



# Contact

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## Research Symposium Special Edition

Foreword by: Hedy McGarrell and Robert Courchène, co-editors

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With this issue we are pleased to bring you the refereed proceedings of the Sixth Annual Research Symposium, part of the 33rd Annual TESL Ontario Conference held in Toronto in November, 2005. The themes that were the focus of the three symposia were **Bullying in the ESL Classroom, Literacy, and Internationally Educated Professionals**.

The three themes covered topical issues that affect the classrooms and practice of ESL professionals in varied ways. Teachers who encounter problems and challenges related to these themes on a daily basis in their classrooms look for background information and practical ideas that will help them meet their learners' needs. In organizing the Research Symposium around pertinent themes and publishing the proceedings, TESL Ontario offers ESL professionals relevant information on recent research and developments that can inform classroom practice.

As in previous years, the different presentations in this issue have been grouped around themes selected in consultation with the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC). They represent a focus on pedagogical challenges that classroom teachers and administrators deal with on an ongoing basis in trying to provide learners with optimal learning conditions. We are confident that readers will find the selected papers interesting and relevant to their teaching. We hope that they will feel inspired by the ideas presented and launch their own inquiries into an aspect of their teaching, then report their insights at future TESL Ontario conferences.

On behalf of TESL Ontario we thank the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for supporting the research symposium and the publication of this special issue. Their commitment to this important event for ESL professionals has been a source of encouragement and strength for our association and members. We look forward to continued cooperation and support from the different ministries involved in language, immigration, settlement and training issues. We also wish to thank all the presenters who participated in the different themes of the symposium for sharing their expertise. Without them, we could not have organized the symposium and offered you these proceedings.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of the Reading Committee; the Symposium Moderators and Monitors; the Conference Chair Cheryl Richman; the *Contact* Editor, Clayton Graves; TESL Ontario administrative staff members Renate Tilson, Jean Hamilton and Eva Csiszar for supporting us in organizing and preparing the publication of this special issue of *Contact*. Without their continuing support, our work would have been more difficult and considerably less pleasant. ❖

## Introduction to this issue

By Hedy McGarrell and Robert Courchêne, co-editors

We are pleased to present this special refereed issue of *Contact*, reflecting presentations from the Research Symposium organized for TESL Ontario, November 2005. All three themes of the 2005 Research Symposium are addressed in these proceedings:

- *Bullying in the ESL Classroom*
- *Literacy*
- *Internationally Trained Professionals*

In preparation for the symposium, researchers and practitioners were invited to submit proposals that addressed different subtopics within each of the three symposium themes. They were encouraged to prepare and submit written versions of their presentations for consideration in this issue, the refereed proceedings of the Research Symposium.

The first theme of the Research Symposium dealt with **bullying**, a type of peer aggression that typically involves an abuse of physical or psychological power through harassment, intimidation to varying degrees, taunting and ridicule. Individuals engaged in the practice of bullying may be motivated by peer pressure, cultural norms, hate, bias or the desire to retaliate. When questioned about the targets of bullies, school children's responses indicate that those who are weaker or smaller, those considered "dumb" or "funny looking" are particularly vulnerable. The practice of bullying is viewed as a serious and pervasive problem for students and teachers. As a result, its study has attracted considerable attention over the last few years, but relatively few stud-

ies focus specifically on how the practice of bullying affects ESL students. The researchers who participated in the symposium paid special attention to this population in their presentation.

The three contributions on this theme consider the problem from different perspectives. In "*Bullying and Victimization among Ethnic Minority Youth*", Katherine S. McKenney, Debra J. Pepler, Wendy M. Craig and Jennifer A. Connolly explore the practice of bullying on the basis of ethnic background in Canadian elementary and high school settings. Their analyses of self-reported data suggest a complex situation that differs in the two school contexts and a potentially positive opportunity for early intervention. In the second contribution to the theme of bullying, David Smith in *Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices for Classrooms and Schools* proposes that the outcomes of anti-bullying programs depend on the relationships among all members of a school community. He argues that principles of restorative justice foster a climate conducive to decreased incidences of bullying and increased opportunities for healthy development. The third contribution, Zopito A. Marini, Beth Koruna and Andrew V. Dane's *Individualizing Interventions for ESL Students Involved in Bullying and Victimization* outlines the diversity of the practice of bullying. Their objective is to show how teachers of ESL students might draw on established cognitive-behavioural programs to reduce the occurrence of bullying in ways that meet individual needs and cultural contexts.

**Literacy**, the second theme in the Research Symposium, attracted contributions that illustrate expanding definitions of what the term entails. An example of collaboration among two

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## Introduction (cont'd)

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researchers, a teacher and four students is presented in *A Language For Learning: Home Languages in the Multilingual Classroom* by Jim Cummins, Sarah Cohen, Lisa Leoni, Madiha Bajwa, Sulmana Hanif, Kanta Khalid, Tomer Shahar. They challenge the notion that languages other than English (where English is the language of instruction) have no useful role in the classroom. They propose an instructional practice that encourages students to draw on their home language to help them expand their academic knowledge, increase their English skills and develop their self-confidence. Their work includes teacher and student reflections on how they experienced the practice as well as samples of student work. They conclude by suggesting that an instructional practice based on valuing the student's first language and language transfer encourages success among ESL students. Similarly, Heather Lotherington in *Multiliteracies at Main Street School: Digital Texts, Multilingual*

*Development and Inclusive Narratives* describes a project that uses digital technology to engage elementary students' multicultural and multilingual experiences to rewrite traditional narratives. The sample narratives produced by the students illustrate how they are able to use their contemporary knowledge to rewrite and illustrate traditional fairy tales through the use of modern and post-modern (multi)literacies.

The third theme addressed the obstacles faced by **Internationally Educated Professionals** (IEPs) in their quest to obtain licensure and professional recognition in English Canada. In their paper, *Developing CLB Referenced Assessments for Internationally Trained Health Professionals*, Bruce Russell, Andrea Strachan and Peggie Shek outline the development of two occupation-specific ESL tests for internationally trained professionals in Bridging Programs: the International Pharmacy Graduate Program at the University of Toronto and the Access

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## Contact us

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## Introduction (cont'd)

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and Options program at The Michener Institute. The goal of these programs is to support participants in trying to obtain full professional licensure.

Russell et al. begin by demonstrating why the generic language tests used for university admission are not able to elicit a reliable sample of candidates' English proficiency. They next describe and justify the theoretical framework used in their work and subsequently outline the steps followed to develop the two occupation-specific

tests. For each step, the authors provide a detailed description of how the outlined objectives were achieved. The authors conclude by cautioning that if the tests developed are for high-stakes testing, researchers will need to undertake a longitudinal study to ensure test reliability and validity. ❖

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### Contributors

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## Contributors

### To the Research Symposium Special Edition

**Jennifer A. Connolly**, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at York University and the current Director of the LaMarsh Centre for Research in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Connolly's research interests include adolescent romantic relationships and the peer context. She is currently exploring the role of peers in the development of maladaptive relationships, including violence in romantic relationships, sexual harassment, and bullying among adolescents.

**Robert Courchène**, Acting Director of the Second Language Institute, is a teacher/teacher trainer at the University of Ottawa. His research interests include testing, curriculum design and multicultural and antiracism education. With Hedy McGarrell, he organizes the annual Research Symposium and edits the proceedings.

**Wendy M. Craig**, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Queen's University. Her research program focuses on two areas: the risk and protective factors associated with bullying and victimization in family, peer, individual, school and social relationships and the development of aggression in females as demonstrated in romantic relationships, dating violence and young girls with behaviour problems. In recognition of her work on bullying and victimization, she recently won an Investigator Award from the Canadian Institute of Health Research. She has also received federal funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada and the Networks of Centers of Excellence.

**Jim Cummins** is a faculty member in the Ontario Institute for

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Contributors

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**Andrew V. Dane**, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Brock University. Dr. Dane completed his graduate work in Child Clinical Psychology at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), which included clinical placements and internships at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Clarke Site. He has been at Brock since 2000. His research interests fall broadly in the area of developmental psychopathology, with particular emphasis on the study of aggression, bullying, and problem gambling in children and adolescents. He has focused much of his recent research on how these risk behaviours are related to child temperament, parenting and peer relationships.

**Beth Koruna** graduated with a B.A. Honors from the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Her Honors Thesis focused on the study of indirect forms of bullying, and has been presented at a national conference. Ms Koruna's interests are centered on understanding children's adjustment difficulties and working on the development of intervention strategies aimed at reducing the consequences of difficult socializing conditions.

**Heather Lotherington** is a Professor of Multilingual Education at York University. Her research focus is on multiliteracies. She is currently di-

recting a collaborative study on emergent multiliteracies in the elementary school, focusing on children's retelling traditional narratives in their own voices, using digital technology.

**Zopito A. Marini**, Ph.D., a developmental and educational psychologist, is a Full Professor in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Dr. Marini did his graduate work at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) with Robbie Case and has been at Brock since 1985, where he was the founding Chair of the Department. He does research, writes and lectures on issues related to the prevention and management of family and school conflicts. At present, Dr. Marini is conducting studies in the area of bullying and peer harassment. His research has been presented widely at over 100 conferences, workshops and keynote addresses and published in academic and professional journals.

**Hedy McGarrell** is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at Brock University, where she teaches courses in applied linguistics and TESL/TEFL. Her current research is on ESL writing and on technology in language learning/teaching. She is the editor of the Americas volume in the forthcoming TESOL series on Language Teacher Research.

**Katherine S. McKenney**, M.A., is a doctoral student in the clinical-developmental psychology program at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her primary research interests include the quality of the parent-child relationship in adolescence and its association with aggressive and delinquent behaviour.

**Debra J. Pepler**, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at York Uni-

(Continued on page 6)

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Contributors

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## Contributors (cont'd)

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versity, and a psychologist at the Hospital for Sick Children. Dr. Pepler's research interests include aggression and victimization among adolescents, with an emphasis on aggression among girls. Currently, Dr. Pepler is the Principal Investigator on a New Emerging Team grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to explore the prevention of violence in the lives of girls. She has also received federal funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada and the Networks of Centers of Excellence to address bullying problems and promote healthy relationships among children.

**Bruce Russell** and **Andrea Strachan** are consultants with LCRT Consulting. Andrea is the CLBTP trainer for the Toronto region; Bruce is a licensed CLBPT trainer. They have developed and delivered a number of ESL courses, workshops and occupation-specific employment preparation programs. Most recently, they developed two CLB- referenced and occupation-specific language assessments: The Michener Institute Language Assessment for the Access and Options programs at the Michener Institute and the International Pharmacy Language Assessment for the International Pharmacy Graduate Program at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto.

**Peggie Shek** has worked with the Indo-Chinese Refugee Settlement Unit of the Ministry of Citizenship & Culture where she designed and delivered multilingual programs to assist newcomers' settlement process, at St. Stephen's Community House in Toronto as an ESL Coordinator/Manager and as Supervisor for the Ontario Welcome House Language Training School in Toronto. Since 1996, she has been LCRT's Consulting Project Manager.

Peggy also has a private practice as a clinical Marriage and Family therapist.

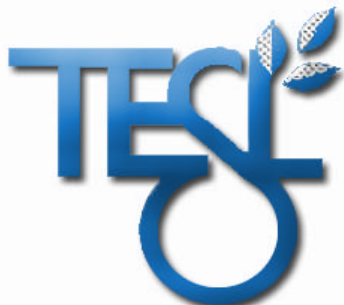
**David Smith** is an Associate Professor of educational counselling at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. He received his Ph.D. in counselling psychology from McGill University in 1998. He researches and publishes on anti-bullying intervention in schools. ❖

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**Contributors**

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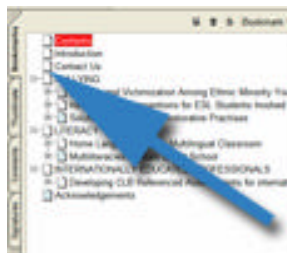
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## Acknowledgements

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth

By Katherine S. McKenney, Debra J. Pepler, Wendy M. Craig and Jennifer A. Connolly

### Abstract

The study explored the bullying and victimization experiences of ethnic minority youth in Canada. More specifically, their involvement in ethnic bullying (i.e., bullying on the basis of one's ethnic background) was examined using ethnically-diverse elementary and high school samples. Self-report bullying prevalence questionnaires revealed no significant differences in reports of perpetration or victimization between majority and ethnic minority youth in either academic context. However, significant differences emerged when students were asked to report their experiences with ethnically-based bullying. Ethnic minority youth reported greater ethnically-based victimization in elementary school. In high school, minority youth reported more frequent bullying of others from a different ethnic background because of their ethnicity, compared to majority youth. The implications for early interventions with minority youth, as well as the limitations of the study and directions for future research are presented. ■

### Introduction

After twenty years of research on bullying and victimization among children, it is now widely accepted that these experiences are pervasive problems and represent frequent, if not daily, occurrences, for a significant number of youth. For example, data from the World Health Organization Health and Behaviour Survey of School-Aged Children (HBSC) indicated that 10% of Canadian boys and 7% of girls between 11 and 15 years of age report having bullied others at least twice in the last 5 days (Craig & Harel, 2004). In contrast, 17% of boys and 18% of girls reported having been bullied at least twice over the same time period. Such prevalence rates indicate that a small but significant number of Canadian youth are involved in maladaptive peer interactions. Given that children involved in these types of interactions may be at a heightened risk for psychosocial problems (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), substantial effort has been directed towards identifying risk and protective factors associated with involvement in bullying and victimization in an effort to improve the negative impact of this social behaviour among youth.

Bullying has recently been conceptualized as a relationship problem, as this form of aggressive behaviour unfolds in the context of a relationship between peers (Pepler & Craig, 2000). This aggression can be exhibited through negative physical, verbal, or social activities that are designed to cause distress to victimized children (Olweus, 1991). With repeated episodes of bullying, the power differential that exists between the child who bullies and the child who is victimized becomes consolidated, such that the child who

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***“...it is now widely accepted that [bullying] experiences are pervasive problems and represent frequent, if not daily, occurrences...”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

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is being bullied becomes increasingly powerless to defend himself (Craig & Pepler, 2003). As a result, these children are frequently unable to extract themselves from a bullying relationship because they lack the power to shift the dynamics necessary to put a stop to this abusive behaviour. Children who are involved in these types of destructive interactions are learning about power in relationships. Children who bully are learning how to use their power aggressively in order to control and cause distress, whereas children who are victimized are learning to be dominated in their relationships with others (Pepler & Craig, in press).

Children who bully generate their power over others through their physical stature, age, gender, popularity, or awareness of another's vulnerability. Within our society, there is also systemic power based on discrepancies among racial or cultural groups, sexual orientation, economic positions, and disabilities. Therefore, some youth may feel entitled to exert power over others because of their membership within a social or cultural context. Youth who identify themselves as a member of the dominant ethnic group, for example, may assert their sense of belonging to the prevailing cultural group as a means of creating a power imbalance with those who identify themselves as an ethnic minority. Bullying that targets another's ethnic background or cultural identity is referred to as ethnic bullying. There are many anecdotal reports of ethnic bullying among youth and the pervasiveness of this type of aggression. For example, Besag (1989) reported that in one group of 13- to 17-years olds, over half the name-calling that occurred referred to racist names and that over 60 different abusive racial terms were used. As well, children frequently report that it is their peers who deviate from the norm that are primary targets for bullying (Fried & Fried, 1996). This deviation can take the form of ethnic and cultural differences. Children and youth who are marginalized in our society because of their ethnic background may be at high risk for victimization, which, if not addressed, can lead to frustration and subsequent involvement in bullying.

Despite the role of ethnic identity in the creation of power differentials among youth, few studies have systematically evaluated the contribution of a child's ethnic identity in bullying relationships. This paucity of research on racial bullying may be due to the fact that much of the initial work on bullying and victimization was conducted in Scandinavian countries, which are less ethnically diverse than Canada. As well, the majority of work directed towards understanding the dynamics of bullying has focused on behavioural factors rather than systemic factors, such as ethnicity. Given the developmental stage of early adolescence and its associated developmental tasks, it seems likely that ethnic identity would play a role in bullying relationships. In early adolescence, youth are beginning the process of developing their social identity, which is the part of the self that derives from memberships in social groups (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). One aspect of this social identity that is salient for adolescents, particularly for youth from minority ethnic groups, is their identification with their ethnic or cultural background (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005).

One manner in which early adolescents begin to develop this sense of

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***“Bullying that targets another’s ethnic background or cultural identity is referred to as ethnic bullying.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

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identity is by affiliating with others who are similar to themselves (Hamm, 2000). For many youth, this similarity could be based on race and ethnicity, such that majority youth associate primarily with other majority youth and minority youth affiliate primarily with members of their own ethnic groups. Such affiliations create visible distinctions between which individuals are considered part of one's group and which individuals are not. Youth who are not members of the dominant ethnic group may be at risk for victimization, as they are perceived as different from, less central and perhaps less entitled than members of the dominant group.

Despite the hypothesized role of ethnicity in bullying relationships, the few studies that have evaluated the role of ethnic identity have found few differences among majority and minority youth's experiences. For example, Moran, Smith, Thompson and Whitney (1993) studied British and Asian school children and found that, with the exception of racist name-calling, ethnicity had little effect on students' reports of enjoying school, having friends, being bullied, or bullying others. Similarly, Boulton (1995) reported few differences in the proportion of British Caucasian or Asian schoolchildren being nominated by their peers as either bullies or victims. The reported incidents of bullying in this study seemed to occur between members of the same ethnic group, rather than between members of different ethnicities. Of note, both studies included relatively small samples that comprised homogeneous ethnic groups and utilized interviews conducted by an individual from the ethnic majority group. The failure to find differences between the experiences of youth from majority and ethnic minority groups could be due to these methodological limitations. As such, the results of these studies should be interpreted with caution.

Although research to date has not revealed differences in bullying behaviours between ethnic groups, work by Siann and colleagues (1994) suggests that there is at least the perception that minority youth are at a greater risk for victimization than majority youth. Their research suggests that although there were few differences between Caucasian and ethnic minority children in terms of reported bullying, three quarters of the ethnic minority students reported that they thought ethnic minority youth were more often bullied than Caucasian youth (Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart, & Rawson, 1994). In comparison, only half of the Caucasian students endorsed this belief.

The objective of this current study was to explore bullying and victimization among Canadian minority youth in order to understand the prevalence of their experiences compared to majority youth. We used data from a large and ethnically diverse sample of elementary and high school students to examine the prevalence of these behaviours. Students were asked to report on general experiences of bullying and victimization, as well as ethnically-based bullying and victimization. In other words, we were interested in students' overall experiences with bullying and victimization, as well as the frequency with which they perpetrated bullying and were targets of this behaviour because of their ethnic background. We expected that both elementary and high

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***“Few studies have systematically evaluated the contribution of a child’s ethnic identity in bullying relationships.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

(Continued from page 10)

school students from an ethnic minority group would report greater victimization and ethnically-based victimization than would students from the majority group. Our hypotheses are directed by research on “in-group bias” (e.g., Tajfel, 1982), which suggests that individuals tend to prefer members of their own group to members of a different group. If a school population consists primarily of students from the dominant majority culture (e.g., Caucasian), then students from ethnic minority groups may be at a heightened risk for being bullied.

We also hypothesized that, regardless of school context, students from the dominant culture would be more likely to report greater perpetration of bullying and ethnically-based bullying behaviour than would ethnic minority students. Members of the dominant culture who attend a school in which they form the majority of the study body intrinsically have more power than those students from an ethnic minority group. Given the power dynamics involved in bullying relationships, it seems likely that majority youth would report higher levels of perpetration than individuals who have less power and possibly less status in the peer group.

