academic content is congruent with ELLs' home culture, prior experience, and knowledge, the better the ELLs can comprehend the content, and improve their L2 acquisition and literacy.

The ESL teachers create an inclusive learning environment by addressing cultural, linguistic, and individual differences. The ESL teachers take ELLs' cultures, experience, and individual differences into consideration when choosing class materials and organizing class activities. The ESL teachers create an inclusive environment by connecting ELLs' academic learning in the IEP to their university academic study. If ESL teachers connect ELLs' culture and experience to IEP curriculum and content, the ELLs will become more motivated to learn. ELLs are motivated and engaged in academic tasks which are relevant to their own experiences/prior knowledge (Egbert, 2003). Motivation is one of the important individual factors in second language acquisition. Gardner (1985)

defines L2 motivation as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 10). Research has shown that motivation plays an essential role in the success of students learning a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Teachers who are responsive to the cultural capital that the students bring to the classroom will create a learning environment where students feel welcome and have the best opportunities to learn (Barnes, 2006). IEPs are multicultural in nature with ELLs from different cultures. ESL teachers who embrace multicultural perspectives may build an inclusive learning community by connecting ELLs’ cultures to IEP curriculum to provide an equal opportunity for all ELLs to succeed academically. The ultimate goal of multicultural education is to empower every student through equity pedagogy, and transform school and social structure (Banks 1994; 2001a). Equity pedagogy in multicultural education refers to teachers’ decisions in the classroom that are based on high academic standards for all children (Banks, 2003). ESL teachers take an equity pedagogy which aims to facilitate educational achievement for all students (Banks, 1994). In an inclusive environment, students will have a sense of security and predictability that are both necessary for relaxed learning (Clarke, 2007).

Emphasizing critical thinking rather than critical consciousness. To understand how CRP utilized by the ESL teachers to support the ELLs’ academic success in the IEP, there is a need to explore the ESL teachers’ understanding about the tenets of CRP.

Although the ESL teachers in this study are not familiar with CRP, they are all aware of the importance of ELLs' cultures in ESL instruction, and incorporate the students' cultures into ESL teaching to facilitate the ELLs' learning.

However, due to their lack of knowledge about critical consciousness, all the ESL teachers thought that critical thinking skills are one of the most important skills for ELLs to succeed in the U.S. academic environment. Critical thinking skills involve reflection about the actual thinking process (Lampert, 2011), making judgments based on using rational reasoning skills (Halpern, 2014), being skeptical about an individuals' skills and dispositions to reach a desired outcome (Ku, Ho, Kau, & Lai, 2014), and creating new knowledge (Dondlinger & Wilson, 2012). Critical thinking skills give students the ability not only to understand what they have read or been shown, but also to ask independent questions about how they can build upon that knowledge (Fahim & Masouleh, 2012).

More broadly speaking, critical consciousness derived from Freire's (2000) notion of "conscientization," which is "a process that invites learners to engage the world and others critically" (McLaren, 1989, p. 195). Critical consciousness is the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo and social inequities, and proactively try to change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In the classrooms, teachers who are aware of the importance of developing students' critical consciousness provide students opportunities to engage in broader sociocultural and sociopolitical issues (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The ESL teachers' emphasis on developing students' critical

thinking rather than critical consciousness sheds light on the importance of incorporating CRP training in teacher education programs with ESL endorsement.

Implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. CRP connects the school culture to students' cultures, values and supports their cultures, and utilizes their cultures as their strengths to achieve three goals: improving academic achievement, nurturing and supporting cultural competence, and developing sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). The ESL teachers apply CRP in their everyday interactions with their students, even though they do not necessarily use the words "culturally relevant" when describing their pedagogy. The pedagogies to improve the students' academic excellence include a focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning. The pedagogies to improve the students' cultural competence include building on students' cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between schools and communities. The pedagogies to improve students' critical consciousness include using critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom.

Academic excellence. One of the primary responsibilities of teachers is to help students become academically successful (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant teachers of ELLs hold high academic expectations and behavior standards for all students (Lee, 2010; Lipman, 1995; Osborne, 1996). CRP emphasizes the importance of students'

home culture as a facilitator for their academic learning—English proficiency for ELLs which plays a crucial role in successfully completing their studies in an English-speaking learning environment (Wardlow, 1989). In the IEP, the ESL teachers apply CRP to improve the ELLs’ English proficiency to help the ELLs succeed in the IEP as well as university academic programs. The ESL teachers improve the ELLs’ academic excellence through such pedagogical practices as the focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning.

Cultural competence. To become culturally competent, students should cultivate “the ability to function effectively in their culture of origin” (Ladson Billings, 2000, p.219), as well as the willingness to be involved in school cultures, approach new cultures, and perform appropriately in cross-cultural communications. Academic success of minority students should not come at the “expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475), instead students’ cultures should be utilized “as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 161). Culturally relevant teachers incorporate students’ cultures in instructions “to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). The ESL teachers cultivate the ELLs’ cultural competence through such pedagogical practices as building on students’ cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between school and communities.

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo and social inequities, and proactively try to change it (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Culturally relevant pedagogy “is about questioning the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). Culturally relevant teachers motivate students to learn the basic knowledge, and develop a set of autonomous skills to examine and criticize the existing social inequality through critical literacy and classroom dialogues (Leonard et al. 2009). Although the ESL teachers are not familiar with the tenets of CRP and emphasize the importance of developing students’ critical thinking rather than critical consciousness, the ESL teachers apply the tenets of CRP unconsciously in the IEP. The ESL teachers develop the ELLs’ critical consciousness through such pedagogical practices as using critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom.

Summary of the Findings

The present study yields valuable findings that may be suggestive to ESL teachers and educational practitioners who teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. The major challenge confronting ESL teachers in IEPs comes from the cultural and linguistic diversity of ELLs. Since the ELLs in the IEP come from ten different countries, they bring huge diversity in terms of culture, language, and individual differences to the IEP.

As three fourths of the ESL teachers are self-identified as White, the ESL teachers are always struggling about how to make their pedagogy more congruent with ELLs diversity, and how to create an inclusive learning community by taking all these diversities into consideration.