### Method

#### Participants

Data for these analyses were drawn from a longitudinal study of adolescents' antisocial behaviour, psychosocial adjustment, and relationships with parents and peers, including bullying and victimization. The sample for the current study comprised students recruited from three elementary schools and two high schools to obtain samples that were relatively representative of the socio-economic and ethnic diversity of the major Canadian city in which the study was conducted. All students in grades 7 through 11 were invited to participate; however, only those students and their parents who provided written consent were allowed to complete the study ( $N = 506$ ). As such, 198 elementary school students and 308 high school students consented to participate in the research. The mean ages of the elementary and high school samples were 12.94 years ( $SD = .71$ ) and 14.56 years ( $SD = .60$ ), respectively. The majority of the students identified themselves as European-Canadian (elementary = 75.9%; high school = 74.3%). For the purpose of this study, these students were classified as members of the ethnic majority. The remainder of the samples was ethnically diverse, as illustrated in Table 1. Students who identified their ethnic background as anything other than European-Canadian were classified as ethnic minority. We acknowledge that there is a great deal of heterogeneity among the various minority ethnic groups included in this study. Classifying all ethnic minority students into one category was done for statistical purposes only and does not reflect the view that the experiences of all minority youth, regardless of ethnic background, are equivalent. The parents' highest level of educational achievement was used as a proxy measure of socio-economic status. Almost half of the adolescents re-

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***“...three quarters of the ethnic minority students reported that they thought ethnic minority youth were more often bullied than Caucasian youth.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

	Elementary school		High school	
	N	%	N	%
European Canadian	148	75.9	231	74.3
Asian Canadian	21	10.8	29	9.3
African/Caribbean Canadian	4	2.1	16	5.1
South Asian Canadian	4	2.1	15	4.8
Hispanic	4	2.1	3	1.0
Middle Eastern	0	0	5	1.6
Native Canadian	0	0	2	0.6
Other	14	7.2	10	3.2

**Table 1: Ethnic composition of study participants.**

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ported that their mothers (elementary = 42.9%; high school = 46.0%) and fathers (elementary = 40.1%; high school = 46.8%) had at least some post-secondary education or higher, which suggests that this sample was fairly well-educated and advantaged. The majority of participants in this study also came from two-parent families, with 70.4% of elementary students and 71.9% of high school students living with both biological parents.

### Measures

*Bullying and victimization.* A modified version of Olweus' (1991) *Bully/Victim Questionnaire* was administered. Bullying and victimization scores were derived from four items. Students were asked to report how frequently they had bullied another student or been bullied in the past five days and in the past two months. Students responded on five-point scales, ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (several times per week or five or more times, respectively). Two additional questions were included in the survey to evaluate the prevalence of ethnically-based bullying and victimization. Students were asked to report how frequently they had bullied a student from another ethnic group because of his/her ethnicity and how frequently they had been victimized by a student from a different ethnic background because of their ethnicity. Participants reported their experiences on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (several times per week) over the past two months.

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**“...only those students  
and their parents who  
provided written consent  
were allowed to  
complete the study .”**

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

	Ethnic minority		Ethnic majority	
	M	SD	M	SD
Bullying perpetration	.85	1.73	.68	1.25
Victimization	.62	1.28	.83	1.69
Ethnic bullying perpetration	1.11	.31	1.14	.53
Ethnic victimization	1.30	.62	1.19	.62

**Table 2: Means and standard deviations of bullying perpetration and victimization for elementary school students.**

(Continued from page 12)

### Procedure

Students were asked to complete the self-report questionnaires during regularly scheduled class time. Trained research assistants and graduate students administered the questionnaires in the spring of the academic year and were present to provide clarification on any of the items if students requested such assistance. Efforts were made to ensure that the students were able to complete the questionnaires in private (e.g., students were separated from each other as much as possible in the classroom and were given partitions that they could erect on their desks in order to block the view of their answers from other students). Students were informed of the voluntary and confidential nature of the study and participants and/or the school were compensated for their time with a small honorarium.

### **Results**

The experiences of students in elementary school and high school were analyzed separately in order to compare prevalence rates across school contexts. Participants' scores were dichotomized to reflect either no involvement or at least one incident of perpetration or victimization over the past two months. We conducted a series of two-way contingency table analyses to determine whether a statistical relationship exists between ethnic status and bullying and victimization experiences. The means and standard deviations of the perpetration and victimization scores for elementary and high school students are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. We first compared the reports of bullying

(Continued on page 14)

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***“...there is a great deal of heterogeneity among the various minority ethnic groups included in this study.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

	Ethnic minority		Ethnic majority	
	M	SD	M	SD
Bullying perpetration	.45	1.23	.48	1.22
Victimization	.47	1.27	.36	1.04
Ethnic bullying perpetration	1.19	.60	1.06	.29
Ethnic victimization	1.25	.63	1.15	.47

**Table 3: Means and standard deviations of bullying perpetration and victimization for high school students.**

(Continued from page 13)

**“Regardless of ethnic background, approximately 14% of students in high school reported being victimized because of their ethnicity at least once over the past two months.”**

perpetration between majority and ethnic minority students, regardless of the underlying basis for the bullying perpetration (i.e., general bullying). The results suggest that there were no significant differences between the reports of general bullying perpetration between majority or ethnic minority students in elementary or high school, Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = .48, NS$  and Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 311) = .30, NS$ , respectively. Approximately 35% of elementary students and approximately 22% of high school students reported bullying others at least once in the past two months.

Similarly, there were no significant differences in the reports of general victimization between the ethnic groups in either the elementary or high school sample, Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 195) = .02, NS$  and Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 310) = .02, NS$ . Regardless of ethnic background, approximately 33% of students in elementary school and 20% of students in high school reported being victimized at least once over the past two months. Of note, the role of gender was initially included in these analyses to explore potential interactions between gender and ethnicity on the prevalence of bullying and victimization. There was no significant effect of gender and this variable was subsequently dropped from the analyses.

A different pattern of results emerged when we compared the reports of ethnically-based bullying and victimization between the ethnic groups. Chi-square analyses revealed that there were no significant differences in the proportion of majority and ethnic minority youth who reported perpetrating ethnically-based bullying in elementary school, Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 193) = .04, NS$ . Regardless of ethnic status, approximately 10% of elementary school students reported bullying others from a different ethnic group because of their ethnic-

(Continued on page 15)

## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

(Continued from page 14)

ity. In high school, there was, however, a small yet significant difference in the proportion of youth who reported bullying others because of their race, Pearson  $\chi^2$  (1,  $N = 306$ ) = 5.60,  $p = .02$ , Cramér's  $V = .14$ . As illustrated in Figure 1, 13% of minority youth in high school reported bullying others because of their ethnicity. In contrast, only 5% of majority youth report perpetrating this same behaviour. We found a reverse pattern of results for ethnically-based victimization. There was a significant difference in the proportion of majority and ethnic minority youth who reported experiencing ethnically-based victimization in elementary school, Pearson  $\chi^2$  (1,  $N = 192$ ) = 3.89,  $p = .05$ , Cramér's  $V = .14$ , as illustrated in Figure 2. Approximately 1 in 4 minority elementary school students reported being the victim of ethnically-based bullying at least once in the past 2 months compared to approximately 1 in 10 majority youth. There were no significant differences in ethnically-based victimization among majority and minority groups in high school, Pearson  $\chi^2$  (1,  $N = 307$ ) = 2.19,  $p = .14$ . Regardless of ethnic background, approximately 14% of students in high school reported being victimized because of their ethnicity at least once over the past two months.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the bullying and victimization experiences of Canadian ethnic minority youth in both elementary and high school. In particular, we evaluated the prevalence of ethnically-based bullying and victimization, that is, the extent to which youth were involved in bullying relationships with students of a different ethnic background because of their ethnicity. Given that these samples were drawn from schools where the student population was primarily Caucasian and the majority of students identified themselves as European-Canadian, we anticipated that minority youth would be at heightened risk for victimization, as they would be perceived as different and therefore, not part of the in-group. Conversely, we expected that the greater proportion of majority youth in the schools and the relative power and status that society appoints to majority individuals would result in higher levels of bullying perpetration among majority youth.

The results of this study shed light on the complexity of bullying and victimization among minority youth and suggest that ethnicity is a relevant construct worthy of further exploration in the bullying research. Contrary to our hypotheses, majority youth did not report higher levels of general bullying perpetration than minority youth in either elementary or high school. Consistent with this pattern, minority youth did not report greater victimization than majority youth in either school sample. Although it is possible that majority and ethnic minority youth in these samples experience similar levels of bullying and victimization, it may be that the lack of significant differences between these groups is the result of demand characteristics associated with the questionnaire. Although students were provided with examples of behaviours that constituted bullying at the start of the

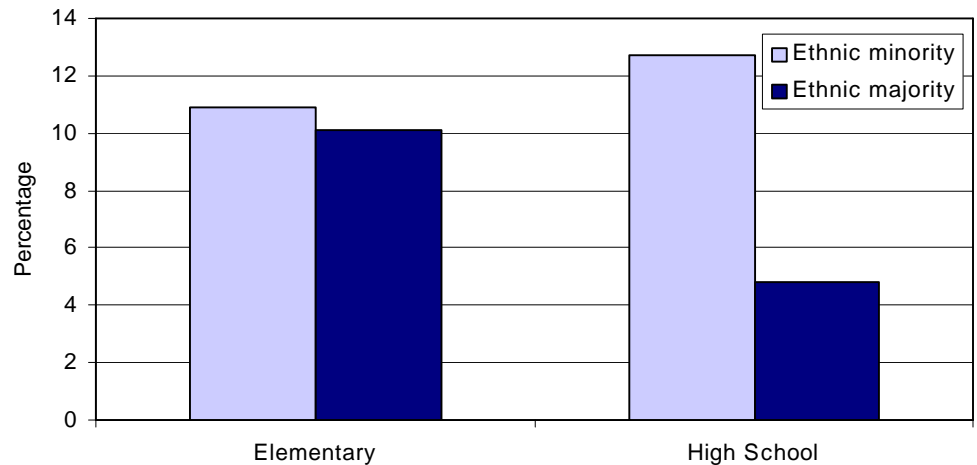
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***“There was no significant effect of gender...”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)



**Figure 1. Percentage of students who report perpetrating ethnically-based victimization.**

**“...minority youth in elementary school who are bullied by students from a different ethnic group because of their ethnicity, over time become those youth in high school who bully others.”**

(Continued from page 15)

survey (e.g., say nasty and mean things to a student or tease him/her in a mean way or hit, kick, threaten him/her), the questionnaires ask students to identify the frequency with which they bully or are bullied. It is possible that students are not aware that their behaviour constitutes bullying or that their experiences represent victimization through bullying. Alternatively, students' responses may have been affected by social desirability, that is, the tendency to respond to questions in the most socially acceptable way. Given the negative stigma frequently associated with bullying others, it is possible that students underreported the frequency with which they engage in these behaviours. Likewise, the shame that victimized youth likely experience as a result of being bullied may have led them to minimize the severity of their experiences to cope with this embarrassment.

Specific questions about bullying experiences with an underlying basis of ethnic identity revealed a different pattern of results. Minority students in elementary school reported greater ethnic victimization than did majority youth. Conversely, minority youth in high school reported greater ethnic bullying perpetration than did majority youth. Although the methodology employed in this study was cross-sectional in nature, the results suggest that there may be a developmental trend in minority youth's experience with ethnically-based bullying and victimization. We offer the following hypothesis for this developmental trend: minority youth in elementary school who are bullied by students from a different ethnic group because of their ethnicity, over time, become those youth in high school who bully others. In elementary school, their victimization is a function of their family background and their sense of

(Continued on page 17)

## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

(Continued from page 16)

belonging and identity with a specific ethnic group. Given that minority youth may be struggling with other difficulties, such as coping with the tensions between their family's traditions and the dominant culture, being bullied because of one's ethnic identity may lead to increasing frustration and hostility. With time, minority youth may direct this hostility towards others, which takes the form of ethnically-based bullying. Previous research has demonstrated that being victimized by peers results in increased risk for adjustment difficulties, including externalizing behaviour problems (Hanish & Guerra, 1999). Considering the power differentials that exist in bullying relationships, the experience of minority youth who move from ethnically-based victimization to perpetration could be conceptualized as an attempt to assert their power over others that was diminished through their earlier victimization. One way to assert power is to bully others who also have little power in the peer group. Future research that employs a longitudinal design is necessary to determine whether youth in elementary school who experience ethnic bullying develop into youth who bully others because of their ethnicity in high school.

This study provides a preliminary and exploratory examination of the bullying and victimization experiences of minority youth in Canada, an area of research that has received relatively little attention, despite the prevalence of ethnically-based aggression in schools and the larger community. There are some limitations of the study that should be noted, as they speak to the generalizability of the results. As previously indicated, the students involved in this study were relatively advantaged and came from stable family environments. As such, their experiences may be significantly different than students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The generalizability of these results may also be limited by the school contexts from which the samples were drawn. Minority youth in this study represented approximately 25% of the study population. Minority youth might report different experiences with ethnically-based bullying and victimization if they attended schools in which they represented a more substantial proportion of the student body, particularly if minority youth comprised the majority of the school population. Such an expectation is supported through the work of Hanish and Guerra (2000) who found that White children were at significantly greater risk of being victimized in predominantly non-White schools.

Given that the samples employed in this study comprised primarily majority youth, we chose to collapse across all minority groups to obtain a category of ethnic minority that was large enough for our statistical analyses. We were cognizant that doing so likely eliminated important distinctions and experiences between minority groups. It is possible that the ethnically-based bullying and victimization experience of African-Canadian students may be quite different from those of Asian-Canadian students, for example. Future studies of samples with larger proportions of minority youth are necessary to fully elucidate the perpetration and victimization among different ethnic groups.

One of the key findings from our study suggests that ethnic minority youth are at a heightened risk for ethnically-based victimization in elementary school. Although minority youth may be targeted because of their ethnic iden-

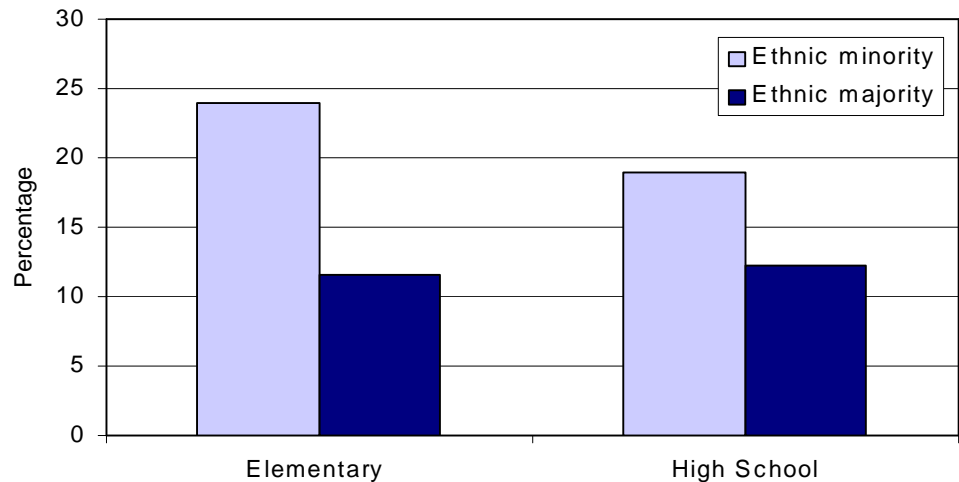
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***“It is possible that students are not aware that their behaviour constitutes bullying or that their experiences represent victimization.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)



**Figure 2. Percentage of students who report ethnically-based victimization**

(Continued from page 17)

**“...being bullied because of one’s ethnic identity may lead to increasing frustration and hostility.”**

tity, it is also possible that the salience of ethnicity and the sensitive nature of race discrimination may predispose youth to attribute their victimization to their ethnic status when, in fact, their victimization may be unrelated to this aspect of their identity. Although this study allows for an examination of the prevalence of ethnically-based bullying and victimization, we have little understanding of how minority youth experience this particular form of victimization. For example, are minority youth bullied through racial slurs, physical aggression and intimidation, or social ostracism by majority youth? Further work is needed to answer this question.

Although the study allows us to speculate as to the developmental nature of ethnically-based bullying and victimization, the cross-sectional methodology employed does not allow us to statistically test for these effects. To examine the stability of these behaviours over time and across different academic contexts (i.e., from elementary to high school), one would need to follow a large cohort of students for several years and repeatedly measure their experiences with ethnically-based bullying and victimization. Such an endeavour represents the next step for researchers interested in the developmental trajectories of this specific form of bullying.

Given that there may be a transition from ethnic victimization to ethnic bullying with age, the results of this study underscore the need for early identification and prevention of this type of behaviour. Majority youth who bully others on the grounds of ethnicity need support from adults to understand the consequences of their behaviour and must be given alternative strategies for interacting with their peers. The first step for adults then is to promote diversity and acceptance among youth. At younger ages, this can be accomplished through discussing the inaccuracy of stereotypes with regard to race, religion,

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

(Continued from page 18)

culture, and other individual differences. Adults can also help students to explore cultural practices that are different from their own and research important and influential individuals from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Such activities enable children to challenge beliefs regarding one's superiority over others.

Another way to promote acceptance of others is to encourage intercultural relationships from an early age. Adults play a key role in the formation of these types of relationships, as ethnic homophily, which is the tendency to affiliate with others of the same ethnic background, increases with age (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003). When adults organize cooperative activities and manage other aspects of peer interaction, such as seating arrangements and group assignments, they can ensure that students have the opportunity to work and socialize with youth from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Such interactions may reduce the opportunities for ethnic bullying.

When children do victimize others because of their ethnicity, they require formative consequences that will allow them to learn from their experiences. Formative consequences are consequences that are designed to teach children that their behaviour is unacceptable while also providing support for those who bully to learn the skills and acquire the insights they are lacking. For example, if a child ethnically bullies another child, that student must spend time writing a letter of apology or a research essay on the cultural practices of a different ethnic group. Such consequences teach while also helping youth to understand the impact their behaviour has on others.

Children learn their most valuable lessons about how to behave and treat others by observing the adults around them. It is imperative, therefore, that adults think about how they use power in their own lives and ensure that they model the use of positive power by respecting and supporting others.

### Conclusion

Although research on children's bullying and victimization experiences over the past several decades has provided us with a broad and comprehensive understanding of the destructive peer relationships that can exist among youth, we are only now starting to explore these same experiences among specific marginalized subgroups of youth. For the purposes of this study we explored bullying and victimization among one marginalized group that has been frequently overlooked in empirical study: ethnic minority youth. The bullying and victimization that these youth experience may be fundamentally different than that of other youth. Their victimization is targeted towards intrinsic and meaningful facets of their identity. When this victimization occurs in early adolescence, a developmental period when identity formation is salient and malleable, minority youth may be at a heightened risk for maladjustment. Early identification of ethnic victimization is essential to ensure that youth who are victimized are protected and supported and that youth who bully are taught the necessary skills.

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***“Children learn their most valuable lessons about how to behave and treat others by observing the adults around them.”***

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## Bullying And Victimization Among Ethnic Minority Youth (cont'd)

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Only through early identification and intervention can youth on troubled developmental trajectories be shifted towards more pro-social behaviour. ❖

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## Individualizing Interventions For ESL Students Involved In Bullying And Victimization

by Zopito A. Marini, Beth Koruna and Andrew V. Dane

### Abstract

School bullying is a serious psychosocial and educational problem for students and teachers alike. One obstacle to understanding and preventing bullying is that the phenomenon is a more heterogeneous concept than was originally believed, including a range of subtypes characterized by whether the bullying is reactive or proactive, direct or indirect, and whether the participants are dually involved in bullying and victimization.

It appears that each subtype is somewhat unique, not just in the form and function of bullying, but in the risk factors involved. Therefore, a major goal of the present paper is to delineate the heterogeneity of bullying, and to explore possibilities for individualizing interventions to meet the specific needs of students involved in the various subtypes of bullying.

We intend to illustrate how teachers of ESL students may adapt and individualize well-established cognitive-behavioural programs for preventing and reducing bullying to best meet the needs of students experiencing these difficulties, including the implementation of school-based intervention strategies for addressing bullying situations that are sensitive to cultural contexts.

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### Introduction

Research has shown that school bullying, a subtype of peer aggression characterized by the repeated and systematic abuse of physical and psychological power, is a serious and pervasive problem for students and teachers alike (Marini, McWhenie & Lacharite, 2004; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefoghe, 2002). Involvement in bullying is associated with a range of psychosocial problems including low self-control, peer rejection, poor academic performance, high acceptance of antisocial behaviour and psychiatric difficulties such as conduct and anxiety disorder (Coie, Dodge & Kupersmidt, 1990; Loeber, Green, Lahey & Kalb, 2000; Haynie et al., 2001; Olweus, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 2001). Furthermore, students with behavioural problems can divert precious instructional time, and other resources, from other students and thus create difficulties for both the teachers and other pupils (Nucci, 2006). In addition, students who are victimized often report an array of internalizing difficulties related to anxiety, depression and self-esteem (Craig, 1998; Grills & Ollendick, 2002). These negative outcomes, which can continue beyond the school years, highlight why it is important for teachers to be aware of these problems in the school, and why it would be worthwhile to implement school-based interventions to prevent and reduce bullying and victimization.

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***“...students with behavioural problems can divert precious instructional time, and other resources, from other students ...”***

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## Individualizing Interventions

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Bullying is likely to be an issue of particular concern for teachers of ESL (English as a Second Language) students. While there is a paucity of bullying research directly involving ESL students, a number of possible links can be drawn to suggest that these particular students may be susceptible to victimization because of possible social isolation, loneliness and lack of close friends. Because of the intertwined nature of the factors contributing to bullying involvement, it is difficult, if not impossible, to examine the extent and nature of bullying and victimization involving ESL students. In other words, due to their complex profile, and the way in which they are studied, it is difficult to determine whether some ESL students may get picked on because of their low language proficiency, their ethnicity or even cultural practices and religious background. For example, there is some research suggesting an increased risk of victimization among ethnic minority students (Hanish & Guerra, 2000) as well as increased classroom aggression as a function of a more diverse ethnic composition (Rowe, Almeida & Jacobson, 1999). In addition, Elsea and Mukhtar (2000) reported that cultural, religious and language differences amongst students of different ethnic minority groups were perceived as factors that would precipitate bullying. In some cases, however, careful attention must be given in differentiating reported and perceived bullying and victimization. For instance, in one study there was no significant difference between students from various ethnic groups in their reported experience of bullying (Seals & Young, 2003); however, ethnic minority students have been found to perceive themselves as more likely to be victimized than their peers of the ethnic majority (Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart & Rawson, 1994). Other research suggests the possibility that the relation between ethnicity and victimization might be connected to broader social processes such as the size of a child's friendship network. In this vein, it has been shown that, amongst ethnic students, the more friends they had the less likely they were to be victimized, and vice versa (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach & Unger, 2004). These results are similar to those reported in the general literature, which predominantly involves non-ESL students (Schwartz, McFayden, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1999; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, Bates & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000). Although there is little direct evidence that ESL students are at greater risk for bullying and victimization, it seems reasonable to conclude based on research pertaining to ethnic, cultural and religious minority students that issues relating to bullying and victimization may be a particular challenge that ESL students must face. However, we must bear in mind that it is not clear whether students are victimized because of their minority status per se, or that it may be a part of complex social processes that comprise the peer relations of students who differ ethnically, linguistically or culturally from the majority of the student body. Despite the limitations of this research, these studies do suggest that teachers of ESL students should be aware of the potential for problems with bullying and victimization in the classroom.

The main purpose of the present paper is to discuss how teachers may adapt and individualize well-established cognitive-behavioural strate-

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***“It is difficult to determine whether some ESL students may get picked on because of their low language proficiency, their ethnicity or even cultural practices and religious background.”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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gies for preventing and reducing bullying to best meet the needs of particular students with these difficulties. One obstacle to understanding and preventing bullying and victimization is that bullying is a more heterogeneous concept than was originally believed (Little, Brauner, Jones, Nock & Hawley, 2003; Toblin, Schwartz, Hopmeyer-Gorman & Abou-ezzeddine, 2005). For instance, there appear to be several subtypes or variations of bullying, characterized by differences in the manifestation of the bullying behaviour, such as whether it is reactive or proactive, direct or indirect. In addition, a significant number of bullies (about 33%) are dually involved in bullying and victimization (Marini, Dane, Bosacki & YLC-CURA, 2006). The literature suggests that each subtype is somewhat unique, not just in the form and function of bullying, but in the sense of having differential etiological profiles or risk factors. Thus, one goal of the present paper is to delineate the heterogeneity of bullying, and to explore possibilities for individualizing interventions to meet the specific needs of students involved in the various subtypes of bullying. In addition, we intend to illustrate how such teachers of ESL students may adapt intervention strategies for addressing bullying to be sensitive to the cultural context.

### **Subtypes of Bullying: Differentiating the Forms from the Function (i.e., Motives)**

As already mentioned, recent research has revealed that bullying is best characterized by its heterogeneity in both the forms used to carry out the attacks as well as the function served for the attacker. For example, much of the research on bullying has focused on direct or overt aggression, which includes observable confrontations involving physical and verbal attacks (Marini et al., 2006; Olweus, 2001). Increasingly, more attention has been focused on indirect types of bullying, in which attacks are carried out in a more covert manner, by means of spreading rumours, excluding people from groups or persuading or daring a peer to harm another student (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Vaillancourt, Brendgen, Boivin & Tremblay, 2003).

Studies have indicated that there are key differences in the risk factors associated with direct versus indirect bullying, including social-cognitive biases, the presence or absence of internalizing problems, peer relationship difficulties and temperament (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). Compared to non-aggressive youngsters, aggressive children have been shown to encode social situations less accurately, are more likely to attribute hostile motives to people in ambiguous social situations, generate more aggressive solutions to social problems and evaluate these aggressive responses more positively (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In addition, aggressive children generally tend to deem aggressive and antisocial acts as more acceptable and less wrong than do their non-aggressive counterparts (Zelli, Dodge, Lochman & Laird, 1999). The pattern of social information processing deficits for indirectly aggressive children differs in some key ways from that of their directly aggressive counterparts. Notably, consistent with directly aggressive children, indirectly aggressive youngsters

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**“...there appear to be several subtypes or variations of bullying...”**

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## Individualizing Interventions

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have been shown to make more hostile intent attributions than non-aggressive children (Crick, 1995; Crick & Werner, 1998; Crick, Grotpeter & Bigbee, 2002). However, directly aggressive children are prone to making hostile attributions regarding instrumental provocation situations (e.g., a peer breaks a child's radio while the participant is out of the room), whereas indirectly aggressive children evince such biases in respect to relational provocation situations (e.g., a child overhears children talking about a party to which they were not invited) (Crick et al., 2002). In addition, there is little evidence that indirectly aggressive girls have deficits in the later steps of social information processing; in particular they do not seem to evaluate indirectly aggressive responses more positively than non-aggressive children (Crain, Finch & Foster, 2005). Indirectly aggressive boys evaluate relationally aggressive responses to instrumental conflict more positively than non-aggressive children, but this was not the case for responses to relational conflict (Crick & Werner, 1998).

Students involved in direct and indirect bullying may also differ in their level of social competence, insofar as indirect bullying has been associated with a higher level of social intelligence than direct bullying (Kaukiainen et al., 1999). This finding makes some sense theoretically in that one would seem to need considerable social skill to persuade peers to exclude a particular student from a given social group, or to sow dissent and discord that would motivate peers to act aggressively toward the targeted child. However, the research in this area is quite complex, in that both direct and indirect bullying have been associated with deficits suggesting limitations in social skill, including low empathy and greater susceptibility to peer rejection (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Kaukiainen et al., 1999).

Researchers have also distinguished bullying done proactively from that which is a reaction to provocation. Reactive bullying involves a more immediate reaction to a perceived provocation, usually driven by frustration, instantaneous emotional release, defense against a perceived threat, and general lack of inhibition (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Poulin & Boivin, 2000). This type of abrupt reaction has also been labelled as self-defensive aggression and tends to be generally impulsive, accompanied by visible hostile expressions, and carries a great deal of strong negative emotions (see Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Pulkkinen, 1996). In contrast, proactive bullying entails more deliberate and methodical planning of attacks, using aversive acts to obtain instrumental or social goals, such as stealing lunch money or bidding for popularity or social status (Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum-Terwogt & Schuengel, 2002). In general, proactive bullying tends to entail unprovoked, goal-directed, predatory and deliberate acts (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Pellegrini, Bartini & Brooks, 1999).

As was the case with direct and indirect forms of bullying, studies have indicated that bullying with a proactive function is associated with different psychosocial risk factors than is bullying that is reactive. For instance, in relation to social information processing, students who report engaging in reactive bullying are also more likely to report social-cognitive difficulties in the initial stages of processing social information, related to difficulties with encoding and interpretation of cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996). Thus, reactive bullies faced with am-

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***“Indirectly aggressive youngsters have been shown to make more hostile intent attributions than non-aggressive children...”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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biguous provocation are more likely to exhibit social-cognitive bias and interpret the provocation as hostile when the intention was actually unclear (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996), though age seems to play a role, with the younger children showing more hostile attributions. However, these individuals did not seem to show difficulties with the later stages of processing social information, as they were able to generate non-aggressive responses to social problems and evaluate likely outcomes as well as non-aggressive students (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In contrast, proactive bullies were more likely to report difficulties with the latter stages, generating more aggressive solutions to social problems, evaluating these as effective means to meet their goals, and underestimating the potential damage that bullying tactics may inflict on relationships. In addition, relative to non-aggressive peers, proactive bullies are more likely to expect aggression to yield tangible rewards (e.g., obtaining a desired item, winning a game) and to minimize the damage that such tactics might inflict on relationships (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996). In regard to peer relationships, reactive aggression tends to be associated with peer rejection and elevated levels of victimization, whereas proactive aggression is not linked to these outcomes (Price & Dodge, 1989; Schwartz et al., 1998). In fact, students who use proactive aggression are generally viewed less negatively, being seen by peers as popular, having a sense of humour and as good leaders (Luthar & McMahon, 1996; Price & Dodge, 1989; Salmivalli, 2001). Although there seem to be developmental differences, with clearer and more consistent results for younger children, the overall pattern is nevertheless quite suggestive (Price & Dodge, 1989).

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***“Students who report engaging in reactive bullying are also more likely to report social-cognitive difficulties...”***

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### **Heterogeneity in Involvement: The Bully-Victim**

Another question that should be asked to determine the best means of helping a bully to change his or her behaviour is whether that individual is also victimized by peers, since victims of bullying often report an array of internalizing difficulties related to anxiety, depression and self-esteem (Craig, 1998; Grills & Ollendick, 2002). Although most studies have focused predominantly on bullies and victims, in a recent study we found that about 33% of the students who reported high levels of experience with either bullying or victimization were dually involved in both (Marini et al., 2006). In view of their combined involvement in bullying and victimization, this emerging group is quite likely to experience more, or at least different, psychological or social difficulties than either bullies or victims.

Although available evidence is sparse, bully-victims exhibit a wide range of maladjustment including internalizing problems, peer rejection, a relative lack of close friendships, greater acceptance of deviance, and less optimal temperament characteristics such as hyperactivity and negative emotionality (Craig, 1998; Haynie et al., 2001; Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Henttonen, 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Schwartz, 2000; Xu, Farver, Schwartz & Chang, 2003). Furthermore, their aggression tends to be reactive in nature (Schwartz, 2000). Examining this range of deficits, it seems

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that bully-victims evince a detrimental combination of impairments that are characteristic of both victims and bullies. For example, bully-victims appear to be similar to bullies and unlike typical victims insofar as they exhibit externalizing problems such as hyperactivity and reactive aggression, as well as beliefs supporting antisocial behaviour (Haynie et al., 2001; Pellegrini et al., 1999; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002). Similarly, they demonstrate internalizing problems and peer relational difficulties that are more consistently observed in victims than in bullies (Kumpulainen et al., 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999). Schwartz and his colleagues (see Schwartz, Proctor & Chien, 2001) have suggested that the common risk factor predisposing bully-victims to both bullying and victimization, and which might explain the wide-ranging deficits just described, is difficulty with the regulation of emotions. In other words, these individuals tend to be emotionally reactive, prone, for example, to over-reacting to provocation such as peer teasing with an explosive outburst. Their predisposition to frustration and anger may render them more susceptible to being aggressive, whereas their emotional volatility may alienate peers and set them up as targets of bullying (Marini et al., 2006; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Voeten, & Sinesammal, 2004).

Effective intervention requires recognition of the pervasive, systematic and heterogeneous nature of bullying behaviour, making it important to assess the type of aggression the children in a given school are using. While there are no shortages of bullying questionnaires available, at the very least teachers and school personnel should have a good understanding of their students by making sure they have some answers to the following three general questions, including: 1) what form or type of aggression is used in bullying? (i.e., direct or indirect), 2) what function does the bullying serve? (i.e., reactive or proactive), and 3) what type of involvement does the student experience? (i.e., bully or bully/victim).

### Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Bullying

The school is an ideal place to intervene, as it is the site where peers come together and bullying is most likely to take place. Moreover, Galloway and Roland (2004) stated that bullying interventions need to begin with pedagogy; ideally intervention should be ingrained into everyday learning. In school-based interventions, teachers and other personnel such as youth workers are provided with instructional materials and training to help them become facilitators of some of the key program components (Cross, Hall, Hamilton, Pintabona & Erceg, 2004; Galloway & Roland, 2004; Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton & Flerx, 2004; Pepler, Craig, O'Connell, Atlas & Charach, 2004; Salmivalli et al., 2004). School-based interventions include the following elements: (1) school-wide code of conduct; (2) monitoring of bullying behaviour; (3) classroom curricula including social-skills programs.

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***“Emotional volatility  
may alienate peers and  
set them up as targets of  
bullying...”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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### School-wide Code of Conduct

In the whole school approach to intervention, it has been stressed that there is a need for consistent codes of behaviour across the whole school, rather than having rules that vary across classrooms. School behaviour codes are meant to create an atmosphere in which bullying is clearly regarded as intolerable (Cross et al., 2004; Hanewinkel, 2004; Limber et al., 2004; Stevens, Van Oost & Bourdeaudhuij, 2004). A key feature of this component is that school-wide rules facilitate consistency in behavioural expectations, as well as in the consequences for violations of the code, across administrators, teachers, youth workers, and other school personnel. Such a code increases the likelihood of behavioural change. Under such a system, students are less likely to regard discipline encounters as arbitrary and unfair because of the openness and transparency of the code of conduct. It should also be emphasized that children need positive reinforcement from teachers when they demonstrate desired behaviours in bullying situations (Limber et al., 2004; Hanewinkel, 2004; Stevens et al., 2004).

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***“...children need positive reinforcement from teachers when they demonstrate desired behaviours...”***

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### Monitoring of Bullying Behaviour

In many interventions, teachers are given information that would help them to recognize the many facets of bullying, so that they can then take on the role of intervener on the playground and in the classroom. This aspect of intervention is designed to increase the extent to which incidents of bullying are monitored (Limber et al., 2004; Pepler et al., 2004; Stevens et al., 2004). It dovetails nicely with the school-wide code of conduct, in that teachers or other personnel witnessing bullying on school property could then apply the appropriate consequences, as specified in the code. In addition, the monitoring of bullying at school would also provide teachers with opportunities to reiterate and reinforce concepts and skills taught to students in class-wide social skills lessons, as described below. Salmivalli (1999) also stated that teachers could help by using a structural intervention approach in the classroom. Specifically, when teachers become aware of isolated students or cliques that engage in indirect or direct bullying, they can try to facilitate the formation of new peer groups that include students who would otherwise be excluded, and to prevent harmful antagonism between rival cliques or individuals.

### Classroom Curricula

Teachers can also use program materials to integrate bullying intervention into everyday curriculum. Open dialogue to raise awareness of bully-

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ing is often the first step taken in the classroom (Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000; Limber et al., 2004; Pepler, Craig, O'Connell, Atlas & Charach, 2004; Salmivalli, 1999; Salmivalli et al., 2004; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). Having open discussions about feelings and emotions of the children in each role promotes an enlightened understanding, or empathy, for those involved in bullying episodes (Craig et al., 2000). A second step is to foster self-reflection in regard to what roles children play in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2004; Salmivalli, 1999). Strategies for intervention with the peer group are often geared to a group of children referred to as bystanders, which in turn is comprised of three general subgroups. One subgroup consists of observers, children who play a vital role in supporting a bully by the act of watching and letting it happen (Marini et al., 2004). Some of these children are labelled reinforcers; they support bullies by cheering and encouraging them. In contrast, defenders are those that console victims or stand up to bullies for the victim (Salmivalli, 1999). One of the main goals of school intervention is to lessen the number of observers and reinforcers, and increase the number of children that feel confident enough to intervene or defend. O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) stated that children often have positive intentions to help their peers, yet they hesitate for reasons such as peer pressure, fear and lack of skills. Using role-playing as a venue to practice adaptive strategies can be beneficial for these children because researchers reason that students are more likely to act as a defender in everyday situations if they feel comfortable and capable of doing so (Craig et al., 2000; Salmivalli, 1999). Acting as a defender may involve a range of responses, from urging observers and reinforcers to walk away from the incident, thereby denying the bully attention from an audience, to obtaining the assistance of an adult such as a teacher or playground supervisor. If students feel sufficiently confident and competent, they may try telling the bully to STOP in an assertive tone.

Teachers may also address bullying through the use of a number of available curricula that outline cognitive-behavioural skills that students may use to reduce incidents of bullying in the school (Cross et al., 2004; Marini et al., 2004). With this step, the teacher is placing responsibility on the students to manage conflict situations and to intervene and help peers who may be targeted for bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2004; Craig et al., 2000; O'Connell et al., 1999). An example of a comprehensive program to prevent and reduce bullying is FAST Track (see Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999, 2000). The goals of this program are to reduce aggressive behaviours and to improve the child's relationship with parents, teachers and peers by teaching cognitive-behavioural skills necessary to engage in effective emotion regulation and social problem solving.

Although the FAST-track program is multi-faceted, including home visits and case management for at-risk families, parent management training to enhance the effectiveness of parental discipline, child tutoring in reading, and child friendship enhancement in the classroom (i.e., Peer Pairing), we would like to highlight the cognitive-behavioural skills that may be taught in the classroom to reduce bullying, which in this program were embedded in a classroom-based curriculum called PATHS and in smaller Friendship Groups designed to teach social skills to at-risk students. A major program component is teaching prob-

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***“Some...children are labelled reinforcers; they support bullies by cheering and encouraging them...”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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lem-solving skills, which are designed to address cognitive distortions in social information processing by changing the faulty thinking, which subsequently can lead to changes in behaviours (Kazdin, 2003). Through the use of instruction, practice (i.e., role play) and feedback, students are presented with problem-solving steps, including defining the problem and interpreting the situation, thinking of multiple possible responses, evaluating the positive and negative consequences of each, and deciding what to do. For example, the problem-solving approach can be used to help students decide how to deal with being teased by peers. Teachers may ask students to generate a list of possible responses to this situation, which might include ignoring it and walking away, using a humorous comeback, asking them to stop in an assertive manner, or getting angry and retaliating. By evaluating the positive and negative consequences of each of the above responses, the teacher can demonstrate the overall advantages of the pro-social, constructive and assertive strategies relative to an angry or aggressive reply. While angry retaliation may offer temporary relief from teasing, teachers can show through this problem-solving exercise that the accompanying drawbacks, such as alienating peers and placing themselves at risk for disciplinary action from teachers, outweigh this limited benefit.