The ESL teachers hold a positive belief towards ELLs' cultures. ELLs' cultures can facilitate cross-cultural communication between and among teachers and students. With the knowledge about ELLs' cultures, the ESL teachers can better evaluate ELLs' performance, understand ELLs' strengths and weaknesses, diagnose ELLs' academic difficulties, and provide assistance for ELLs' academic study. However, as for their perception toward ELL's L1, the ESL teachers hold both positive and negative attitudes. They value ELLs' L1 as a tool to explain more complex meanings or complete more difficult tasks. They suggest moderate use of L1 will facilitate ELLs' language learning. Since the primary objective of IEPs is to equip learners with the academic language and skills they need in order to be successful in university degree programs (Vásquez, 2007), the ESL teachers place prime importance on improving ELL's language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In line with this view, they are likely to prefer and create an English-only learning environment.

All the ESL teachers are not familiar with CRP, do not explicitly state CRP in their interviews, and emphasize the importance of developing ELLs' critical thinking rather than critical consciousness. However, they all utilize pedagogical practices with the mark

of CRP. They apply the tenets of CRP unconsciously in the IEP to promote ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. This study yields the following themes related to the ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the IEP.

Pedagogical practices for improving ELLs' academic excellence:

- A focus on learning strategies
- Providing students with structure, clear directions, and support
- Enriching the curriculum
- Encouraging cooperative learning

Pedagogical practices for cultivating ELLs' cultural competence:

- Building on students' cultural experiences
- Creating an inclusive environment
- Encouraging relationships between schools and communities

Pedagogical practices for cultivating ELLs' critical consciousness:

- Critical literacy strategies
- Engaging students in social justice work
- Sharing power in the classroom

Implications

The findings from this study shed light on two aspects of IEPs. The first one is the implications of IEP curriculum and pedagogy. The present study is a single-instrumental case study in an IEP. The findings from this study provide practical implications for IEPs in the United States, which have similar teacher and student demographics, curriculum and pedagogy, and similar issues and challenges facing ESL teachers. The second is the implications for the TESL/TEFL teacher education program. The findings suggest that since all the ESL teachers in this study are not familiar with CRP, misinterpret “critical consciousness” as “critical thinking”, and use these two terms interchangeably sometimes, there is a need to incorporate CRP training in TESL/TEFL program to raise ESL teachers’ critical consciousness.

IEP curriculum and pedagogy. This single instrumental case study of an IEP has a significant implication for IEPs across the U.S., which share similar teacher student demographics, curriculum and pedagogy, and issues and challenges facing ESL teachers. Data from document analysis revealed that developing ELL’s critical consciousness is not sufficiently stated in the IEP curriculum. Instead, the IEP curriculum document emphasizes developing ELLs’ critical thinking as one of its primary goals. Critical thinking skills encourage students to pose questions from a critical stance (Fahim & Masouleh, 2012); whereas, critical consciousness encourages students to engage in broader sociocultural and sociopolitical issues (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The

underrepresentation of critical consciousness in the IEP curriculum and misinterpretation of critical consciousness by ESL teachers sheds light on incorporating critical consciousness in IEP curriculum and pedagogy. CRP has been described as holistic learning that is an integration of all aspects of the students' learning (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). CRP is both sociocultural and sociopolitical in nature, prompting teachers to reflect upon their positions as change agents (Gutstein, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Culturally relevant pedagogy is an equity pedagogy (Banks, 2006). Banks and Banks (1995) define equity pedagogy as "teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (p. 152). They further state that:

It is not sufficient to help students learn to read, write, and compute within the dominant canon without learning also to question its assumptions, paradigms, and hegemonic characteristics. Helping students become reflective and active citizens of a democratic society is at the essence of our conception of equity pedagogy....An education for equity enables students not only to acquire basic skills but to use those skills to become effective agents for social change. (p. 152)

As for the goal of education, Dewey (1929/2013) points out that educational process has two sides, one psychological and one sociological. Education must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. Education is a fundamental method of social progress and reform. In other words, the goal of education is cultivating physically and psychologically healthy people who have a good command of the subject knowledge and skills, who care about the society and the world around

them, and who realize their core values by making contributions to the development and progress of the society.

Although IEPs are academic preparation programs which aim to improve ELLs' English proficiency for their university degree programs, they are also sharing the same goal with education in general—preparing effective and reflective agents for social progress. If the ELLs are not able to think reflectively and develop their critical consciousness toward existing social political inequalities, they may face challenges when they enter the American university context which aims to cultivate effective and reflective citizens. IEP curriculum and pedagogy should not only focus on improving ELLs' language skills and cultural competence, but also focus on developing their critical consciousness, which is an essential element for cultivating active citizens who are able to challenge the existing status quo and social inequities. It is not enough to just develop some courses which focus on critical themes, such as the sustainability course. Developing the ELLs' critical consciousness should be incorporated into the IEP curriculum, and become one of the foci of the ESL teachers' pedagogy.

Teachers who embrace this social justice challenge of providing a democratic and equitable education must teach in culturally relevant ways or take into consideration and “use knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students” in order for them to experience school success (Banks, 2001b, p. 233). “Culturally relevant teachers create learning environments that support, develop, and draw from the students’

cultural and ethnic identities.” (Bales & Saffold, 2011, p. 961) ELLs with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds are often marginalized in the monolingual (English only) educational context of IEPs. Prohibiting ELLs’ use of L1 in IEPs may impede their L2 acquisition because it mirrors disempowering relations (Auerbach, 1993). An English-only policy may result in privileging students with higher English proficiency while discriminating against other students (Auerbach, 1993). Thus, “the extent to which ESL teachers value ELLs’ linguistic resources in teaching is a measure of our willingness to address basic inequities in the broader society.” (Auerbach, 1993, p. 30) CRP uses ELLs’ home culture and first language as facilitators, finds a connection between their home culture and the target culture, fosters their confidence in their home culture and self-identity, and makes them succeed academically as their White peers (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). CRP also aims to cultivate students’ critical consciousness, knowledge, and attitudes toward the existing inequity in every aspect of school and society, and empower the students to become active agents to challenge the social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Ladson-Billings (2000) claims that:

Culturally relevant teachers recognize that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum. The individual traits of achievement and cultural competence must be supported by sociopolitical critique that helps students understand the ways that social structures and practices help reproduce inequities. (p. 210)