An additional strategy called cognitive restructuring is typically used to counter hostile attribution biases, whereby children are taught to consider both sides of the story in a difficult peer situation, to recognize that more benign explanations of a peer's intentions are also plausible. With regard to peer teasing, teachers may illustrate that teasing is not always done maliciously or with intent to cause harm. Alternative interpretations can be suggested, including that the children might be joking, or that the teasing may be focused on something external to the child (e.g., a favourite hockey team, a transitory incident like tripping) rather than being directed at an attribute or property of the child per se, which may reduce anger and other negative emotions that might otherwise be triggered. Self-talk or self-instruction may also be used to enable students to exert self-control in emotionally charged situations (Lochman & Wells, 2004). For example, children may learn to calm down and to stop and use problem-skills, by making statements to themselves such as "calm down, don't lose control." Social skills are also taught within this program, with a view to enhancing children's peer relations, and thereby reducing conflict situations that may lead to bullying and victimization. This component includes instructions and step-by-step practice with friendship-making skills such as using humour effectively, initiating conversations, joining in games and turn taking (see Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999).

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***"A major program component is teaching problem-solving skills..."***

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### **Effectiveness and Limitations in Bullying Interventions**

School-based programs for the prevention and reduction of bullying and victimization have been shown in numerous studies to be effective, particularly in the short-term, in enabling students to learn the program skills, reducing student behavioural difficulties and improving peer relations (Conduct

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Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999; Schneider, 1992; Smith et al., 2004). However, each program has also been found to have important limitations (Smith, J.D., Stewart & Cousins, 2004). Specifically, children participating in these programs are quite successful in learning skills that would facilitate social adjustment; however, they seem to have more difficulty transferring the use of these skills to everyday situations that involve heightened emotions and greater complexity than scenarios practiced in role-plays (Beelman, Pflingsten & Loesel, 1994; Schneider, 1992). Furthermore, evidence of long-term behavioural changes is weaker than that for shorter-term improvements (Schneider, 1992). Thus, to make improvements in these programs, it may be essential to individualize interventions to address the specific needs of students, tailoring the intervention to the various subtypes of bullying or to allowing for cultural considerations.

### Individualizing Interventions

The interventions described above do not seem to allow for heterogeneity in bullying or in the cultural-linguistic make-up of the students. In the following section, we will consider some of the ways in which established interventions for bullying and aggression might be individualized to address the particular needs of individuals involved in different kinds of bullying.

#### ***Individualizing Programs for Indirect Bullying***

Let us begin by considering the implications of the distinction between indirect and direct bullying. One key difference pertains to the form of bullying itself. Indirect bullying is more covert, in the sense that the perpetrator may escape detection and that the damage done to the victim may be less obvious than the physical pain inflicted through direct bullying. It is clear from the literature that victims of indirect bullying suffer internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, and have social difficulties including being rejected by their peers (Crick, 1996; Crick & Dodge, 1994). What is less clear is whether children and teachers are fully aware of just how harmful acts such as social exclusion and the spreading of rumours can be. On some level, such acts of aggression might be dismissed as childish games that have no serious consequences. Therefore, it may be advisable to include a psychoeducational component in school-based programs, whereby children and teachers discuss the damaging effects of indirect bullying, to build empathy for the victims. Similarly, teachers might stress the importance of including all children in social groups or activities, regardless of their popularity or any differences, including cultural-linguistic ones, that might otherwise single them out for victimization. Furthermore, making reference to the roles that children take in bullying situations, teachers might emphasize that supporters and bystanders make indirect bullying possible. For a child to be excluded and ostracized, or be the victim of a rumour, supporters must cooperate with the indirect bully in forming a coalition against an unliked

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***“Self-talk or self-instruction may also be used to enable students to exert self-control ...”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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peer, and bystanders must let it happen without comment. A major goal of this psychoeducational component might be to encourage supporters and bystanders to become defenders of the victimized child, by refusing to exclude him or her from social activities and by actively seeking to include isolated and rejected children in games and group activities that might occur on the playground.

Given the lack of outcome research, it is unclear whether cognitive-behavioral components of bullying prevention programs, which have been used as an effective intervention for direct bullying and aggression, would be equally effective as a means to address indirect bullying. In any case, it seems likely that such programs may need to be modified in view of the differences between direct and indirect bullying. As discussed earlier, indirect bullies seem to possess a higher degree of social competence than direct bullies, showing fewer deficits in social information processing and scoring higher on a peer-rated measure of social intelligence (Kaukiainen et al., 1999; Crick & Dodge, 1994). Several lines of evidence suggest that indirect bullying could be a defensive response to distrust or jealousy in peer relationships, rather than a problem with social skills, and hence, intervention programs may need to be adjusted accordingly. Specifically, indirectly aggressive individuals have demonstrated hostile attribution biases, a preference for exclusive friendships wherein the friends play predominantly with each other, and are more likely than nonaggressive youngsters to be insecurely attached to parents, which is thought to engender insecurity in social relations (Crain et al., 2005; Grottpeter & Crick, 1996; Marini et al., 2006). In line with cognitive restructuring methods whose purpose is to challenge and revise personal stories or narratives that support maladaptive behaviour, including narrative therapy (White, 1991; White & Epston, 1990) and the STORIES program (Telglasi & Rothman, 2001), teachers could challenge the underlying beliefs about self and others that may spark jealousy and insecurity that could in turn give rise to indirect bullying, thereby reducing the motivation for involvement. The gist of this approach is to identify distorted, unreasonable or biased assumptions that students may make to explain difficulties that they may be experiencing, for example, being too hard on themselves, or jumping to unreasonable conclusions about why other students said or did something to them. A teacher may take such opportunities, where feasible, to point out alternative interpretations of the situation, to highlight a more constructive or positive way of thinking, and to underline that the biased thinking previously displayed by the student is unrealistic and potentially harmful.

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***“Teachers might stress the importance of including all children in social groups or activities...”***

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### ***Individualized Interventions for Proactive and Reactive Bullying***

The differential psychological and social profiles of reactive and proactive bullies suggest that individualized interventions may be needed to address the deficits and biases that are most germane to each subtype. For instance, reactively aggressive bullies demonstrate hostile attribution biases to a greater extent than do proactive bullies, and they have been shown to have

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## Individualizing Interventions

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more social difficulties, including a higher level of victimization and peer rejection, and less popularity with peers (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Poulin & Boivin, 2000). To address these specific issues, an individualized program for reactive bullies might give greater emphasis to cognitive restructuring exercises that teach these students to interpret social situations in a more balanced way, recognizing that there are two sides to a story. For example, if a reactively aggressive bully is excluded from a game, she might assume that it is because she is disliked by the peers involved, but she would be taught to consider other plausible interpretations, such as that the maximum number of players for the game were already playing. Self-control strategies such as coping self-talk, relaxation and distraction exercises may also help reactively aggressive bullies to manage their anger in stressful or frustrating circumstances (Lochman & Wells, 2004). To improve peer relations, reactive bullies may also benefit from social skills training, whereby they receive step-by-step practice with friendship-making skills such as how to initiate conversations, join in games, use humour, engage in turn taking and reciprocity (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999).

In contrast, proactively aggressive bullies may need the main emphasis to be on problem solving. Social information processing research has shown that, in comparison to nonaggressive children, they evaluate aggressive solutions to social problems as yielding more positive outcomes (Crick & Dodge, 1996). Therefore, the challenge with proactive bullies may be to convince them that there are better ways to achieve their goals than using aggressive strategies, which they seem to view as effective and useful. To persuade them otherwise, extra time may need to be invested in getting these children to consider both the positive and negative consequences of aggressive and nonaggressive tactics, so that the benefits of nonaggressive approaches are more apparent to them.

In essence, the key task for those working with proactive bullies is to convince them that they can achieve the social and instrumental goals that they desire more effectively through nonaggressive means. For example, it might help to suggest that whereas in the short run they can manipulate other children successfully through the use of force and intimidation, and they may even receive positive feedback and admiration from some people for doing so, in the long term, these benefits will be outweighed by negative consequences such as losing friends, annoying and alienating people, and having numerous stressful and difficult disciplinary encounters with teachers and parents. Nonaggressive strategies, such as negotiation and assertiveness, would enable them to achieve the same short-term outcomes without the long-term drawbacks. In contrast, reactive bullies may be easily persuaded that their behaviour is problematic, and may be open to trying other alternatives, but they may need additional assistance controlling emotional, impulsive outbursts of aggression in the midst of a stressful social interaction.

### **Individualized Intervention for Bully-Victims**

Students who participate in bullying and also experience victimization may also require an intervention that is tailored to their particular needs. As discussed

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***“Indirect bullying could be a defensive response to distrust or jealousy in peer relationships.”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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in detail above, bully-victims differ from bullies in having particular difficulties with emotion regulation and having greater internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression (Marini et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2001). To address these unique issues, it may be advisable to provide interventions that give particular emphasis to self-control skills and to supplement cognitive-behavioural components targeting aggression and bullying with those that have been used to deal with anxiety and depression.

The Coping Power program designed by John Lochman and colleagues (Lochman & Wells, 2004) is a cognitive-behavioural program targeting aggression and bullying, which includes components that explicitly address the issue of emotion regulation. Specifically, children are taught to use coping self-statements (e.g., OK, cool down, don't lose control) to reduce anger that might arise during a provocative peer interaction, such as being teased. Coping self-statements might also be used to remind the child to stop and think rather than acting impulsively in response to a social problem, perhaps cueing the child to use problem-solving skills to identify an adaptive solution. In addition, distraction and relaxation techniques are used to reduce angry arousal. Given their susceptibility to emotional dysregulation and reactive aggression, bully-victims may need extra practice with these components.

Cognitive-behavioural programs for anxiety and depression in children and adolescents have similar components to those for aggressive children, and it would therefore seem feasible to incorporate elements of these programs into cognitive-behavioural approaches used to address bullying per se. For example, Kendall and colleagues (Kendall, Aschenbrand & Hudson, 2003) have developed a program whereby anxious children are taught to recognize thoughts that contribute to anxiety, to challenge them, and ultimately to replace them with more adaptive and more realistic thoughts that reduce anxiety levels. To give a concrete example, a student may learn to recognize that his anxiety levels rise when he assumes that all of his classmates would "think he is stupid" if he were to give an incorrect answer in class. Instead, he may be encouraged to take a more realistic view, recognizing that everyone makes mistakes, and that when other people make mistakes, he does not usually think badly of them. To reinforce this perspective, the student might use some encouraging self-talk, such as "It's OK to make mistakes; it's how we learn." For programs targeting bully-victims, this cognitive restructuring exercise might be a useful supplement to those typically used to address cognitive distortions relating to hostile attribution biases (e.g., Lochman & Wells, 2004).

Bully-victims are also more likely than pure bullies or comparison children to face problems with depression (Craig, 1998; Marini et al., 2006). Consequently, it may be necessary to combine cognitive-behavioural components that target depression with those typically used in the treatment of aggression. There are a number of effective cognitive-behavioural programs for the treatment of depression in children and adolescents (Weisz et al., 2003; Clarke, DeBar & Lewinsohn, 2003). Consistent with the approaches that target aggression, these programs include problem-solving components used to identify adaptive strategies for dealing with stress (see description of problem-solving

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***“Nonaggressive strategies, such as negotiation and assertiveness, would enable them to achieve...short-term outcomes without the long-term drawbacks.”***

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## Individualizing Interventions

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steps in section entitled “Classroom Curricula”), and cognitive restructuring exercises designed to identify, challenge and replace negative thoughts that exacerbate depression (as described above in regard to anxiety).

Decreasing levels of depression and anxiety around peer victimization would be beneficial in itself for bully-victims, but it may have the added benefit of reducing factors that create situations in which aggressive confrontations are likely to arise. For one thing, to the extent that it improves peer relations, it may reduce the potential for conflicts leading to aggression. In addition, aggression is more likely to take place when an individual is in a negative mood (Berkowitz, 1993), so a reduction of anxiety and depression may reduce the tendency for bully-victims to engage in explosive, emotional and reactive aggression (Salmivalli et al., 2004).

### ***Individualizing Interventions to address Cultural Diversity***

The cognitive-behavioural components of bullying prevention programs might easily be adapted to address the specific issues that might make ESL students vulnerable to experiencing bullying and victimization. For instance, problem-solving exercises could be used by teachers to facilitate student thinking about cultural-linguistic issues that may commonly give rise to bullying or victimization.

Specifically, the first step in problem-solving is to identify and define the problem (e.g., Kazdin, 2003), which may allow students and teachers to discuss common triggers of student conflicts, especially as they relate to insensitivity to cultural diversity.

Cognitive restructuring exercises might also be adapted to enhance perspective taking. Teachers may use this approach to challenge cultural biases that their students may show, by pointing to exceptions and inconsistencies that do not fit with a student’s biases or distorted assumptions about another culture or ethnicity. Social skills that facilitate friendship-making could also be adapted by ESL teachers to accommodate variations in social practices across cultural groups.

For example, social skills relating to joining a group activity might be taught to address cultural differences in shyness and assertiveness, and similarly, cultural variations in emotional expression could be dealt with in a social skills lesson on how to deal effectively with peer teasing.

## Conclusions

Research clearly indicates that bullying and victimization are major social and educational concerns that threaten the well-being of students and undermine the educational initiatives of teachers by diverting time and resources

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***“It’s OK to make mistakes; it’s how we learn.”***

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## Individualizing Interventions (cont'd)

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from educational to behavioural issues. The purpose of this paper was to highlight the fact that there are important variations in the way that bullying may be manifested in schools and classrooms and to indicate crucial differences in the functioning and psychosocial adjustment of these students. We have made several suggestions regarding the potential benefits of adapting existing, well-established programs for preventing bullying, to address variations in the subtypes of bullying that ESL teachers may witness in the school, and to ensure that these attempts to intervene are sensitive to cultural diversity. ❖

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices For Classrooms And Schools

By David Smith

### Abstract

Bullying is a serious problem in many schools in Canada, and teachers and school administrators are eager to find effective solutions to reduce bullying and victimization in their schools. Although prevention programs that involve the whole school are widely implemented in schools across Canada to address bullying, there is only limited evidence that they are effective in reducing bullying. It is argued in this paper that school climate, and specifically the kind of relationships among all members of the school community, is an important variable affecting the outcomes of anti-bullying programs. It is suggested that a climate founded on principles of restorative justice offers a potentially effective means of reducing bullying and fostering the healthy development of children. ■

School bullying is an all too common social problem that defies simple solutions. Bullying is a subtype of aggressive behaviour that is repeated over time and in which the perpetrator exerts power over a weaker victim through various means, including physical strength, age, or psychological advantages (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003). In a recent large-scale international study, Canada placed in the top quarter among 36 participating countries for rates of bullying and in the top third for victimization rates (Craig & Pepler, 2003). This study revealed that approximately 54% of Canadian boys and 32% of Canadian girls bullied others in the six weeks prior to data collection, and 34% of boys and 27% of girls were victimized in the same interval.

Research evidence indicates clearly that bullying and victimization are associated with pronounced social, psychological, and academic problems in children (Rigby, 2003). Many victimized children suffer anxiety, depression, diminished self-esteem, and social withdrawal (Nansel et al., 2001). Children who bully are at high risk of future antisocial behaviour and delinquency, such as dating violence (Connolly, Pepler, Craig, & Taradash, 2000). A subgroup of victims that reacts aggressively to abuse ("aggressive victims") displays both the antisocial behaviour of bullies as well as the social and emotional difficulties of victims (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001). Children in this group are at high risk for severe, violent, even deadly, reactions to chronic bullying (Anderson et al., 2001).

While earlier conceptualizations of bullying focused on the differentiating characteristics of bullies and victims, scholars now view bullying in systemic terms and describe it as primarily a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions (Canadian Initiative for the Prevention of Bullying, n.d.). An upshot of this way of conceptualizing bullying is that it, like other important relationships in people's lives, exists not only in the discrete moments when it is occurring, but also between bullying episodes inside the minds of the different people involved. This explains, in part, the noxious effects of bullying on children, even when the bullying occurs infrequently, and why the effects often endure into people's adult lives. This paper will explore the relational sys-

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***"Canada placed in the top quarter among 36 participating countries for rates of bullying."***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

(Continued from page 42)

tem of the school—which I call the “school climate”—and its potential for reducing bullying and creating a positive social environment that fosters the academic and personal growth of students.

The roles that different individuals play within bullying relationships consolidate over time such that the children who bully have increasing power over victimized children. This systemic view of the problem is illustrated by the “bullying circle” developed by pioneering Norwegian researcher, Dan Olweus (1993). At the centre of this circle is the victimized student and arrayed around the perimeter are different people who, whether they realize it or not, all play roles in bullying. They range from the children who attack and disempower the victims; the children who actively aid the bullies or encourage them in their attacks; the onlookers who quietly watch the bullying incident occur or leave quickly so they won’t be implicated; and the defenders who act in ways to stop the bullying, for example, by telling a teacher or stepping in to protect the victim. To the misfortune of victimized children, it appears that the role of defender is rarely adopted. In fact, research indicates that the actions of peers in the vicinity of bullying incidents typically support the bullying behaviour rather than curb it (Salmivalli, 1999; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Peers’ encouragement of bullying, even passive attention, reinforces children who perpetrate the aggression, making it more likely to occur in the future (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000).

Within the relational system of a classroom or the larger school, teachers can be instrumental in solving and preventing serious bullying problems. There are good reasons to believe that student-teacher relationships have an important influence on the development of bullying. For example, research indicates that children involved in bullying often have poor relationships with their teachers, including little or no mutual warmth, caring, or positive feelings generally (Hanish, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Fabes, Martin, & Denning, 2004). On the other hand, strong, positive attachments between children and teachers constitute a protective factor that can reduce the risk of serious aggression problems and foster at the same time social and academic success.

Schools have implemented a variety of measures in recent years to deal with bullying, and in some jurisdictions anti-bullying measures are mandated by law (e.g., all public schools in Ontario must have an anti-bullying program in place by September 2006). One common approach to dealing with bullying problems is what is called a “whole-school” approach, which refers to a class of programs that share the core features of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1993). This was the first comprehensive whole-school intervention implemented on a large scale and systematically evaluated. In its essential form, a whole-school intervention includes the following key components: a clear, consistent policy involving non-physical consequences for bullying; information on bullying and victimization for all members of the school community; curricular activities designed to instill anti-bullying attitudes in all children and assist them in developing pro-social conflict resolution skills; and, finally, interventions for individuals directly involved in or affected by bullying.

Whole-school programs are widely implemented in schools in North America and in Europe, but relatively little is known about how effective they are

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***“In some jurisdictions  
anti-bullying measures  
are mandated by law .”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

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across the wide variety of school contexts. There are reasons to believe that the whole-school approach represents a viable solution to bullying problems, particularly considering that it is based on a systemic understanding of the problem and involves the entire school community. In a recent investigation, Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou (2004) quantitatively synthesized the outcomes of whole-school anti-bullying programs. Studies included in this synthesis had to (a) pertain to a systematic evaluation of a whole-school anti-bullying intervention, (b) provide quantitative outcome data on victimization and/or bullying, and (c) have been conducted in more than one classroom. Studies were located by conducting keyword-searches of electronic databases, and by requesting copies of relevant documents directly from researchers involved in anti-bullying research. The search for studies ended in December 2002 when 14 evaluation studies had been identified that met the inclusion criteria.

Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou's (2004) analyses focused on two key program outcomes: self-reported victimization and self-reported bullying. All percents and scale scores from the original studies were transformed to Z-scores and then to effect sizes expressed as r-values ( $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$ ). Two primary classes of effects were explored in the analyses. The first class of effects comprised programs in the sample without control conditions. These data reflect the change on outcome measures from pre-test to post-test for groups that received the intervention. In the case of studies reporting data for multiple intervention conditions, an average intervention effect was calculated. The second class of effects comprised the programs that included a control condition (i.e., no anti-bullying program). This permitted a comparison of changes on outcome measures between the intervention and control groups from pre-test to post-test. Seven studies in this review had a control condition, and by conventional scientific standards they permit the more rigorous test of an anti-bullying program.

Using a rubric originally developed by Cohen (1988), Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou (2004) classified program outcomes into one of the following categories: large, medium, small, negligible, and negative. As Table 1 shows, victimization and bullying outcomes in uncontrolled studies fell almost exclusively into the categories of negligible and negative. Only one study (7%) yielded an outcome that was categorized as medium, and none was categorized as large. Program outcomes in studies that included a control condition were very similar: 86% of victimization outcomes and 100% of bullying outcomes fell within the negligible or negative categories. Based on these findings, Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou (2004) concluded that there is currently only limited empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of whole-school anti-bullying programs. Given the small number of studies included in this research synthesis, these findings must be treated as preliminary and the conclusion as tentative until future evaluation studies of high rigour provide confirmation.

Despite this pattern of findings in the research literature, credible accounts of successful anti-bullying initiatives abound. These contradictory ob-

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***“There are reasons to believe that the whole-school approach represents a viable solution to bullying problems...”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

Program	Outcome	Large	Medium	Small	Negligible	Negative
			.30 - .49	.10 - .29	.00 - .09	< .00
Without control conditions	Victimization	0	7	80	0	13
	Bullying	0	0	8	77	15
With control conditions	Victimization	0	0	14	57	29
	Bullying	0	0	0	67	33

**Table 1: Summary of Program Effect Sizes.**  
**Note: Figures indicate percentage of studies achieving respective levels of r.**

(Continued from page 44)

servations raise questions about how anti-bullying initiatives in some schools can succeed while in others they have little or no positive impact. Researchers are increasingly considering the role that school climate may play in the success or failure of programs. In technical terms, school climate may function as a moderating variable, such that program success varies as a function of the type of climate within which the anti-bullying initiatives are offered. I propose that a school climate founded on the principles of restorative justice is the type of climate in which anti-bullying programs will tend to succeed. In contrast, I speculate that the more traditional and still common punitive climate, which privileges punishment as a disciplinary policy, is not conducive to effectively resolving bullying problems. For the purposes of this discussion, school climate (also called school ethos) refers to the normative beliefs, values, and ideals that characterize a particular school community. The climate is manifested primarily in the relationships among people in the community and in what and how they communicate among themselves. While there may be other types of school climates, I will focus on two of these key types that seem relevant to modern schools. These climates are depicted here in their pure forms for illustrative purposes. In practice, they rarely exist in pure form but rather in varying degrees. For the purposes of my argument, schools exhibiting primarily punitive principles will be characterized as having a punitive climate, and schools exhibiting primarily restorative principles will be characterized as having a restorative climate.

As Figure 1 illustrates, a punitive climate is typified by high social control and low social support to community members. It is based on the presumption that people are motivated primarily to maximize pleasure and minimize pain and discomfort (i.e., hedonism) and that behaviour can be effectively regulated with rewards and punishment. It is individualistic and moralistic in its orientation and presumes that people are free to choose between right and wrong. The net effect is that social problems, such as bullying, are situated within individuals. This means that when things go wrong, someone must be blamed and corrective action in the form of punishment must follow. Typically, punishments isolate

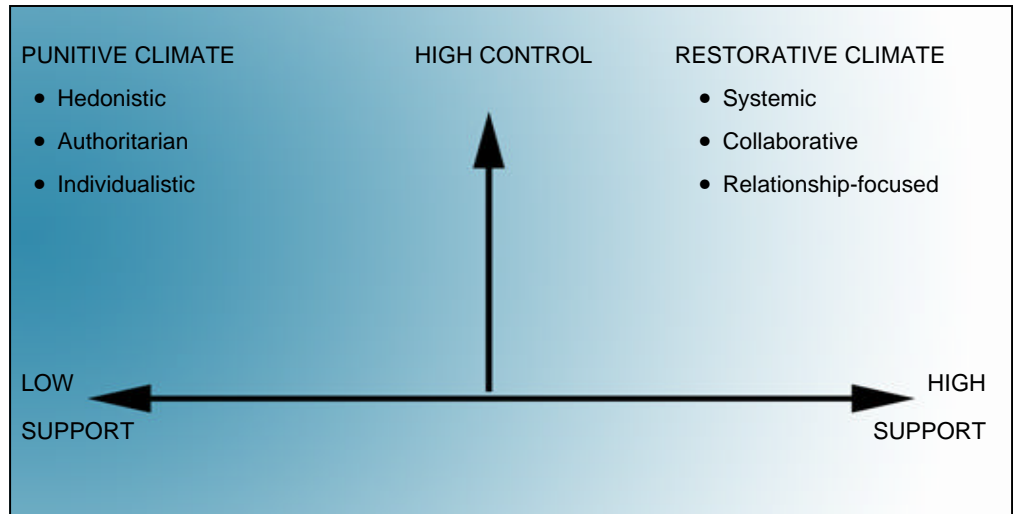
(Continued on page 46)

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***“In schools, adult authorities are in charge and make the rules...”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)



**Figure 1. Two Approaches to School Discipline  
(Adapted from Wachtel and McCold (2001))**

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**“The net effect is that social problems, such as bullying, are situated within individuals...”**

wrongdoers, normally through suspensions or expulsions. There is minimal consideration for causes of the bullying, beyond the moral failing of the child. The emphasis is on adherence to rules of conduct and restoration of order and little attention is given to the experiences of victims. This highlights another principle operative in punitive climates, which is authoritarianism. In schools, adult authorities are in charge and make the rules, and it is the children’s role to obey them. This inevitably creates a community built and regulated primarily on fear. Disciplinary policies arising from a punitive climate are often referred to as “zero-tolerance” policies. The Ontario Safe Schools Act, which came into force in 2001, is an example of this type of policy.

The restorative climate, although differing in many fundamental ways from a punitive climate, actually shares one important purpose, which is social regulation. It is recognized within this climate that communities must be orderly and individual rights respected, and therefore, social control is high, as is illustrated in Figure 1. However, this is best achieved by increasing support to wrongdoers rather than punishing and isolating them. This may take the form of problem-solving conversations between a teacher and students involved in a bullying incident. These discussions normally highlight the strengths wrongdoers bring to the resolution process and any recent successes that reveal their potential to be peaceful members of the community. Furthermore, notwithstanding the roles of individuals in the wrongdoing, there is a wider social context that must be considered. This systemic outlook on social problems permits a broader consideration of reasons for the misbehaviour with the intent of understanding, not blaming. Fundamentally, misbehaviour is seen as a violation of relationships, not rules. By implication, the focus within a restorative approach is on how people have been hurt, including the victim,

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

(Continued from page 46)

the wrongdoer, and members of their communities and families. This extended group of affected individuals could include, for example, a friend who is worried about the victim's well-being, a teacher who is angry about having a vulnerable child in her care injured, and a parent who is discouraged about another setback for her child at school. Ultimately, wrongdoers are accountable for their misbehaviour and are expected to make amends to repair damaged relationships. Because solutions to social problems like bullying are derived collaboratively, members of the larger community (i.e., classroom or school) are involved in developing rules and codes of conduct that specify appropriate and meaningful consequences for misbehaviour.

Although restorative justice as an alternative to retributive justice has gained a foothold in the Canadian judicial system, as well as in other western countries, its introduction into schools is relatively new and its practices less well developed (Drewery, 2004). Early indications in the research literature, though, suggest that restorative practices in school settings are a promising approach to dealing with bullying and other forms of school violence. Morrison (2003) reported that a school-wide conflict resolution program built on restorative principles had a number of positive outcomes. At the end of the program, students displayed more adaptive ways of dealing with conflict and more respect and consideration for members of their school community, and they participated at higher rates in the activities of the community. McCold (2003) reported outcomes of an educational program for delinquent and at-risk youth based on principles of restorative justice. The data revealed that the youth participants showed higher self-esteem and social values at the end of the program. Additionally, there was a significantly lower rate of re-offending among participating youth in the six months following completion of the program. These are encouraging preliminary results, but clearly more research on restorative practices in schools is required.

A restorative school climate converges with the larger goals of moral education initiatives to which many schools are committed. Moral education (alternately labelled character or values education) is defined as strategic teaching of values and principles that are fundamental to our liberal democratic society (Davis, 2003). The list of values includes fairness, tolerance, honesty, respect, and responsibility, among others. Shaaban (2005) argues that the ESL classroom is an ideal environment for moral education. She argues that the pedagogical strategies used in these classrooms are excellent vehicles for promulgating these values that are widely embraced by ESL teachers and scholars. The cultural diversity in the ESL classes may cause some teachers to be uneasy about promoting certain moral principles (e.g., restorative practices) over others. However, critics of the moral education movement (e.g., Davis, 2003; Glanzer, 2003) have argued that programs must be comprehensive and nurture a specific and coherent set of principles, not simply the principles of students' choosing.

Restorative justice has been a central system of justice in most ancient societies. It has been revived in modern societies, driven in large part by work by the people in First Nations communities in modern western countries (Adams, 2004). There are specific practices within this approach, such as circles and conferencing, which are beyond the scope of this paper. (For a description of restora-

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***“What did Ben say to you during recess? What did you do or say after he said that to you?”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

*(Continued from page 47)*

tive conferencing used in schools, see Drewery, 2004.) However, as climate is manifested in the relationships in the school community, there are ways to use restorative principles in the daily life of the school community when teachers are faced with student misbehaviour and have the task of restoring peace in the classroom. The questions below are intended to guide teachers when they converse with students involved in a bullying incident. How the teacher might use these questions is illustrated in the example below of Ben, a grade 4 boy, who has been accused of repeatedly taunting and threatening a classmate, Julia, while playing during recess.

### 1. What has happened?

The teacher would ask those involved what happened, fleshing out the details of the events and seeking clarification when necessary with each of the students. She might say, “Based on what you’ve told me so far, I understand that Ben, you were sitting on the bench, and you overheard Julia and Karen talking about your friend Mike, and what they were saying upset you. What exactly did you hear them say?” To Julia, she might ask, “What did Ben say to you during recess? What did you do or say after he said that to you?” Subsequently, she could ask Ben if this converges with his recollections by asking, “Is this the way you remember things happening, Ben?” It is likely that their accounts of events will differ, and the teacher should not take the divergences as proof that someone is lying. Differing perspectives lead people, children and adults alike, to experience the same events in different ways. When all accounts have been offered, the teacher can negotiate with the children a reasonable account of the events. It is critical that the teacher listen with curiosity to all sides of the story and work hard to understand what the students are telling her.

### 2. What were you thinking and feeling when this occurred?

This question is useful in exploring the context in which the misbehaviour occurred. The teacher in our example could ask Julia what it felt like to hear Ben’s taunts and threats: “How did what Ben said affect you? You looked upset when you came in after recess. What were you feeling then?” While we are often (and correctly) compelled to focus on the wrongdoer’s behaviour and the victim’s feelings in response, it is important in the service of understanding the broader context of the bullying incident that the wrongdoer’s feelings and the victim’s behaviour are also explored. The teacher might ask Ben, “When you heard Julia say that about Mike, how did you feel on the inside when you heard that?” This also creates opportunities for promoting personal accountability and responsibility, so that children learn that others do not “make them do it.” This line of dialogue, if followed through to its conclusion, will also illuminate more appropriate ways for children to express the feelings

*(Continued on page 49)*

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***“Restorative justice has been a central system of justice in most ancient societies.”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

(Continued from page 48)

that give rise to aggressive behaviour.

### 3. Who has been affected and how has it affected them?

This question encourages teachers to consider the impacts of the misbehaviour on members of the wider classroom or school community. There are direct effects of bullying that are relatively easy to observe, if one looks closely enough. A discussion with the victim(s) is usually sufficient to uncover these direct effects. In our example, the teacher could ask Julia how she is feeling now and whether or not she is scared about the things Ben said to her earlier. There may also be indirect effects of bullying on children who were only peripherally involved in the episode: Other children may become more uncomfortable in the classroom with the aggressor present such that it disturbs their work and relationships within the class. These effects are usually less obvious and only emerge with additional probing. Inquires with Julia's friend Karen, who witnessed the harassment, might reveal such effects. A complete understanding of these impacts is essential for deciding the most effective ways by which a wrongdoer may make amends. Additionally, by exploring these effects, the teacher helps aggressors learn the true impacts of their aggression.

### 4. How can the misbehaviour be rectified?

One of the key elements of restorative justice is the necessity to set right the wrongs that have been committed. This is a critical step to restoring relationships and re-integrating the wrongdoer into the community. This necessarily requires input from those hurt by the misdeeds. There are any number of ways for amends to be made, and the key consideration is that the wrongdoer and victims all feel that sanctions encourage healing. The teacher has an important role in determining appropriate sanctions in consultation with the involved children. In our example, the teacher might suggest that Ben write a letter of apology to Julia, and then ask Julia if she would accept this gesture of peace making from Ben. The teacher would then supervise Ben so that he writes a letter in which he appropriately explains why he acted as he did, takes responsibility for his behaviour, and apologizes for the hurt he caused Julia.

An additional benefit of the restorative approach to dealing with bullying illustrated in the example above is that it can engender increased empathy in children who bully others. Empathy is a shared emotional response that reflects an individual's emotional and cognitive understanding of another person's distress (Feshbach, 1997, p. 35). A substantial volume of research indicates that, in general, empathy is positively related to pro-social behaviour, like comforting or helping others, and negatively related to aggression. Preliminary research suggests that bullying may be similarly remedied through empathy training (Espelage, Mebane, & Adams, 2004), and restorative practices like those described here represent one possible route to achieving this goal.

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***“By exploring these effects, the teacher helps aggressors learn the true impacts of their aggression.”***

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## Solutions for Bullying: Restorative Practices (cont'd)

(Continued from page 49)

In summary, restorative justice is a set of principles and practices that promotes healing, moral learning, community caring, and personal responsibility. It is proposed that by implementing these ancient principles of justice, teachers can cultivate empathy and positive relationships and contribute to the development of a school climate in which children flourish and thrive. As an alternative to schools that privilege punitive principles and methods, a school climate founded on restorative principles offers valuable lessons to children involved in bullying about how to be responsible citizens. As conflict, and even wrongdoing, is universal in human communities, teachers should not be frustrated when they appear in their classrooms but should see these events as rich opportunities for learning about better ways for people to live in peace. ❖

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## A Language For Learning: Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom<sup>1</sup>

By Jim Cummins, Sarah Cohen, Lisa Leoni, Madiha Bajwa, Sulmana Hanif, Kanta Khalid, Tomer Shahar

### Abstract

Home languages other than English or French are typically viewed in Canadian schools as largely irrelevant to students' educational progress. It is assumed that because the teacher does not speak the multiple languages that may be represented in his or her classroom, there are no instructional options other than use of English (or French) as the exclusive language of instruction.

This normalized assumption is challenged in the present paper. We document ways in which students' home languages can be incorporated into classroom instruction. Furthermore, we document teacher and student perceptions regarding how these instructional practices affirmed students' academic confidence and sense of self and also enabled them to use their prior knowledge, encoded in their home languages, as a foundation for learning English and academic content.

We<sup>1</sup> argue on the basis of these findings that teaching for transfer from the home language to English represents an important instructional strategy for promoting educational success among students who are learning English (or French) as an additional language. ■

### Introduction

We describe in this paper an action-research collaboration between a classroom teacher (Lisa Leoni), university-based researchers (Sarah Cohen and Jim Cummins) and four students (Madiha Bajwa, Sulmana Hanif, Kanta Khalid, and Tomer Shahar). The collaboration focused on the incorporation of students' home languages (L1) into classroom instruction with the goal of enabling students to access the curriculum and use their full repertoire of cognitive tools for

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***“Teaching for transfer from the home language to English represents an important instructional strategy ...”***

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1. Jim Cummins is a faculty member in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), Sarah Cohen is a doctoral candidate at OISE/UT, Lisa Leoni teaches in the York Region District School Board (YRDSB), and Madiha Bajwa, Sulmana Hanif, Kanta Khalid, and Tomer Shahar are all students in the YRDSB.

The research reported in this paper was carried out with funding (2002-2006) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Principal investigator, M. Early, *From Literacy to Multiliteracies: Designing Learning Environments for Knowledge Generation within the New Economy*).

2. We use the term “English-as-a second-language” (ESL) to refer to programs or teachers whose primary purpose is to provide support to students who are in the process of learning the English language. The term is problematic because for many of these students, English may be a third or fourth language. However, we retain its use here because it is the “official” term used in government and school board policies and support documents. We refer to students who are in the process of learning English as “English language learners” (ELL).

## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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academic learning. Three of the students (Madiha, Sulmana, and Kanta) were in Lisa's grade 7/8 classroom during the 2003/2004 academic year. The following year, Madiha and Tomer were members of Lisa's ESL class.<sup>2</sup>

The collaboration came about in the context of a Canada-wide project entitled *From Literacy to Multiliteracies: Designing Learning Environments for Knowledge Generation Within the New Economy* (Early, Cummins, & Willinsky, 2002). In collaboration with teachers and school administrators, the project has carried out a variety of case studies of classrooms contexts in which teachers have implemented approaches to literacy instruction that go beyond simply teaching English (or French) reading and writing. The focus on expanded notions of literacy is motivated by rapidly changing economic and social realities brought on by the phenomena of globalization and rapid technological expansion. Globalization expresses itself locally in the form of dramatically increased linguistic diversity in schools. With immigration levels projected to rise by more than one-third in the coming years (from approximately 220,000 per annum to more than 320,000 per annum), linguistic diversity is becoming the norm in urban school systems across Canada. Thus, "literacy" is not synonymous with English (or French) literacy. Outside of school, students and communities are engaged with multiple forms of literacies involving different languages.<sup>3</sup>

Within Canadian schools there has been little sustained policy discussion with respect to the pedagogical implications of linguistic diversity. The topic is largely absent from principals' courses and from pre-service teacher education courses. Prominent books on school leadership and the management of educational change (e.g. Fullan, 2001) say nothing about the issue. In short, home languages other than English or French are viewed as largely irrelevant to children's schooling. At best, they are treated with benign neglect and ignored; at worst, educators consider them an obstacle to the acquisition of English or

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***"Within Canadian schools there has been little sustained policy discussion with respect to the pedagogical implications of linguistic diversity."***

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3. Policy-makers have begun to incorporate the term *multiliteracies* into curriculum guides as illustrated in the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2006) *Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6* in which the concept is explained as follows:

The term *multiliteracies* is used in this guide to describe the increasingly diverse ways in which ideas and information can be expressed and understood—using conventional and innovative text forms, symbols, and media. Students need to become proficient at understanding and using a wide range of text forms, media, and symbol systems in order to maximize their learning potential, keep pace with changing technologies, and actively participate in the global community. Building on their first language, students develop skills in critical literacy, visual literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, cross-curricular literacies (involving music, mathematics, science, visual arts, and other subjects), and literacy in other languages. (p. 3)

## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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French and discourage their use in school and at home.