ESL teachers individually and collectively have the potential to create a context of empowerment (Cummins, 2001b). “Teaching is a calling, a responsibility not only to students and families but to the community.” (Lipman, 1995, p. 206) It is essential to

cultivate teachers' critical consciousness on sociocultural and sociopolitical issues, and engage them in an endeavor which aims to develop students' critical consciousness. In the context of English-only instruction in IEPs, ESL teachers still have choices in the structure of the classroom interactions, and the messages about identity they communicate to their students (Cummins, 2001b). ESL teachers who implement the CRP provide ELLs opportunities to construct their own knowledge and create new understandings (Banks, 1993). ESL teachers can also provide ELLs opportunities to engage in critical reflection and questioning by challenging the deep structure of schools, including teacher-student interaction, allocation of class time on critical tasks, and physical arrangement of space in classrooms (Banks & Banks, 1995). As for the implication for IEP pedagogy, this study provides a list of culturally relevant pedagogical practices which aim to promote ELLs' critical consciousness by ESL teachers, such as critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom. The actual pedagogical activities used by the ESL teachers in this study may inspire ESL teachers who are confused about the application of CRP in their IEP classrooms.

Teacher education program (TEP) with ESL endorsement. Data from the interviews and document analysis revealed that the ESL teachers did not align with the tenets of CRP related to the development of critical consciousness. One of the emerging themes is their lack of knowledge about CRP. Critical consciousness is misinterpreted by ESL teachers as equal to critical thinking. How do ESL teachers respond effectively to the

issues and problems caused by diversity in IEPs and take CRP to improve ELLs' academic achievement without any systematic knowledge about CRP? According to Gay (2002), it is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to prepare pre-service teachers who will effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Traditionally, TEPs in universities show little conformity in training pre-service teachers to meet the needs of ESL students, and their requirements as well as program designs vary significantly (Teemant, 2005; Henrichsen, 2010). Gan (2012) and Richards (1987) list ESL pedagogy, linguistics, second language acquisition theory, cultural diversity, and field component as essential course topics in TEP with ESL endorsement. Lee and Dallman (2008) discuss the importance of multi-cultural and diversity training for classroom teachers, stating that most pre-service teachers in their study felt it was important to focus on "constructing learning environments which take into account the various languages spoken by children in the class" (p. 38). Despite the apparent agreement that understanding of diversity and culture are integral parts of ESL education, both pre-service and veteran educators see a lack of comprehensive training for classroom teachers (Teemant, 2005). It takes time and effort to prepare pre-service and in-service ESL teachers to embrace the notion of culturally responsive education and implement it in ESL or EFL teaching (Porto, 2010). Therefore, it is urgent to incorporate CRP training in the TEP with ESL endorsement to cultivate critical awareness and critical consciousness of pre-service and in-service ESL teachers.

Gay (2002) proposes five important aspects that teacher training programs need to possess as part of the preparation of pre-service and in-service teachers. These components would more effectively prepare pre-service teachers to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The components are (a) developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (d) effective cross-cultural communications, and (e) delivering culturally responsive instruction.

In order for teachers to engage in activities that will lead to social change, they have to understand their role as political beings (Ladson-Billings, 1998). ESL teachers need to understand their sociopolitical and sociocultural surroundings, and cultivate critical consciousness to discern social inequalities permeated in institutions, such as IEPs. CRP “is about questioning the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). ESL teachers need to engage in constant reflection on their perspectives upon ELLs’ culture and first languages, and their everyday classroom practice. CRP is both sociocultural and sociopolitical in nature, prompting teachers to reflect upon their positions as change agents (Dutro et al., 2008; Gonzalez, 2009; Gutstein, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

The only concern is that whether the ESL teachers have that critical awareness with them, and whether they are willing to take extra time and effort to incorporate critical

consciousness into their teaching. For ESL teachers, it is not necessary to be an expert in every culture of the world. What matters is that teachers and students should work together to cultivate a multicultural awareness to respect and explore different cultures (Benavides, 1992). Lipman (1995) suggests that, “Teaching is a calling, a responsibility not only to students and families but to the community.” (p. 206) Culturally relevant teachers show a strong commitment to the improvement of ELLs’ and minority students’ academic achievement; the value of the students’ home culture; the collaboration with the students’ families; and the endeavor of the racial equity and social justice. In this sense, CRP is liberatory—a pedagogy of empowerment (Giroux & Simon, 1989).

Limitations

Although the present study yielded practical findings on ESL teachers’ utilization of CRP in IEPs, due to its methodological deficiencies, it is not exempt from limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small. The participants in this case study are only four ESL teachers from an IEP that has approximately 20 faculty and staff. The pedagogical practices applied by the four ESL teachers cannot generalize the pedagogical practices applied by all ESL teachers in the IEP let alone ESL teachers across the United States. Instead of generalizing the findings, this study aims to provide some insights and practical suggestions for ESL teachers in IEPs generally.

Second, the present study applied criterion sampling and snowball sampling strategy. After the researcher sent out the recruitment letter among ESL faculty, only two ESL teachers initially responded and agreed to participate in this study. One of them helped the researcher connect with two other teachers who would be interested in the study. Since the sampling is not random sampling, it is unknown that how well the sample represents the population.

Third, this study relied on interviews, observations, and documents to collect the data. The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted about forty minutes to one hour. The researcher observed each participant's class three times for an entire class period (approximately two hours), and completed a total of 22 observation hours. The documents only include IEP curricula, syllabi, handouts, and the student handbook. Therefore, insufficient data collection time and the limited number of documents could not enable the researcher to find out more details about the IEP as well as ESL teachers' pedagogical practices. However, this study uses member checking and peer-debriefing techniques to ensure its validity.

Suggestions for Further Research

Firstly, future researchers should focus on conducting multiple case studies of IEPs, or interviewing more ESL teachers and observing their classes from a single case through a random sampling method, instead of snowball sampling. Random sampling will

produce participants who can better represent the population. A larger sample size with more teacher participants will improve generalizability of the study.