The absence of serious policy consideration at all levels of the educational system has resulted in the “normalization” of certain assumptions and practices in Canadian schools:

- Provision of instructional support for English language learners (ELL) is the job of the ESL teacher;
- “Literacy” refers only to English (or French) literacy;
- The cultural knowledge and home language proficiency that ELL students bring to school have little instructional relevance;
- Culturally and linguistically diverse parents, whose English may be quite limited, do not have the language skills to contribute to their children’s literacy development.

It is important to re-visit these assumptions, which we view as highly problematic, in view of the emerging research findings that many ELL students experience academic difficulties in Canadian schools. For example, a multi-year longitudinal study in a Calgary high school reported an overall dropout rate for ELL students of 74 percent (Roessingh, 2001; Watt & Roessingh, 1994). For those who entered Grade 9 with minimal English, the dropout rate was more than 90 percent. In Ontario, a recent report by the advocacy group People for Education (2006) has highlighted the consequences of the policy vacuum in relation to ELL students:

ESL students tend to lag behind native language speakers in their learning of curriculum, because they are forced to put that learning on hold while they acquire the language skills to deal with the curriculum.

Results from the EQAO [Education Quality and Accountability Office] standardised tests of students in Grades 3 and 6, show that ESL students achieve standards well below their non-ESL counterparts. And last year, only 50% of ESL students passed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, compared to 82% of the general population.

In the higher grades the pressure on students is even greater. They require even more sophisticated language skills to cope with more complex concepts and texts. For many newcomer students, success at school is an academic long shot. (p. 4)

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***“It usually takes only about 1-2 years for students to become reasonably fluent in conversational English.”***

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The assumption that only ESL teachers are responsible for ESL support is

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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clearly problematic in view of (a) the timelines required for ELL students to catch up academically, and (b) the fact that even beginning ELL students are likely to spend only one or two periods per day with the ESL teacher while the rest of the time is spent in the mainstream classroom.

With respect to timelines, a number of research studies have shown that very different time periods are required for ELL students to catch up to their peers in different dimensions of English proficiency. Specifically, it usually takes only about 1-2 years for students to become reasonably fluent in conversational English. About two years is also typically required for many students in the early grades to acquire basic decoding skills in English to a level similar to that of their English-speaking classmates (e.g. Geva, 2000; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). However, ELL students typically require *at least 5 years* to catch up to native English speakers in academic English (Cummins, 1981; Klesmer, 1994; Worswick, 2001). Thus the fact that 50 percent of ELL students fail the grade 10 literacy test in Ontario is not surprising in view of the time periods typically required for ELL students to catch up academically. However, the findings do raise the question of how many of these students will actually complete high school graduation requirements as opposed to dropping out of high school.

With respect to provision of instructional support for ELL students, during the past 20 years ESL educators have developed an array of instructional strategies to support students in acquiring both conversational and academic English (Coelho, 2003). However, ELL students typically receive most of their instruction in regular classroom contexts from teachers who have received no specific training or qualifications in strategies for supporting ELL students. In view of changing linguistic and cultural realities, it is no longer sufficient to be an excellent science or math teacher in a vacuum; excellence must be judged by how well a teacher is able to teach academic content to the students who are in his or her classroom, many of whom are likely to have limitations in their command of academic English. This reality also has implications for school principals. To what extent is a school principal qualified to evaluate the adequacy of teachers' instruction when he or she may also lack specific knowledge and qualifications regarding appropriate instructional strategies for enabling ELL students to gain access to the curriculum and expand their English academic abilities?

On the basis of our action research collaboration, we focus in this paper on how schools can build on students' multilingual competencies within both the "mainstream" and ESL classrooms. We propose a set of assumptions or "claims" that directly challenge the normalized assumptions outlined above:

- ELL students' cultural knowledge and language abilities are important resources in enabling academic engagement within both the ESL classroom and content area instruction;
- ELL students will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse parents (and grandparents) represent a significant source of support for students' literacy development in

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***“Excellence must be judged by how well a teacher is able to teach academic content to the students who are in his or her classroom...”***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 55)

both English and the home language when literacy instructional practices in the school encourage home-school collaboration.

### The Action-Research Collaboration

The Multiliteracies project (Early et al., 2002) involved collaborations with several schools primarily in Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The major school boards involved in the project (the Vancouver School Board and the York Region District School Board) were full partners in developing the research proposal (senior administrators in each board helped write the proposal and are co-investigators of the project). The focus of this paper is on a collaboration that took place in one K-8 public school in the GTA. Within the broad range of instructional approaches theoretically encompassed by the term *multiliteracies*, individual teachers who volunteered to participate adopted a variety of instructional interventions ranging from Internet-mediated sister-class projects (Ng, Lin, & Wu, 2005), use of MSN-chat for instructional purposes (Chen & Morin, 2005), to the incorporation of students' L1 into classroom instructional activities. (see [www.multiliteracies.ca](http://www.multiliteracies.ca) for descriptions of these projects). The present paper focuses on this latter intervention. The feasibility of incorporating students' L1 into the instructional process had been demonstrated by educators in Thornwood Public School in the Peel Board of Education (Cummins, Chow, & Schecter, 2006; Schecter & Cummins, 2003). A large number of student-created dual language books can be viewed and downloaded at <http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual> (Thornwood Public School, no date).

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***“When students share identity texts with multiple audiences... they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self.”***

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We have used the term *identity texts* to describe the products of students' creative written or artistic work. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. Although not always an essential component, technology acts as an amplifier to enhance the process of identity investment and affirmation. It facilitates the production of these texts, makes them look more accomplished, and expands the audiences and potential for affirmative feedback.

The study took place over the course of a year and a half during which time the school-based researcher (Lisa Leoni) and the university-based researcher (Sarah Cohen) were in close contact and the university researcher made weekly visits to the school. When the study began, Lisa was teaching a mainstream grade 7 class in a highly diverse K-8 school in the YRDSB. However, in the second year of the study, Lisa became one of the two ESL teachers at the school. She taught students in grades 3 and 4 in the morning, and in the afternoon she taught students in grades 5 through 8.

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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Work samples were collected from students in her grades 5 through grade 8 ESL classes as well as from students in her grade 7 class which she had taught in the previous year.

Sarah Cohen, a doctoral student at the University of Toronto, collaborated with Lisa in the implementation and documentation of the project. The information that Sarah gathered included classroom observations during which field notes were taken, audio and video recording of classes and semi-structured interviews with Lisa and her students. Lisa was responsible for implementing the dual language practices that were the focus of the study, for collecting samples of student work and for distributing questionnaires about language use.

### L1 Incorporation: Themes and Perspectives

Shortly after her arrival in Canada, Madiha Bajwa, a student in Lisa's grade 7 class, authored with two of her friends, Kanta Khalid and Sulmana Hanif, a bilingual Urdu-English book entitled *The New Country*. The 20-page book, illustrated with the help of a classmate, Jennifer Du, "describes how hard it was to leave our country and come to a new country." Both Kanta and Sulmana had arrived in Toronto in Grade 4 and were reasonably fluent in English but Madiha was in the very early stages of acquisition.

The three girls collaborated in writing *The New Country* in the context of a unit on the theme of migration that integrated social studies, language, and ESL curriculum expectations. They researched and wrote the story over several weeks, sharing their experiences and language skills. Madiha's English was minimal but her Urdu was fluent, Sulmana was fluent and literate in both Urdu and English. Kanta's home language was Punjabi and she had attended an English-medium school in Pakistan. Much of her Urdu acquisition had taken place since arriving in Toronto and she had become highly skilled in switching back and forth between Urdu and English. In composing the story, the three girls discussed their ideas primarily in Urdu but wrote the initial draft in English. Sulmana participated somewhat less in the discussion but was very skilled in turning the ideas into written text. She served as scribe for both languages.

Like Madiha, Tomer Shahar came into Lisa's (ESL) class with minimal English. The opportunity to write in Hebrew, and work from Hebrew to English, enabled him to build on his prior knowledge and experience, and share his interests (particularly his passion for horses) with his teacher and peers. Figure 1 shows the covers of *The New Country*, written by Kanta, Madiha, and Sulmana, and *Tom Goes to Kentucky*, written by Tomer.

In a more typical classroom, Tomer's and Madiha's ability to gain access to the curriculum and carry out grade-appropriate work would have been severely limited by their minimal knowledge of English. They certainly would not have been in a position to write extensively in English about their experiences, ideas, and insights. However, when the social structure of the classroom was changed in very simple ways, both students were enabled to express themselves

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***"They certainly would not have been in a position to write extensively in English about their experiences, ideas, and insights."***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)



Figure 1: These and other dual language identity texts can be viewed at [www.multiliteracies.ca](http://www.multiliteracies.ca).

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**“When a student enters my class, I want to discover all that I can about that student as a learner and as a person.”**

in ways that few newcomer students experience. Their home languages, in which all their experience prior to immigration was encoded, became once again a tool for learning.

The perspectives of Lisa as the teacher implementing a radically different approach to supporting language and literacy development across the curriculum and Kanta, Madiha, Sulmana, and Tomer, students who experienced this approach, are presented in the following sections, organized according to themes. These perspectives were recorded at various stages of the project, in interviews and conversation, and during the presentation the authors of this article made at the Ontario Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) conference in October 2005. They retain their “oral” character with minimal editing.<sup>4</sup>

4. A webcast produced by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Education featuring the present authors’ presentation at the Ontario TESL conference in November 2005 can be accessed at [www.curriculum.org/secretariat/december7.html](http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/december7.html).

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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### Lisa's Instructional Philosophy

**Identity affirmation and expansion.** *The way I see it everything has to relate to the identity of the students; children have to see themselves in every aspect of their work at school.*

*My overarching goal as a teacher is to uncover all that is unknown to me about my students—linguistically and culturally, and especially to understand the community they are part of (their parents, their friends, their faith) and the list goes on. So when a student enters my class, I want to discover all that I can about that student as a learner and as a person.*

*What I love about using identity texts as a teaching strategy is that it validates students' cultural and linguistic identities.*

*They also help connect what students are learning in the class to their prior lived experiences and when these connections happen, learning becomes real for them because they are using their language and culture for purposes that have relevance for them. Most importantly, they end up owning the work that they produce.*

*The book, The New Country, was written by Kanta, Sulmana and Madiha when we were studying a unit on migration. It represents the immigration story of all three girls. As they worked on this project I was able to learn about their skill levels, the roles that each of them played in the writing and development of the story, socially and academically, and the overall learning process, even when the interactions were happening in their first language. There was a lot of evidence of metalinguistic negotiation, cognitive engagement and cooperative processing of ideas.*

*From day one, like any new student, Madiha was part of my classroom. Language and cultural differences in the classroom became naturalized, so the non-Urdu speaking students saw this as an accepted and valid part of the learning process and it removed the stigma of the students being "ESL students".*

*I called Kanta and Sulmana my co-educators. This experience also created a learning situation for them because they modeled literacy practices and they themselves also moved along the continuum of ESL skill levels. At the time of writing the book, they were placed at a stage 3 but over time after only a few months, they started demonstrating stage 4 capabilities. This was facilitated in large part because this collaborative process allowed Kanta and Sulmana to be the educators, to take that leadership role.*

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***"Opportunities like writing a dual language book bring out the inner voice of students and make visible to the teacher what is usually invisible."***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 59)

*The three girls also increased their interest and confidence in school. They participated more frequently in school-wide events, their involvement in class and willingness to share work with peers, and overall attitude and happiness and engagement in coming to school all increased.*

**Teaching for transfer.** *Whether students are given the opportunity or not, it's been clear to me that students learning an additional language use their first language to help them make sense not only of grammatical structures or concepts represented by vocabulary but also of the world around them. What is inside a language helps students see what they see, and draw connections between old and new learning. So rather than keeping this a hidden process, my aim is to give it a space in the classroom. Opportunities like writing a dual language book bring out the inner voice of students and make visible to the teacher what is usually invisible.*

**Inclusion and assessment.** *When Tomer entered my class last year, a lot of the work he produced was in Hebrew. Why? Because that is where his knowledge was encoded and I wanted to make sure that Tomer was an active member and participant in my class. It was also a way for me to gain insight into his level of literacy and oral language development. As I watched Tomer carry out various writing tasks, it became clear to me that Tomer had very strong literacy skills in his first language. For example, I asked Tomer to do a creative writing piece based on three pictures that he himself could select. During the writing his pencil didn't stop moving, there was little hesitation, and it was apparent that his ideas flowed easily. Next I had Tomer read aloud to me [in Hebrew] what he had written and there I saw the fluency, intonation, and the ease with which he read. I was able to relate his oral language and literacy skills to the English language development rubric that I follow for assessing student progress.*

*The next step I followed was accessing a resource within my school that was another teacher who was able to read Hebrew and so as she read [the English translation], I typed. You can see the paragraph formation, features of a narrative account that are satisfied, and well-developed vocabulary. Everything's there that I'm looking for in my English-speaking students, so again it was clear to me that Tomer had all those skills that I was looking for--reasoning, organization and logical sequencing of ideas. I think engaging in this process validated Tomer's existing literacy skills and like any initial assessment, it informed my teaching and plan for intervention.*

### Comment

In the above, Lisa highlights the fact that human relationships are at the heart of teaching. Teachers are not just transmitting content to students—they

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**“Human relationships  
are at the heart of  
teaching.”**

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 60)

are engaged in a process of negotiating identities (Cummins, 2001). Although the constructs of identity negotiation and identity investment have not received much attention in the cognitive psychology or educational leadership research literature, they have emerged as significant explanatory constructs in the educational anthropology and second language learning literature (e.g. Fordham, 1990; Norton, 2000).

Lisa's philosophy of attempting "to uncover all that is unknown to me about my students" is highly congruent with the principles of learning articulated by Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2000) in their book *How People Learn*. Among these principles is the centrality of prior knowledge and experience as a foundation for all learning. In a follow-up volume, Donovan and Bransford (2005, p. 4) point out that "new understandings are constructed on a foundation of existing understandings and experiences" (emphasis original). The fact that ELL students' prior knowledge is encoded in their L1 means that students' L1 is relevant to their learning. It also implies that teachers should attempt to activate students' prior knowledge and explicitly teach for transfer of concepts and skills from L1 to English. Unfortunately, when the classroom becomes an "English-only zone", students' prior knowledge is likely to be banished from the classroom along with their home language.

The research literature on bilingual academic development shows consistently significant relationships between literacy skills in L1 and L2 (see Cummins, 2001, for a review). As Lisa points out, since this process of cross-linguistic transfer is happening anyway, it makes sense for teachers to encourage it and make the process efficient rather than haphazard.

Because students' prior knowledge as well as their academic abilities are encoded in their L1, teachers can gain considerable insight into students' current academic level when they encourage students to use their L1 for reading and writing tasks. As Lisa notes, even when the teacher does not know the L1, valuable information can be gained from observation of the way the student carries out these tasks and, with a little imagination and effort, it is usually possible to find community members or other teachers and/or support personnel who can translate what students have written into English. This then sets the stage for even newcomer students to author dual language books.

## Students' Experience of Bilingual Instructional Strategies

### **Identity affirmation and expansion**

**Kanta.** *My first language is Punjabi, my second language is Urdu, and my third language is English. Madiha had come just about a month before Ms. Leoni told us to do the story so we were just talking about the difficulties she faced and the difficulties we had faced since we were immigrants also. Then we started talking about why not write about the differences between one country and the other, about all our differences, what was going through me when I came here,*

(Continued on page 62)

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***"When the classroom becomes an "English-only zone", students' prior knowledge is likely to be banished from the classroom along with their home language."***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 61)

*what Sulmana saw when she came here and how it was for Madiha, so that's how we came up with the idea to write the story about our three experiences.*

*How it helped me was when I came here in Grade 4 the teachers didn't know what I was capable of. I was given a pack of crayons and a coloring book and told to get on coloring with it. And after I felt so bad about that--I'm capable of doing much more than just that. I have my own inner skills to show the world than just coloring and I felt that those skills of mine are important also. So when we started writing the book [The New Country], I could actually show the world that I am something instead of just coloring. And that's how it helped me and it made me so proud of myself that I am actually capable of doing something, and here today [at the Ontario TESL conference] I **am** actually doing something. I'm not just a coloring person—I can show you that I am something.*

*As soon as I went home I told my parents: "My teacher's asking us to do something in Urdu and English" and they were like "Wow you have a chance to do something in Urdu and English, you've never had a chance to do that before!" and they were like, "If you've got that chance, take it and go forward with it and make the best ability because we know how you felt when you were new and you didn't get that chance and now that you have the chance make it the best you can to show those other people that you're something, not just someone who has to do only coloring. So then my parents were really happy and would help me with whatever I wanted help with and they supported me.*

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***"When I came here in Grade 4 the teachers didn't know what I was capable of. I was given a pack of crayons and a coloring book and told to get on coloring with it."***

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**Sulmana.** *When we were working on The New Country I felt really good and I wanted to write more stories afterward. When I was doing it I was really happy. It was fun to be able to write in both languages and to work on a project with my friends and I really liked having the chance to write in both languages and to improve my Urdu. It was my first experience translating English to Urdu so we worked together because I had forgotten many of the words in the last three years so my vocabulary improved a lot too. I had to ask my Mom a lot of words when we were writing it in Urdu but also before that, when I realized that we were going to be writing it in both languages I went home from that day and started reading more books in Urdu at home because I hadn't been doing that so much, so I had forgotten some words and I wanted my writing to make sense.*

*When I told my parents about the book they were really surprised to hear that their daughter could actually write in both languages and they were really happy to know that I as a normal girl who had been in Canada for the last three years actually got an opportunity to write a book in English and Urdu because when you are living in Canada you don't often get a chance to write*

(Continued on page 63)

## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 62)

*something in Urdu or your first language.*

*When my grandma came here last Sunday and I told her about the book, first of all she couldn't believe it and then I said "Wait grandma, I'll show you proof." And I showed her the package Sarah gave us [to come to the conference]. She was so surprised and so happy that her granddaughter is so popular, that her books are all around Canada and after she saw the whole thing she was like "Wow, you're great," and she started kissing me.*

**Madiha.** *I write in Urdu so the Urdu people can understand, like Pakistani and Indian people who don't understand English, that's why I write Urdu. And also so my Mom can read my book because she doesn't understand English, so I write in Urdu so she can understand it too. And I like to write in Urdu because I don't want to forget my own language from my home country.*

*I am proud of The New Country because it is our story. Nobody else has written that story. And when we showed it to Ms. Leoni she said it was really good. She said "It's about your home country, and family, and Canada, it's all attached, that's so good." I like that because it means she cares about our family and our country, not just Canada. Because she cares about us, that makes us want to do more work. My parents were really happy to see that I was writing in both Urdu and English; my mother was happy because she knows that not everyone has that chance.*

**Tomer.** *I felt great seeing my book on the Internet because everybody could see it and I don't need to show it to everybody, they can just click on my name in Google and go to the book. I told Tom [a friend in Israel] to see it and all of my family saw it.*

### Teaching for Transfer

**Tomer.** *With Tom Goes to Kentucky it was easier to begin it in Hebrew and then translate it to English and the other thing that made it easier was that I chose the topic. Because I love horses, when I'm writing about horses it makes me want to continue to do it and do it faster.*

*I think using your first language is so helpful because when you don't understand something after you've just come here it is like beginning as a baby. You don't know English and you need to learn it all from the beginning; but if you already have it in another language then it is easier, you can translate it, and you can do it in your language too, then it is easier to understand the second language.*

(Continued on page 64)

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***"After she saw the whole thing she was like 'Wow, you're great,' and she started kissing me."***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 63)

*It helps when you want to understand something but you can't and so you try to understand it in the first language and it's coming really slow and you try to translate it into English and then slowly you can get it and you can begin to ask questions and then you don't need any more the first language.*

*It makes it more faster to be able to use both languages instead of just breaking your head to think of the word in English when you already know the word in the other language so it makes it faster and easier to understand.*

*My family said it is good because then I can practice my second language and my first language and not forget it. They told me it's better when you know the first and the second language because then there are no mistakes and misunderstandings in the book.*

*The first time I couldn't understand what she [Lisa] was saying except the word Hebrew, but I think it's very smart that she said for us to do it in our language because we can't just sit on our hands doing nothing.*

**Madiha.** *I think it helps my learning to be able to write in both languages because if I'm writing English and Ms. Leoni says you can write Urdu too it helps me think of what the word means because I always think in Urdu. That helps me write better in English. When I came here I didn't know any English, I always speak Urdu to my friends. Other teachers they said to me "Speak English, speak English" but Ms. Leoni didn't say anything when she heard me speak Urdu and I liked this because if I don't know English, what can I do? It helps me a lot to be able to speak Urdu and English.*

**Kanta.** *It helped me a lot to be able to write it in two languages and especially for Madiha who was just beginning to learn English because the structure of the two languages is so different. So if you want to say something in Urdu it might take just three words but in English to say the same thing you'd have to use more words. So for Madiha it helped the differences between the two languages become clear.*

*When I came here I was forced to speak English; I wasn't allowed to speak Urdu. So the teacher at first she gave me a coloring book and a big package of colors. From that experience of being forced to use English only, I did learn English pretty fast and it was a good thing to learn English but my English writing structure was really poor because I couldn't see the difference between Urdu and English and the process of writing them. So in one way it helped me learn English faster but for Madiha who got a chance to use both English and Urdu it helped her see the differences between the two languages and her writing in English improved a lot more and better than mine did.*

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***"When you don't understand something after you've just come here it is like beginning as a baby."***

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(Continued on page 65)

## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 64)

**Sulmana.** *The roles that each of us took came about pretty naturally, like Kanta was really good at translating so she did that and I was good at writing in Urdu so I did that and Madiha helped me with the vocabulary and the grammar in Urdu.*

### Comment

The insights of Kanta, Madiha, Sulmana, and Tomer reinforce the claim that incorporation of the home language into instruction affirms students' identities and motivates them to engage with literacy in a sustained way. Sulmana also notes that the project motivated her to seek help from her Mom with Urdu words and to read more books in Urdu at home because she realized she was beginning to forget words in her language.

The students also highlight the process of cross-language transfer of knowledge and skills. Both Madiha and Tomer point to the logical nature of enabling newcomer students to use the cognitive tools they bring to the classroom. Madiha notes: *"If I don't know English, what can I do?"* while Tomer says *"It's very smart that she said for us to do it in our language because we can't just sit on our hands doing nothing."*

Tomer and Madiha elaborated on the process of cross-language transfer in a written response to three questions:

1. When you are allowed to write stories in class using your first language or home language, how do you feel?
2. Do you enjoy reading your stories in your first/home language? Why or why not?
3. When you are allowed to use your first language in class, does it help you with your writing and reading of English?

Tomer's mother attended the TESL Ontario session where we initially presented these findings. Her comments add weight to the impact of dual language writing (and Lisa's teaching practice generally) both on students' sense of self and relations within the family:

*I want to say as a mother of a child in this program, we are very grateful to have a child at this school. ... The respect they have here for the child's first language is something like accepting the child. A lot of people, even teachers from this school, told us about the first two years in Canada. It was like bringing a child into a war [zone]. Two years of children nagging you and bothering you about your accent, about your manners, and about your clothes, and whatever. Our children never suffered from those things. From day one they were accepted. Their language was very respected and we are most ... I don't have the words to say it ... but we really want to thank everybody.*

(Continued on page 66)

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***"It helped me a lot to be able to write it in two languages..."***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 65)

### Conclusion

As noted above, it is generally accepted among cognitive psychologists that students' pre-existing knowledge represents the foundation for future learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). If students' pre-existing knowledge is encoded in their home language, then their home language is clearly relevant to learning. The present paper has documented the impact of one teacher's use of students' L1 as a resource for learning. Students created dual language books and posted these on the Word Wide Web. New arrivals who spoke minimal English were enabled to participate actively in instruction and demonstrate their competent L1 literacy skills through writing in their L1. Parents and grandparents assumed new roles in their children's education in support of their children's L1 writing.

The classroom interactions documented in this case study construct a very different image of the student than the image constructed in more typical classrooms. Students were enabled to express themselves, their experience, intelligence, imagination in ways that are simply not possible when the classroom is an English-only zone. They were also enabled to use their L1 as a powerful tool for learning. The focus was on teaching for transfer rather than ignoring students' pre-existing knowledge.

Teaching for transfer does not require that teachers speak the languages of their students. It does require, however, that teachers and administrators be willing to examine critically the implicit assumptions underlying curricula developed for the "generic student" and think imaginatively about how ELL students can more rapidly gain access to the curriculum.

It is worth noting also that the notion of teaching for transfer challenges some influential assumptions about second language teaching and learning. For example, it challenges the notion that instructional time through the target language should be maximized and recourse to students' L1 minimized. This "direct method" assumption is still endorsed by most teachers and policy-makers in the areas of both English as a second language and French as a second language across Canada. While it is certainly important to establish a strong communicative space for the target language, we would argue that the instructional quality of that space is enhanced by judicious encouragement of students' L1 as a cognitive tool.

Our work also problematizes the exclusion of translation as a viable pedagogical strategy in second language teaching contexts. Under conditions of student engagement in substantive projects to which they are committed (e.g. writing identity texts, projects written up in two or more languages, etc.), we argue that translation from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1 can be a powerful tool to develop language and literacy skills and increase metalinguistic awareness.

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***"It's very smart that she said for us to do it in our language because we can't just sit on our hands doing nothing."***

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(Continued on page 67)

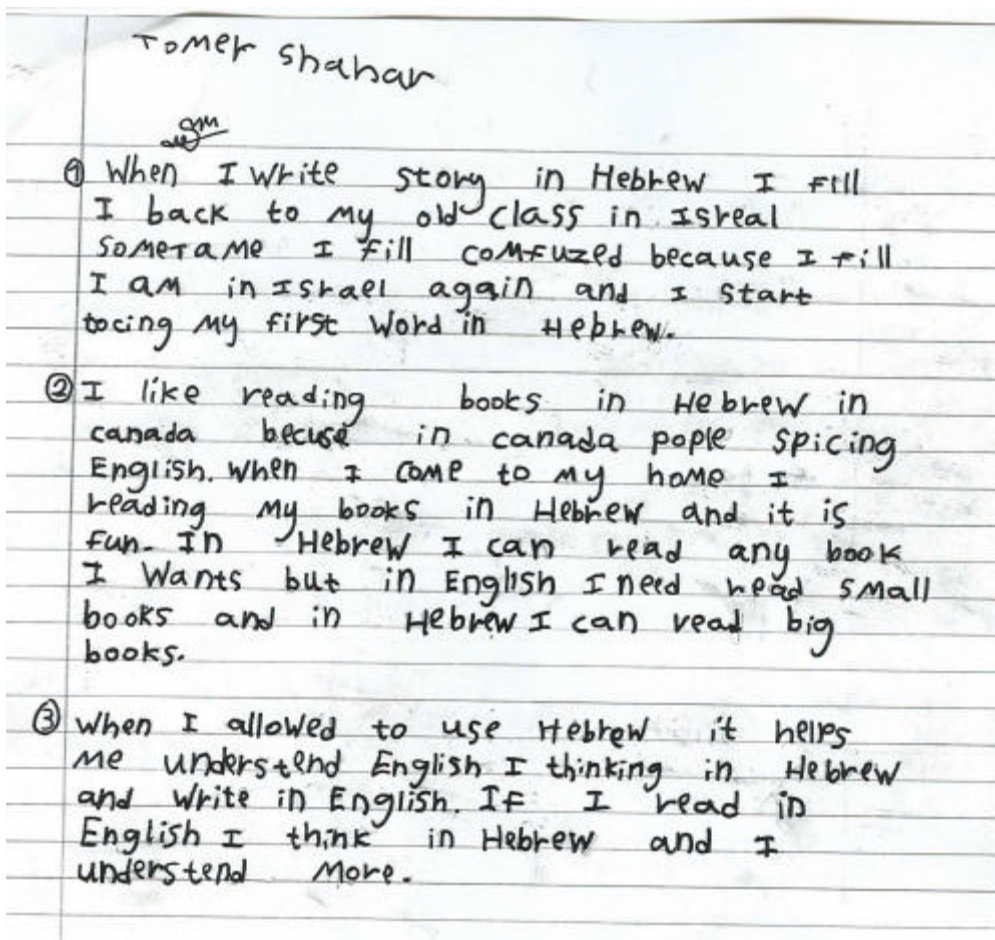
## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 66)

Our observations and video recordings of Kanta, Sulmana, and Madiha discussing their story show frequent discussion of translation equivalents in English and Urdu. Sulmana notes that writing the story in both languages made her realize that she had forgotten some words in Urdu and it motivated her to read more books in Urdu at home. Kanta highlights the fact that translation helped Madiha, in particular, become conscious of the very different structures in Urdu and English, with the result that her writing in English developed more adequately than hers (Kanta's) had done ("...for Madiha who got a chance to use both English and Urdu it helped her see the differences between the two languages and her writing in English improved a lot more and better than mine did.")

Other students similarly attest to the role that translation plays in their attempts to make English comprehensible.

(Continued on page 69)




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**“Students were enabled to express themselves, their experience, intelligence, imagination...”**

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Figure 2. Tomer's responses to questions about use of the home language




## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

1) When I am allowed to write story in class using Urdu I feel very comfortable and very special and very important. I feel good that people see my Urdu and English story. I feel very comfortable because I know how to write in Urdu and I know why we write Urdu because we learn more English. I feel special because I don't want to forget my language.

2) I like reading story in Urdu because I like my language and I like reading into my language because it's really easy for me I like to read Urdu stories because I understand my language I like Urdu stories because some story is true.

3) When I am allowed to use Urdu in class it helps me to read and write English. When I have to learn new English words I remember them faster if I study the words in Urdu. Like this

New words

English	UrDU	Pictur
Lungs	پھیپھڑے	
Kidneys	گردے	
heart	دل	

**“When I am allowed to use Urdu in class it helps me to read and write English.”**

Figure 3. Madiha's responses to questions about use of the home language

## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

(Continued from page 67)

For example Aminah, another newcomer student in Lisa's ESL class, says (spelling original):

When I am allowed to use my first language in class it helps me with my writing and reading of english because if I translation in english to urdu then urdu give me help for english language. I also think better and write more in english when I use urdu because I can see in urdu what I want to say in english.

Hira elaborates on this issue as follows:

When I am allowed to use Urdu in class it helps me because when I write in Urdu and then I look at Urdu words and English comes in my mind. So, its help me a lot. When I write in English, Urdu comes in my mind. When I read in English I say it in Urdu in my mind. When I read in Urdu I feel very comfortable because I can understand it.

Finally, the promotion of teaching for transfer challenges the "two solitudes" model of bilingual/immersion education in Canada and elsewhere. The rigid separation of students' two languages in programs such as French immersion fails to capitalize on obvious instructional strategies such as drawing attention to the many cognate relationships between English and French. The creation of dual language identity texts is also proscribed by the two solitudes assumption, for which there is not a shred of empirical support.

In conclusion, with respect to the development of school-based language policies, we should be asking what image of the student is constructed by the (implicit or explicit) language or literacy policy of the school. Does the language policy construct an image of the student as intelligent, imaginative, and linguistically talented? Does our pedagogy acknowledge and build on the cultural and linguistic capital (prior knowledge) of students and communities? To what extent are we enabling *all* students to engage cognitively and invest their identities in learning? Do our strategies for teaching literacy make students feel "very comfortable, very special, and very important" in the way that Madiha felt when given the opportunity and encouragement to write in Urdu?

There is an urgent need in the Canadian context to require all schools to develop school-based language policies that make explicit the belief systems operating in the school regarding students' language and literacy development. In particular, schools should address the issues of (a) Who is responsible for supporting ELL students to access the curriculum? (b) What options are available for activating students' prior knowledge in the instructional process? (c) What options are available for incorporating students' L1 into the instructional process? (d) How can schools involve culturally and linguistically diverse parents in a respectful way as partners in their children's education? ❖

(Continued on page 70)

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***"To what extent are we enabling all students to engage cognitively and invest their identities in learning?"***

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## Home Languages In The Multilingual Classroom (cont'd)

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# Multiliteracies At Main Street School: Digital Texts, Multilingual Development And Inclusive Narratives

By Heather Lotherington

## Abstract

Our research project to study multiliteracies in theory and practice is grounded in the challenges children experience in acquiring literacy across disparate home, school, community and societal contexts. Our project at Main Street School in Toronto engages children in elementary school in rewriting traditional narratives in their own voices, using digital technology. Positing that literacy instruction misses opportunities to productively engage multiculturalism and multilingualism, we are incorporating multiple languages in children's rewritten digital narratives. This presentation describes our project, and the new narratives children are producing. ■

## Introduction

This paper outlines an ongoing theoretical and practical exploration of multiliteracies that is taking place in an elementary school in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), which has been given the pseudonym, Main Street School (MSS)<sup>1</sup>. It describes a series of linked studies which have as overarching aim, the conceptualizing, designing, and documenting of multiliteracies in action at the elementary school level: contemporary literacies that interactively engage multicultural, multilingual, multimodal and multimedia realms.

The research described involves a collective of university and elementary school teachers and researchers and includes the principal, librarian and technology assistant. We are currently engaged in a three year funded research project<sup>2</sup> that specifically aims to create new narratives for children at the elementary school level which enfold cultural and linguistic diversity through innovative digital forms. Our study follows two prior studies at Main Street School, the first an ethnographic study of emergent multiliteracies in action; and, the second, a pilot study to rewrite a traditional narrative to include children's concepts of contemporary culture using digital resources. Our research seeks to address the practical challenges children face in becoming literate across disparate home, school, community and societal practices and understandings of language and literacy development. *The evolving*

*(Continued on page 73)*

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***“In this paper we attempt to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses.”***

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1. Main Street School is the pseudonym for Joyce Public School. In previous related studies anonymity was a condition of the study; in the current study, the school has asked to be recognized.
2. I acknowledge with gratitude SSHRC grant 410-2005-2080 for the project: Emergent multiliteracies in theory and practice: Multicultural literacy development at elementary school.

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)



Figure 1: A collage of Modern Literacies

(Continued from page 72)

theory finds its roots in the New London Group's call to action in understanding and teaching literacy in contemporary society, entitled: *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (New London Group, 1996, Section 1, para. 2).

In this paper, we attempt to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses. We seek to highlight two principal aspects of this multiplicity. First, we want to extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies, for the diverse cultures that interrelate, and the plurality of texts that circulate. Second, we argue that literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. Our response to the call for designing a pedagogy of multiliteracies is devising a process for the teaching and learning of digital narratives capable of including children's cultural and linguistic realities.

### Reconceptualizing literacy as multiliteracies

In the modern tradition shaping 20<sup>th</sup> century education, literacy was defined simply as reading and writing on paper, and assumed to be in a majority language. Curricula featured canonical literature reflecting dominant cultural values. Writing technology was simple: a pencil or a ballpoint pen and paper, and for good copies, a typewriter. Duplicating technology was limited to stencils and manual (purple) ditto copies until the photocopier arrived on the scene. The modern tradition, which developed in response to the Industrial Revolution, set the agenda for mass education, a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. As Agnello (2001) points out, industrial-era literacy was geared to preparing learners for the

(Continued on page 74)

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**“Writing technology was simple: a pencil or a ballpoint pen and paper, and for good copies, a typewriter. Duplicating technology was limited to stencils and manual (purple) ditto copies until the photocopier arrived on the scene.”**

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## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)



Figure 2: A collage of Postmodern Literacies

(Continued from page 73)

***“Texts produced for and by the knowledge economy are artifacts of digital rather than industrial technologies.”***

workforce. Modern era texts were published in accordance with accepted conventions and standards in a hierarchical process requiring approval by editing and publishing professionals. They were printed on paper using the industrial technology of moveable type. These texts were linear in organization, following accepted indexing and bibliographic conventions. Figure 1 presents a collage of modern texts and associated literacy practices. Modern literacies still dominate the curriculum, and importantly, assessment instruments, despite the steady movement of global society towards a post-modern era, generated by the Information Revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Post-modern literacy practices have mushroomed in response to the rapid proliferation of digital technologies, network interconnectivity, globalization, and the burgeoning world of virtual communication. The kinds of texts produced for and by the knowledge economy are artifacts of digital rather than industrial technologies, shaped by information architectures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2004) that enable sophisticated multimedia encoding. New literacies are required to create and access these texts.

No longer confined to paper, new textual forms are mediated technologically, accessed through screens utilizing keyboards, and touch-based mechanisms, such as touch pads, touch-activated screens, and mouse attachments. They are enabled in a vast interconnected virtual landscape where communications take place in nanoseconds. Texts online are no longer limited to linear, hierarchical production chains, though academic texts online continue to be produced through established peer review mechanisms. Web pages, among other new text forms, are structured and linked such that both

(Continued on page 75)

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 74)

nonlinear and multi-linear access is featured. Postmodern textual processes yield interactive, image-centered texts. Figure 2 presents a collage of postmodern literacies, which add richly to the conceptualization of literacy, and to considerations of literacy acquisition and proficiencies. Though they do out-mode some modern literacies, e.g., the card catalogue of a library has morphed into an electronic retrieval system, they do not necessarily make obsolete modern texts and literacies. Twenty-first century literacies are interlaced with 20<sup>th</sup> century literacies in novel ways in everyday social life. Figure 3 presents a cartoon, used with permission, depicting contemporary mode-switching.

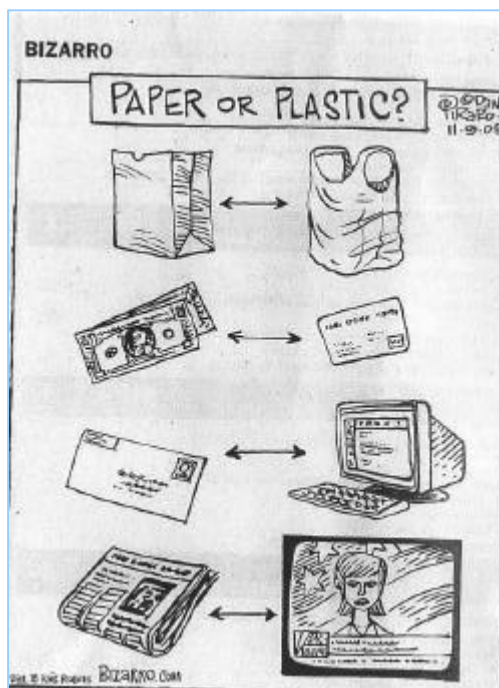
The concept of multiple literacies opens up what Kellner (2002, p. 163) describes as “the new frontier”, raising epistemological as well as pedagogical questions about the essence of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including:

- What counts as literacy now?
- How can we teach and assess contemporary literacy practices in schools?