Secondly, for interviews, a detailed interview protocol with well-designed interview questions will ensure the data quality from the interview. Longer observation hours in teacher participants' classrooms will enable future researchers to get more details about ESL teachers' culturally relevant pedagogical practices. Future researchers could also attend IEP faculty meetings with permission and any informal meetings to get a better understanding about the issues that ESL teachers are most concerned about. These measures ensure a deeper understanding about the culturally relevant pedagogy ESL teachers apply in IEP classrooms as well as more convincing data.

Thirdly, future studies on CRP should also include input from students, their families, and communities. ELLs should be interviewed about how CRP benefits them in the aspects of academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. How these individuals and groups experience culturally relevant teaching would provide a broader understanding of the impact of CRP on ELLs' schooling experience and provide information on what practices are most effective for ELLs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this single instrumental case study is to explore how English as a second language (ESL) teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in

intensive English programs (IEP) to support the academic success of English language learners (ELL). The participants were four full-time ESL teachers who were teaching ELLs in an IEP affiliated with Mountain University. Face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis revealed various pedagogical strategies utilized by the ESL teachers to support the ELLs' academic success. The sociocultural theory, second language acquisition (SLA) theory, and CRP provide a theoretical framework for the study.

In order to get an understanding about how CRP is implemented in the IEP classrooms, the researcher interviewed the teacher participants about the difficulties and challenges they face in teaching ELLs, their perceptions of ELLs' cultures and first language (L1), and their pedagogy related to the inclusion of ELLs' cultures and L1. The researcher also observed the teacher participants' classes and conducted document analysis. The researcher intentionally avoided the concept CRP in the interview questions in order to see what themes about CRP would naturally emerge from the interviews with the teacher participants. The data revealed that the ESL teachers did not specifically describe their strategies as CRP because they were not familiar with the tenets of CRP. However, many of their pedagogical practices were firm examples of what CRP look like in IEPs.

This study yields culturally relevant pedagogical practices that the ESL teachers use to improve the ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical

consciousness. The ESL teachers improve ELLs' academic achievement through such pedagogical practices as a focus on learning strategies, providing students with structure, clear directions, and support, enriching the curriculum, and encouraging cooperative learning. The ESL teachers' pedagogical practices to improve ELLs' cultural competence include building on students' cultural experiences, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging relationships between schools and communities. ELLs' critical consciousness is developed through critical literacy strategies, engaging students in social justice work, and sharing power in the classroom.

Culturally responsive teaching differs from "just good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159) because the former requires teachers to reflect on their instruction constantly and be sensitive and responsive to students' cultures and needs in the classroom. It also requires teachers to consider how they can adapt the prescribed curriculum to meet the needs of their students, and how they can create an inclusive learning environment to support students' academic achievement. In IEPs, ELLs are from different countries with diverse cultures and languages. In IEPs, ELLs differ significantly in terms of their home cultural experiences and their relation to the mainstream culture (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). It is an ongoing endeavor for ESL teachers to make their pedagogy responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity of ELLs, and strive for building an inclusive learning community which is conducive to improving ELLs' academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

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Appendix I

Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear XXX,

My name is Arongna Bao, and I am a PhD student from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. I am writing to invite you to participate in my PhD dissertation research about the ESL teachers' pedagogical practices in the intensive English program at English Language Center (ELC). You are eligible to be in this study because you are a certified ESL teacher. I have got the approval of my research from the director of ELC. I also obtained your contact information from him.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed twice at your office or any location that is convenient and quiet for you. Each interview will last about 60 minutes. Your class will be observed for three times for an entire class period each time. I would like to observe and note down the interactions between and among teacher and students in your class, and then I will use the information for data analysis of this study. You will receive a gift card, Mongolian artifact, and free Starbucks coffee as compensations of your time and effort.

Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained during and after data collection through methods such as describing and analyzing data anonymously, storing the documents in the secure place to only allow the access of the primary investigator, and proper disposal of the hard copies of the data and documents, reporting multiple perspectives and results other than the positive ones, avoiding plagiarism and the information that would harm participants, writing the report with clear, straightforward language which is appropriate for the audiences, providing copies of report only to the participants, ELC director, my advisor, and my dissertation committee.

I will send you a copy of the informed consent form for review. When you read it, you will have a clear idea about the research, and potential risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at baoarongna2000@hotmail.com, 720-318-3465.

Looking forward to your prompt reply.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Arongna Bao

PhD candidate

Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

Appendix II

Letter for the participants' background information

Dear teachers,

Thank you for deciding to participate in my research. It would be great if you could introduce yourself briefly before our first interview. In this way, I can know you better, and it will facilitate our first interview. In your self-introduction, you can include but not limited to the following information:

- Ethnic identity
- Your hometown
- Mother tongue, second language, third language
- Educational background (Major/concentration)
- What influence, if any, does your educational background have on the way you approach your role to teach ESL to international students in the English language center (ELC)?
- How does your educational background facilitate your ESL teaching at the ELC?
- Number of years teaching ESL in the United States? Which place? For whom?
- Number of years teaching ESL abroad? Which country? For whom?
- What other jobs have you done before your current job as an ESL teacher at the ELC?
- What influence, if any, do your previous work experiences have on your current teaching at the ELC?
- How do your previous work experiences facilitate your ESL teaching at the ELC?

I do appreciate your help! Thank you!

Arongna Borjigin

Appendix III

Interview Protocols

(1)

Date: _____ Location: _____
Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Preamble

I'm [interviewer's name]. Today is [fill in date] and I am at [fill in location] talking with [interviewee's name]. Thanks so much for agreeing to this interview! The reason why I asked you to participate in this interview is to hear what you think about your experiences of teaching in English Language Center, your difficulties and challenges, your attitudes and thoughts about ELLs' first language and home culture in students' learning, and your reflections on your pedagogy.

There are four ELC teacher participated in my research. I am going to interview each one of you three times. For the first interview, I am going to spend about 60 minutes asking you the first research question—about the difficulties and challenges you face in the teaching of international students. For the second interview, I am going to spend about 60 minutes asking you some questions about your attitudes and thoughts about English language learners' home cultural and linguistic background knowledge in their learning. For the third interview, I am going to spend about 60 minutes asking you questions about your reflections on your pedagogy.

The permission form that you signed means that I can record our discussion so that I can listen to it later and use it to write a report. I will ask the questions and take notes of the conversation. No one but me, a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction program from Morgridge College of Education will hear the tape or read the transcript of this interview. However, I will share my findings with you and program director of the English Language Center. I will also share the research findings with researchers through publications and presentations. I will not put your name in the report, it is anonymous. So it's OK for you to tell me what's on your mind.

Research question: What are the difficulties and challenges ESL teachers face in teaching English language learners (ELLs) in intensive English programs (IEP)?

- How many years have you been teaching at the English language Center (ELC)?
- What courses have you taught in ELC?
- How many students in your course(s)?
- What countries are your students from?
- What do their ages range from?
- What are their levels of English proficiency?
- What do you enjoy about your class/classes?

- What do you find most challenging in your teaching?
- What kinds of learning activities do you do in class?
- How do these activities help with the students' learning?
- What knowledge or skills do you think are the most important for the students to gain from ESL courses in the ELC?
- Why do you think so?

Wrap up of the interview. Here's my email baoarn2013@gmail.com if you think of anything else that you'd like to tell me about what we've talked about today. Thanks. I really appreciate your help with my research!

(2)

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Research question: What are ESL teachers' attitudes and thought about ELLs' home cultural and linguistic background knowledge in ESL learning?

- What does your relationship with your students look like?
- What is your knowledge about your students' home cultures?
- What do you think about your students' home culture in teaching and learning English?
- How do you incorporate your students' home cultures in your teaching?
- What are the difficulties and challenges?
- What do you think about students' use of first language in teaching and learning English?
- What do you do when students speaking their first language in class?

(3)

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Research question: What are ESL teachers' reflections on their pedagogy which utilize ELLs' linguistic and cultural background knowledge as strength and assets in IEPs?

- Please describe some moments, course activities, or assignments in which students' home cultural and linguistic background knowledge is incorporated.
- What do you think about these kinds of moments, activities, or assignments for students' learning English?
- What are your course objectives and goals?
- What do you do when these pedagogical activities failed to meet these objectives and goals?
- What is your knowledge about culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)?
- What will you do to make your teaching and pedagogy more culturally relevant to your students?

Appendix IV

Pilot Observation Protocol Synthesis of the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

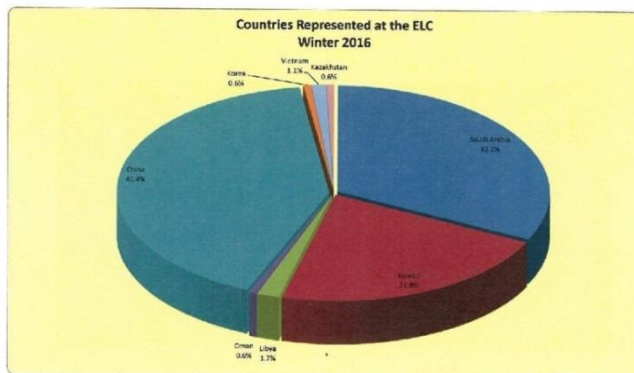
	Characteristics
High Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Modeling, scaffolding, & clarification of the challenging curriculum● Using students' strength starting points● Investing and taking personal responsibility for students' successes, going above and beyond● Creating and nurturing cooperative environments● Having high behavioral expectations
Cultural Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reshaping the prescribed curriculum● Building on students' funds of knowledge● Encouraging relationships between school and communities
Critical Consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use of Critical Literacy strategies● Engaging students in social justice work● Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society● Sharing power in the classroom

Note. Adapted from “Operationalizing culturally relevant pedagogy: A synthesis of classroom-based research” by Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(4), 433-452.

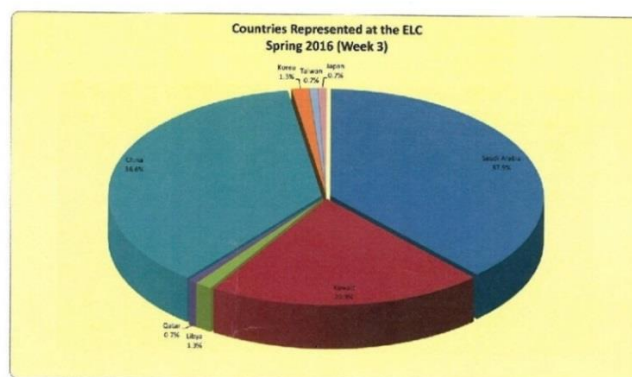
Appendix V

ELC Student Enrollment Data in 2015-2016 School Year

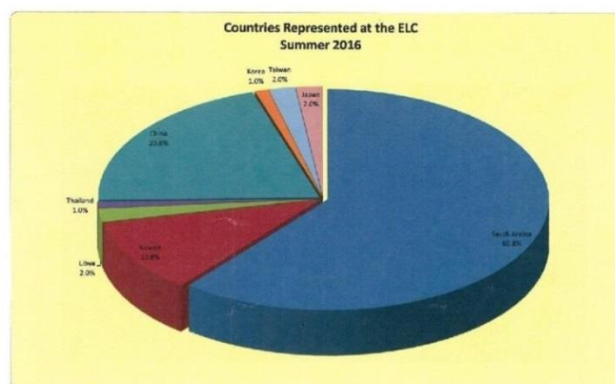
Region	Country	Number
1	Saudi Arabia	56
1	Kuwait	38
1	Libya	8
1	Oman	1
2	China	72
2	Korea	1
2	Vietnam	2
3	Kazakhstan	1
3	Turkey	1
4	Colombia	1
4	US	2
Total		178



Region	Country	Number
1	Saudi Arabia	58
1	Kuwait	32
1	Ulyea	2
1	Qatar	1
2	China	56
2	Korea	2
2	Taiwan	1
3	Japan	1
3	Turkey	1
4	Peru	1
4	Spain	1
4	US	1
	Total	157



Region	Country	Number
1	Saudi Arabia	62
1	Kuwait	11
1	Ulyia	2
2	Thailand	1
2	China	21
2	Korea	1
2	Taiwan	2
3	Japan	2
3	Turkey	1
4	Peru	1
4	Spain	1
4	US	1
Total		106



Appendix VI

ELC Intensive English Program Curriculum Model

Foundations A2 (20 Hours)	Intermediate Low A2+/B1 (20 Hours)	Intermediate High B1 (20 Hours)	Advanced Low B1+/B2 (20 Hours)	Advanced High B2 (20 Hours)
Integrated Skills All Skills (8 Hours)	Integrated Skills All Skills (8 Hours)	Integrated Skills All Skills (8 Hours)	Integrated Skills - Content Class All Skills (8 Hours)	Integrated Skills - Content Class All Skills (8 Hours)
Oral Communication Skills (4 Hours)	Oral Communication Skills (4 Hours)	Oral Communication Skills (4 Hours)	Oral Communication Skills (4 Hours)	Oral Communic ation Skills (4 Hours)
Applied Grammar (4 Hours)	Applied Grammar (4 Hours)	Applied Grammar (4 Hours)	Structures for Writing (4 Hours)	Writer's Workshop (4 Hours)
Writing (4 Hours)	Writing (4 Hours)	Focus Class – Student Choice (4 Hours)	Focus Class – Student Choice (4 Hours)	Focus Class – Student Choice (4 Hours)

Appendix VII

Self-evaluation Form

Advanced-Low

Integrated skills

Self-Evaluation

Name _____

Presentation Title/Topic: _____

Rate yourself using the following scale:

(+++)
Good (---) Needs Improvement (NI) Not enough information to rate myself

Please be realistic in your self-evaluations. Don't rate yourself all bad or all good because this is not helpful or realistic. Please also be detailed in discussing your strengths and weaknesses. With respect to your weaknesses, what do you plan to do about them? Use the back if you run out of room.

1. Presentation

_____ eye contact _____ pronunciation _____ self-confidence
_____ nonverbal communication _____ pace (speed of the speaker)
_____ volume (loudness) _____ grammar _____ comprehensibility
_____ fluency (pauses, hesitations, etc.) _____ enunciation _____ intonation

2. Content

_____ organization
_____ amount of information for audience (too much, too little)
_____ appropriateness of information for audience (too specific, too general)

3. Strengths—what are your biggest strengths as a speaker? Explain clearly why they are strengths. (use complete sentences)

4. Weaknesses (things I want to improve)—what are your biggest weaknesses as a speaker? Explain clearly why they are weaknesses. (use complete sentences)

5. Goals for this class—now, think about your strengths and weaknesses and write at least two goals for this class related to speaking. After you write down a goal, explain what you plan to do to reach this goal. Be detailed and complete when explaining your ideas. (use complete sentences)

Appendix VIII

Vocabulary Quiz Handout

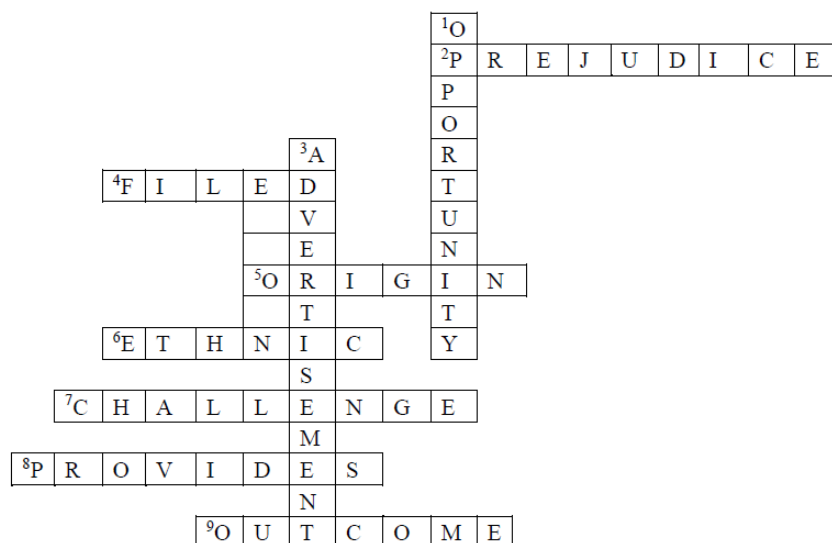
Advanced Low Integrated Skills

Vocabulary Quiz Wiki#4

Name: _____

The teacher will say each word. Write the words. (4.5 points)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____
7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____



Across

2. Women still face _____ in the workplace.
4. Mr. Genoa _____ a formal complaint against the department.
5. the country, race, or type of family which someone comes
6. The students are from a variety of _____ backgrounds; they are from many different cultures.
7. when someone refuses to accept that someone or something is right and legal
8. The hotel _____ laundry service for guests.
9. It is impossible to predict the _____ of the next election.

Down

1. A chance to do something or an occasion when it is easy for you to do something
- 3.a picture, set of words, or a short film, which is intended to persuade people to buy a product or use a service, or that gives information about a job that is available, an event that is going to happen etc.

Appendix IX

Speaking Activity Handout

Unit 5 Reading 1 Vocabulary Practice (Why do people take risks?)

Choose vocab words from our first set in Unit 5 to complete the questions. next, get up and form two lines with the rest of your classmates facing each other. One side will ask question, and the other side will answer them. You will switch partners every 2 minutes. After you have talked with 3 people, the sides will reverse. After that, got back to your seat and write 1-3 complete sentences to answer each question. **Use the new words from the questions in your oral and written answers.**

1. To be a good teacher, what does a person have to have a high _____ for?
2. What is your future profession? What _____ do people in your profession usually have to be successful?
3. What _____ of being an adult do you enjoy the most?
4. What is one _____ memory from your childhood that you still have?
5. What are some _____ that people have to take when they decide to get a pet for their children?
6. How do people in your country _____ wealth and rich people?
7. In your free time would you rather engage in active or quiet _____? Give examples.
8. What are some ways to maintain _____ health when you have to study hard for a long time?
9. What is _____ about your hometown?
10. Describe a _____ that you have faced recently.

Appendix X

Reading Skills Handout

Unit 7 Reading 2 Worksheet

Part 1. Prediction & Skimming

- _____ a. Kelly decided to climb Half Dome Mountain in Yosemite.
- _____ b. Ten months after her heart replacement, Kelly began to climb Half Dome.
- _____ c. Kelly decided that she wanted to climb a mountain to change her image.
- _____ d. Kelly became very sick and received a heart transplant.
- _____ e. Kelly's husband Craig was proud of Kelly's accomplishment.
- _____ f. Kelly reached the top of Half Dome with a new heart.

Part 2. Read paragraphs 1-4. Circle the words you do not know. After you read, find answers to these questions. Highlight or underline the necessary sentences in the text:

1. What kind of record did Kelly Perkins set?
2. Kelly writes that both climbing mountains and being sick are challenges. According to her words, how are these two challenges similar?
3. Why wasn't Kelly happy with her self-image? How did she hope to improve it?
4. What was the main reason why she chose to climb Half Dome, not another mountain?

Part 3. Read paragraphs 5-7. Circle the words you do not know. After you read, find answers to these questions. Highlight or underline the necessary sentences in the text:

1. What made it difficult for Kelly to cross the canyon?
2. How were climbers supposed to cover the last half-mile to the top?
3. What happened at the top?

Discussion question:

If you were Kelly's husband, would you give her the gold charm even if she had not reached the top that day? Why or why not?

Pronoun Reference Practice

- a) In paragraph 1, last line, what does **so** refer to?
- b) In paragraph 2, line 5, what does **either** refer to?
- c) In paragraph 3, line 4, what does **that** refer to?
- d) In paragraph 4, line 4, what does **it** refer to?
- e) In paragraph 7, line 8, what does **its** refer to?
- f) In paragraph 7, the last but one line (second from the end), what does **it** refer to?

Main Ideas & Details Practice

Answer questions in exercises E. and G. on page 119.

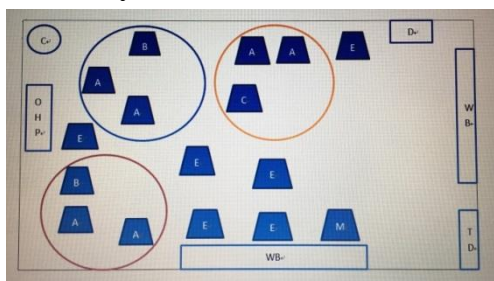
Appendix XI

Classroom Situational Maps

Notes:

C (Clock), OHP (Overhead Projector), D (Door), WB (Whiteboard), TD (Teacher's Desk), E (Empty Seat), M (Me--the Researcher), S (Student), A (Arabian Student), B (Black student), C (Chinese student), AM (Arab Man), AW (Arab Woman), CM (Chinese Man)

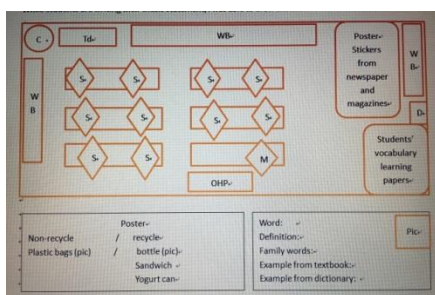
Amy's class



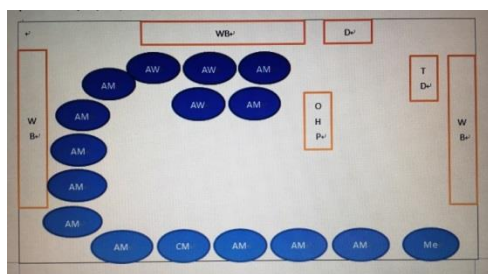
Nicole's class



Isabella's class



Tyler's class



Appendix XII

ELC Proficiency Scale

Level	CEFR Level	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Culture
Foundations	A2	Student can understand short simple texts containing basic vocabulary and longer texts on high interest themes with instructor support. Student can use reading strategies such as previewing, scanning, finding meaning from context, and understanding pronoun references. Student can use new vocabulary in both spoken and written tasks. Student has basic knowledge of main ideas and details.	Student can write about self, things and people he/she knows using simple language and sentence structures. Student can identify features of written models and use them to produce short basic paragraphs integrating grammar structures and vocabulary taught at this level. Student can use and spell vocabulary from the 300 most common words in English list and basic classroom objects.	Student can understand simple information, questions and short conversations about family, people, daily life, homes, work, hobbies provided that people speak slowly and clearly and provide help when necessary.	Student can communicate limited information about himself, family, job, hobbies, daily life, and routines in a simple exchange and speaking slowly. Student can correctly use some simple structures and use basic language comprehensibly.	Student can meet basic expectations of U.S. classroom culture.

Intermediate Low	A2+/B1	The student can critically read, analyze and demonstrate understanding of simplified written texts (one to two pages, low-level vocabulary) though discussion and writing.	<p>The student can produce paragraph length writings with titles, topic sentences, supporting details and a conclusion.</p> <p>The student demonstrates control over simple forms of the past, present, and future verb forms as well as progressive forms of the past and present.</p>	<p>The student can listen to and understand a variety of simplified media and materials.</p> <p>The student demonstrates the ability to participate in conversations, listening to and responding to classmates.</p>	<p>The student can speak clearly and intelligibly in all kinds of speaking activities on familiar and simple academic topics.</p> <p>The student can express ideas about known topics clearly in both formal and informal oral presentations and in impromptu speeches.</p>	Student can demonstrate an understanding of classroom culture norms and discuss simple academic topics.
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Intermediate High	B1	Student can identify, discuss, and summarize main ideas and support in a variety of simplified texts. Student can annotate a reading to aid in the identification of main ideas and support.	Student can produce multi-paragraph writing with clear thesis statements, topic and concluding sentences, main ideas, and details. Student can use elementary vocabulary and grammar structures correctly, but makes errors when writing about complex ideas. Student can use conjunctive adverbs to connect ideas.	Student can understand main ideas and important details from conversations and short, simplified lectures. Student is able to use note taking strategies to record important information from a simplified lecture.	Student can participate in discussions. Student can give both prepared and impromptu presentations, supporting his/her ideas with appropriate reasons and details.	Student can demonstrate an understanding of familiar social issues and make comparisons between their society and US society.
Advanced Low	B1+/B2	Student can critically read and analyze to determine meaning and make connections between text and background knowledge. This includes note taking and inferencing.	Student is able to produce a simple essay with an introduction, conclusion, coherent idea development or argument, and reference sources.	Student can comprehend and identify main points and specific details from a variety of sources using academic listening & note taking strategies.	Student can orally summarize, paraphrase, elaborate, and clarify information and meaning from a variety of academic sources.	Student can describe common human values and relationships within historical and cultural frameworks.

Advanced High	B2	<p>Student can analyze and evaluate an author's position, purpose, audience and tone using evidence from the text.</p> <p>Student can read a popular novel intended for native speakers.</p>	<p>Student can write an essay which presents a convincing position supported by source materials. Student can use varied vocabulary, but makes some word choice and word form errors.</p> <p>Student can use a wide variety of grammatical and sentence structures to express themselves in writing.</p>	<p>Student can understand, analyze, synthesize, and formulate an opinion about the content from pre-collegiate lectures.</p>	<p>Student can incorporate source material into presentations using clear, convincing, unified, plagiarism-free speech.</p> <p>Student can participate actively in discussion using strategies like asking for clarification and interrupting.</p>	<p>Student can explain and form opinions about controversial issues in US society.</p>
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LAUNCH	B2+/C1	Student can analyze undergraduate-level texts of various genres and styles according to author purpose, audience, and logic. Student can synthesize texts using quotes, paraphrases, and summaries in a way that meets university academic honesty standards.	Student can effectively communicate through writing for a variety of purposes using appropriate levels of critical thinking, sound logic and evidence. Student can use various syntactic structures effectively and can significantly improve writing through multiple revisions and instructor feedback.	Student can critically listen to and synthesize information from a variety of short and sustained sources intended for native speakers.	Student can contribute critically to a variety of academic discussions and initiate effectively during group work to accomplish an assigned task. Student can deliver a comprehensible and critically prepared presentation.	Student can describe how culture is evolving and how individual and pluralistic values influence US society and academic discourse. Student can demonstrate successful integration into US university culture.
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*New student placement and achievement at the ELC is not based on any past, present, or future standardized tests scores from outside of the ELC (ie: IELTS, TOEFL). However, as a point of reference for students, sponsors, and other institutions, the correlation between the CEFR proficiency scale (upon which the ELC curriculum is approximately based) and standardized tests scores such as the TOEFL or IELTS can be found here:

CEFR & ELTS correlation:http://www.ielts.org/researchers/common_european_framework.aspx

CEFR & TOEFL correlation:<https://www.ets>

Appendix XIII

University of Denver

Information Sheet for Exempt Research

TITLE: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Adult ESL Classrooms—A Case Study of a University Intensive English Program

Principal Investigator: Arongna Bao

Protocol #: 875436-1

DU IRB Exemption Granted: May 9, 2016

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

You are invited to participate in a research study about ESL teachers' pedagogical practices which incorporating students' cultural and linguistic background knowledge in the intensive English program. If you agree to be part of the research study, the researcher will ask you to participate in three face-to-face, semi-structured interviews at the location that is convenient and quiet for you. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and the interview will be recorded using a smart phone and a digital voice recorder. The first interview will explore ESL teachers' challenges and difficulties in teaching ELLs. The second interview will explore ESL teachers' attitudes and thought about ELLs' home cultural and linguistic background knowledge in ESL learning. The third interview is about teachers' reflections on their pedagogy which utilizes ELLs' linguistic and cultural background knowledge as strength and assets in IEPs.

Additionally, the researcher will ask you to indicate three classes that the researcher will observe for an entire class period (2 hours) each time, with the focus on your use of culturally responsive strategies. Since it will be a non-participant observation, the researcher will not take part in any of your class activities. The observations will be noted down as field notes. Both the interviews and observations will follow protocols developed in advance.

In addition to interview and observation, the researcher will also review documents, such as, the IEP curriculum, syllabus, hand-outs, students' assignments, and students' handbook from ELC website and teachers. This will allow the researcher to assess the

integration of culturally responsive practices across multiple areas.

Potential risks and discomforts may include:

- Discomfort caused by the lack of rapport between the researcher and the participants
- Discomfort caused by the sensitive or private questions asked by the researcher during the interview
- Discomfort or disturbance to the class to some extent due to the presence of the researcher during the observation

Privacy and confidentiality include:

- Use of pseudonyms for all participants
- Collecting data related only to the research questions
- Storing the data and documents in the password-protected personal laptop to only allow the access of the primary investigator
- Proper disposal of hard copies of the data and documents
- Proper release of the report: provide copies of report only to the participants, ELC director, my advisor, and my dissertation committee
- The ELC director will only receive a summary of the findings in order to protect individual teachers

By doing this research we hope to learn about ESL teachers' pedagogical practices which take the students' home cultural and the linguistic background knowledge as a facilitator for students' learning in the intensive English program. You will receive a \$20 gift card, an artifact from Mongolia, and free Starbucks coffee for participating in the study.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any interview questions, continue with the interview, or allow researcher to have a class observation for any reason.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact Arongna Bao (PI), baoarongna2000@hotmail.com, 720-318-3465; and Maria Salazar (Academic Advisor), Maria.Salazar@du.edu, 303-871-3772. If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers. The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is minimal risk and qualifies as exempt from full IRB oversight.

Agreement to be in this study

You should receive a copy of this form for your records. Please sign the page below if you agree to participate in this research study.

Please **initial** in the appropriate boxes:

☐

I agree to be audio/videotaped for research purposes.

☐

Please **initial** here and provide a valid email (or postal) address if you would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to you. _____

Signature: _____

Date _____

Print: _____

Appendix XIV

Timeline

9/1/2015~1/15/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Comprehensive exam● Proposal writing & proposal defense
1/16/2016~5/9/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Contacting the director of the English Language Center, obtain his/her approval● Selecting and contacting the four teachers who are going to be interviewed, and whose class will be observed● Submit documents for Institutional Review Board● Obtain IRB approval
1/16/2016~5/9/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strengthen the literature review, theoretical framework● Revise the methods of the dissertation
5/10/2016~8/10/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Interview of teachers (4 teachers, 3 times each)
5/10/2016~11/15/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reviewing ELC students' handbook, curriculum, syllabus, and students' assignments
7/1/2016-8/5/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Classroom observations (4 teachers, 3 times each)
5/10/2016~4/25/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Data transcription● Data analysis● Findings● Conclusion
5/5/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Oral defense

Appendix XV

Proposed Budget

The estimate budget will be 200 dollars, including:

- cost of printing of the research articles, related documents, and dissertation draft,
final version of the dissertation and bookbinding
- gift cards, coffee, and artifacts for the participants as compensation