### Rethinking language and literacy education

Current language and literacy education in Ontario focuses on proficiency in English with a knowledge of French. Children’s language and literacy competencies (in English) are assessed at grades 3, 6, and 10 using province-wide, paper and pencil tests developed under the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)<sup>3</sup> banner. The substance of EQAO test questions indicates that these instruments covertly test knowledge of English language and Anglo-Canadian culture as literacy. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is a deciding factor in secondary school completion. The OSSLT and other EQAO tests are geared to modern notions of literacy.

(Continued on page 76)



**Figure 3: Mode-switching**  
(used with permission)

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**“21<sup>st</sup> century literacies are interlaced with 20<sup>th</sup> century literacies in novel ways in everyday social life.”**

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3. <http://www.eqao.com>

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

*(Continued from page 75)*

As Lankshear and Knobel indicate, the literacies of today include the worlds of both “atoms and bits” (2003, p. 50). Children are communicating in dynamic new communicative spaces, creating social practices that reconfigure established orthographic conventions. Lotherington and Xu (2004) theorize that conventional changes are affecting language in general in online environments. The traditional “4 skills” analysis of language consisting of speaking, listening, reading and writing is, thus, no longer sufficient to describe new communicative competencies that unite virtual communities in what Crystal calls “NetSpeak” (2001), and engage children in sophisticated digital literacies (Gee, 2003) and metaliteracies (Lotherington, 2004).

Cummins (2000) has made a sound theoretical case for supporting first language (L1) development in second language (L2) learning. Yet there is no systematic way of supporting multiple languages in the provincial education system, which offers a patchwork of “heritage” language classes taught as non-credit courses in Saturday or after school programs, and selective “international” languages in some public high schools. Though bilingual proficiencies should not be judged as double monolingualism (Grosjean, 1992), this is effectively what provincial EQAO assessments encourage by testing children’s second language proficiencies as “literacy” achievement. In this way, children who are non-native speakers of English are tested in English and described in terms of “literacy” proficiencies, and their broader literacies in other languages and media are ignored. The school system offers increasingly limited educational support for children’s acquisition of English as a second language, and scant, if any, maintenance of children’s home languages. Literacy instruction misses many opportunities to productively engage multiculturalism and multilingualism.

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***“There is no systematic way of supporting multiple languages in the provincial education system...”***

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### Designing a pedagogy of multiliteracies at Main Street School

#### **Main Street School**

Main Street School (MSS) is an elementary school in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), located in a North York neighbourhood characterized by light industry and mixed residential housing, including a quadrant of high-rise apartment buildings in which a large number of MSS students live. Approximately two-thirds of the children attending the school speak a language other than English or French at home and in the community. This is a common phenomenon in the TDSB.

The MSS community is characteristic of inner city schools in that it is economically poor but rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. The children in this demographic do not acquire as birthright the cultural and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) on which the gate-keeping EQAO literacy tests are based. The social equalization approach that MSS has taken to help its students suc-

*(Continued on page 77)*

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 76)

ceed educationally has been to immerse children in digital technology to facilitate learning and to build their skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The school has been widely recognized on both a national and an international level as a technologically innovative school (Granger et al., 2002).

### **Designing a pedagogy of multiliteracies**

The multiliteracies-in-action narrative rewriting project at MSS has the following overarching pedagogical goals:

- help children learn to read and write in English,
- provide a means for supporting community languages,
- make traditional stories more inclusive of urban, multicultural children,
- experiment with digital literacies.

Our research rises to the challenge of designing a pedagogy of multiliteracies by involving multilingual, multicultural, urban children in rewriting traditional narratives using their own voices with the support of digital technology. To learn to read through rewriting is not new by any means (Dias, 2002), but in engaging new media, we invest in children's strengths as those born into a digital world. Our research focuses on creating and documenting pedagogical processes for teaching multiliteracies by investing in narrative development. Our linked studies are described below, each focusing on a particular dimension of multiliteracies. We are at the beginning of our own story.

### **2004 focus: multiculturalism. Rewriting Goldilocks**

Our pilot project to trial a teaching and learning process for creating digital narratives began with the kindergarten children's interest in the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Lotherington, 2005; Lotherington & Chow, in press), which we decided to update in 2004.<sup>4</sup> We focused on multiculturalism in this first rewriting project, our first goal being to inject the children's sense of culture into the traditional story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The project spanned a school year during which we met with a number of teachers working at the primary level at regular workshops in which we discussed ideas and problems. In the grade two classroom, children heard multiple versions of the basic

(Continued on page 78)

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***“Our first goal... to inject the children's sense of culture into the traditional story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.”***

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4. With grateful acknowledgment of SSHRC funding for: *Rewriting Goldilocks: Emergent transliteracies*.

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 77)

story, followed by offbeat versions that started to twist the basic story.

They learned the narrative structure thoroughly through a series of related activities that worked on the children's growing understanding of character, plot and resolution. Next the stories were rewritten, first as a whole class, then individually, using HyperStudio for final digital versions (see Lotherington & Chow, in press for details of this process).

We had assumed that children would ground culture visibly, writing themselves into the fabric of their story versions, as is suggested in the rendering of "Bradylocks" done in a Grade 1 classroom (see Figure 3).

Our assumption was wrong. Indeed the teachers had warned us that children's conceptions of culture would derive from the popular rather than heritage culture. The main protagonist was redrawn in many ways, including as a nasty shark, an adventurous space explorer, and a charmingly pathetic robber (see Figure 4).<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless the children certainly revised the story. For instance, the

(Continued on page 79)

***"We had assumed that children would ground culture visibly, writing themselves into the fabric of their story versions."***



**Figure 3: "Bradylocks"**

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 78)

fact that Goldilocks invades the bears' home to eat porridge is motivationally baffling in an affluent society where food is plentiful. Furthermore, what exactly is porridge to a population of culturally diverse, urban 7 year olds? In one child's version, Sugi, a space explorer who has invaded the UFO of three aliens who have gone out for a stroll, finds something more contemporary and recognizable to eat (see Figure 5).

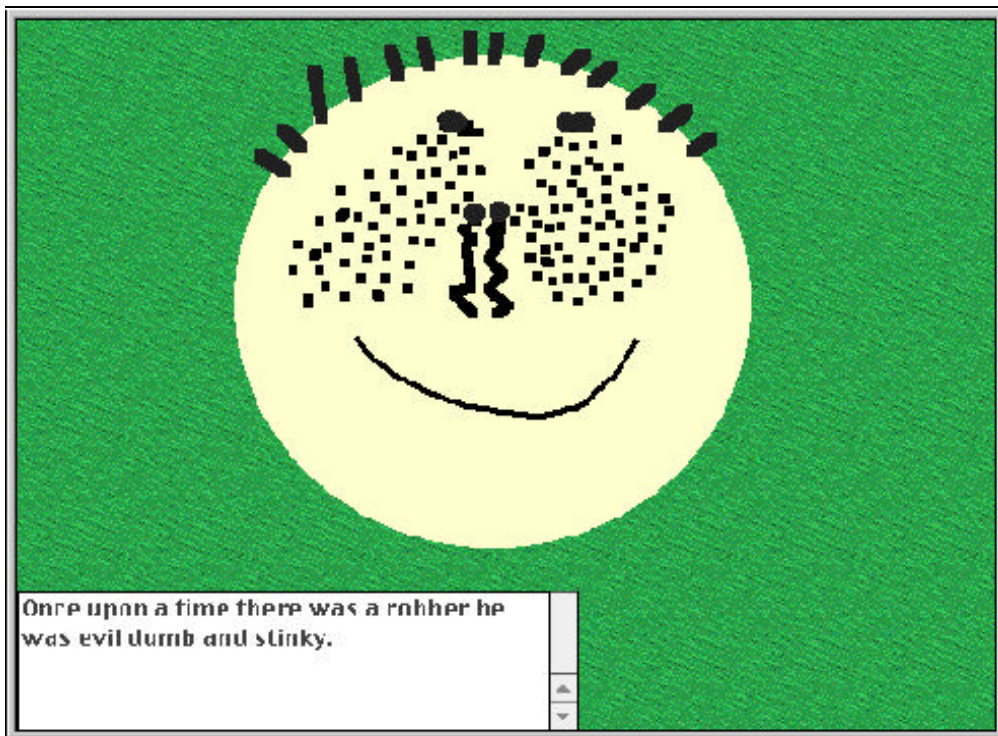


Figure 4: *Robber*

The children's rewritten stories far surpassed our expectations of cultural reinterpretation. Their rewritten protagonists were not merely superficially redrawn but coherently reinterpreted as characters driven by clear motivations: a robber who is hungry, and whom the bears offer to feed after they discover him, quaking with fear in baby bear's bed; a little girl who is neglected and lonely, whom the bears not only feed when they discover her in baby bear's bed but also walk home, and then arrange an exchange sleepover for baby bear at her house; and Sharky, the bully, who takes not baby's but papa's food, chair and bed, and resolves the home invasion in a similar vein

(Continued on page 80)

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***"Our assumption was wrong."***

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## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)



**Figure 5: Jell-O!**

(Continued from page 79)

(see Figure 6).

We learned many lessons in this pilot study which provided us with a process that could be used in the classroom to teach multiliteracies. Relevant to the goal of investing multiculturalism in a narrative, we discovered that children's ideas of culture are heavily influenced by popular media, and that cultural inclusion must take into account:

- heritage cultures
- home cultures
- appreciation of multiple cultures
- reified "Canadian culture"
- "high culture"
- contemporary subcultures
- digital culture
- kids' lived experiences

The goal of creating multimodal versions opened up many experimental spaces that bridged old and new literacies. Primary teachers are imaginative

(Continued on page 82)

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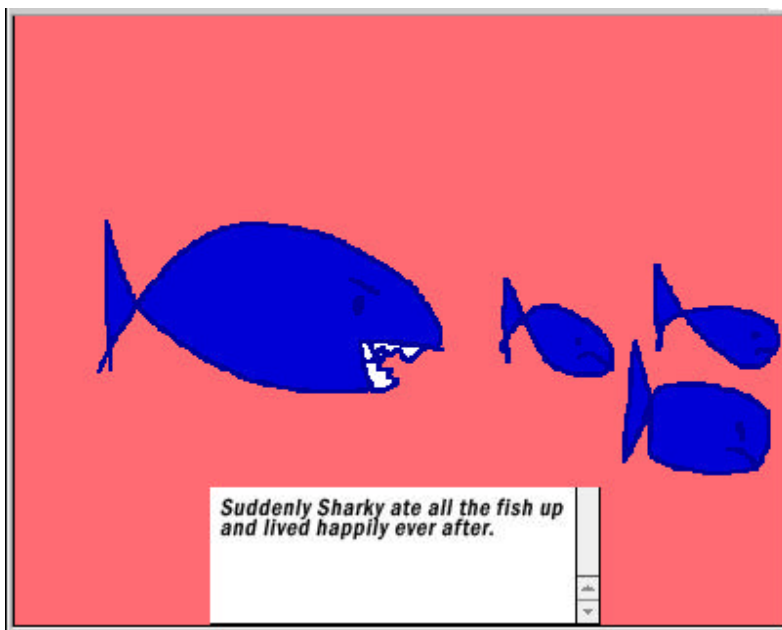
***"The children's  
rewritten stories far  
surpassed our  
expectations of cultural  
reinterpretation."***

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## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)



Figures 6,7 : Sharky's happily ever after ending



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***“Rewritten protagonists were not merely superficially redrawn but coherently reinterpreted as characters driven by clear motivations.”***

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## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 80)

and well-versed in multimedia as interpreted in modern literacy practices, such as arts and crafts, drama and puppetry, performance and music. The children's stories were written using HyperStudio<sup>6</sup>, a program for building hypertext that is downloadable to schools in the TDSB. Their hypertext stories were printed and taken home as books for Father's Day, so they were available both electronically and in conventional print form<sup>7</sup>. Importantly, the grade-two teacher saw many directions in the kinds of stories children were creating that influenced her literacy program the following year.

### **2005 focus: multimodality. *The Little Red Hen: The Movie***

In 2005, the teachers continued their explorations into creating narratives that were threaded with cultural and language familiarity for the children. The kindergarten teacher taught the children the story of *The Gingerbread Man* which culminated in baking gingerbread men, who mysteriously escaped and had to be tracked down in a brilliantly designed treasure hunt that had the children enacting the narrative, following the gingerbread man's traditional refrain: "Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!" But they did catch their own baked gingerbread men, and scolded them for running away before eating them! The grade-one teacher had children retell *The Three Little Pigs* in poster presentations, in which the pigs created houses that were more familiar, such as city high rises, and they wrote their stories in bilingual versions, including Japanese and English. The grade-two teacher decided to teach *The Little Red Hen*, which has a much simpler setting and storyline making it easier to adapt than the multiple settings of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The children retold the story, revising the main protagonist, the layabouts who don't help, and the food being prepared. Instead of making bread from wheat, the main protagonist, who ranged from a princess to a jellyfish, made everything from macaroni (with the directions from the Kraft Dinner package) to birthday cake, read from a real cookbook. The versions were written as plays and performed for individual classes complete with narrators, costumed characters, stage sets, and musical interludes during scene changes. The plays were videotaped to create iMovies<sup>8</sup>.

These projects were intrinsically multimodal, seamlessly merging modern and post-modern literacies. They led us to look at some of the possible digital genres available to an elementary class writing a story:

(Continued on page 83)

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***"Primary teachers are imaginative and well-versed in multimedia as interpreted in modern literacy practices..."***

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6. [HyperStudio](#) by Knowledge Adventure is a multimedia authoring tool for project-based learning.

7. For more examples of the children's stories go to: <http://schools.tdsb.on.ca/joyce/main/goldilocks/index.htm>

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (cont'd)

(Continued from page 82)

- Ebooks, using Ministry approved software, e.g. HyperStudio, StoryWeaver<sup>9</sup>, Kid Pix<sup>10</sup>
- Drama and videotaping, using iMovie<sup>8</sup>
- Videogames using generic game shells.

### **2006 focus: multilingualism. Stories in transition and translation**

Now in our third year of researching multiliteracies in action through digital narratives, we have begun a 3-year study to devise multilingual versions of children's rewritten digital narratives, using a combination of translation software and post-translation editing with community members. Our goals are to teach, learn and support:

- English (as a second language)
- Heritage languages
- Home languages
- Community languages
- International languages
- French as the official L2 language

We are just beginning this voyage into the multilingual imagination. So far we have discovered that machine translation is only a raw beginning, and that the incorporation of community members, heritage language teachers and human translators – a veritable urban village – is needed to create multilingual stories. We have discovered resources online that support and provide models for new narratives that create opportunities for “the discursual negotiation of social identity” (Fairclough, 2000, p. 176). We have discovered the new stories can take many shapes.

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***“Instead of making bread from wheat, the main protagonist, who ranged from a princess to a jellyfish, made everything from macaroni.”***

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8. [iMovie](#) is an Apple application for creating movies.

9. [StoryWeaver](#) is story development software by Storymind.

10. [Kid Pix](#) is a virtual multimedia art creation program by Broderbund geared to primary-aged students.

## Multiliteracies At Main Street School (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 83)

### Summary and conclusion

Inspired by the NLG's 1996 call to action to reconceptualize literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and create a pedagogy for the teaching and learning of multiliteracies, our research collective is experimenting with pedagogical processes for teaching multiliteracies through digital narratives. By introducing narratives to children as flexible story forms for their contemporary reinterpretation, we are developing both theory and practice in multiliteracies. We are cumulatively creating a pedagogy for teaching-and-learning narratives at elementary school that are inclusive and contemporary, that encode cultural and linguistic diversity through digitization, and that tell old stories in new ways. Many of these ways are yet to be imagined. This is language and literacy education that invites the reader to enter the world of the text with a sense of personal agency to interpret the world (Freire, 1998/1970) through connections that emerge from individual story engagement. We pose multiliteracy learning in opposition to existing literacy education practices that teach and test exclusive, regulatory and static print literacy that promotes "the right answers" in a majority language via large scale assessments.

As we continue our experimental action research at MSS, supported by a visionary principal, hard-working teachers, children's joy in composition, successes in the classroom, and spiraling possibility in the digital world, all tempered by procedural and technological setbacks, we encounter both interest and fear in educators. This fear is generated partly by the expense and newness of digital technology, which renders us all insecure learners, and partly by curricular aims that are held in place by educational testing that does not host 21<sup>st</sup> century multiliteracies. This strengthens my resolve to create a pedagogy of multiliteracies that meets present and future communicative needs for all children, and in so doing, to challenge current static curricular and assessment agendas that fail to do this. ❖

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments for Internationally Trained Health Professionals

Bruce Russell, Andrea Strachan and Peggie Shek

### Abstract

For internationally trained professionals whose first language is not English, lack of English-language proficiency can be a serious obstacle in achieving full professional licensure in Canada. Funding from the Government of Ontario allowed two Ontario training institutions in the health-care sector (The Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto and The Michener Institute) to develop occupation-specific language assessments that could be used in their Bridging Programs. These programs were set up to assist internationally trained professionals to succeed in achieving full professional licensure. LCRT Consulting, a group of educators experienced in working with the Canadian Language Benchmarks was contracted in both cases to develop two occupation-specific language assessments referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks. The purpose of the assessments was for program placement in Bridging Programs. ■

### Introduction

Program staff in two Ontario Bridging Programs, The International Pharmacy Graduate Program at the University of Toronto and Access and Options at The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences in Toronto noticed that results on current language assessments were not providing enough information about profession-specific communicative competence of their internationally trained clientele. Each Bridging Program decided to develop occupation-specific language assessments referenced to the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* (Pawlikowska-Smith, G., 2000), a 12-level descriptive scale of English-language communicative proficiency. LCRT Consulting, a group of educators experienced in working with the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), was contracted to develop the two assessments. This paper will describe the social and theoretical contexts from which the two assessments derive; discuss the test development process and validation considerations; and conclude with a discussion of the project findings.

### Background

At the TESL Ontario Conference (2005) plenary session on “Supporting Immigrants for Life in Globalized Canada: Myths and Realities”, Barbara Burnaby gave a brief historical survey of immigration policy in Canada. In her survey, she suggested that significant changes to the immigration policy in the 1960s set in motion an immigration pattern that has resulted in the multicultural nature of contemporary Canadian society. Today, the widely diverse popula-

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***“Today, the widely diverse population found in the Canadian workplace is representative of a globalized Canada that simply did not exist before the 1960s.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments

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(Continued from page 86)

tion found in the Canadian workplace is representative of a globalized Canada that simply did not exist before the 1960s.

For Ontario licensing bodies and, in particular, licensing bodies in the provincial health care sector, this social change has presented new challenges. For many provincial licensing bodies, the challenge is how to grant licensure to an unprecedented number of internationally trained applicants from diverse backgrounds and contexts while still ensuring the health and safety of the people of Ontario. Ultimately, the pressures of labour demands in the Ontario health care sector brought the Ontario Government and health-sector licensing bodies together to find a solution to this challenge. The result of this cooperation was the development and implementation of Bridging Programs.

### Bridging Programs

Bridging Programs were created to increase access to employment for internationally trained professionals. In 2004, the government of Ontario invested 9.5 million dollars in Bridging Programs (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005) to facilitate access of internationally trained professionals to Ontario's employment sector (including the health-care sector). The Government of Ontario has mandated that Bridging Programs "...remove barriers to employment faced by immigrants and create more opportunities for internationally trained professionals to contribute to our province's economic growth" (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005).

The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences and the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto are two of the many training institutions that have entered into partnerships with the government of Ontario. In 2006 the Ontario Government funded 14 Bridging Projects. Examples of such partnerships and projects include: University of Ottawa, developing a satellite campus for internationally trained pharmacists; York University, providing language training, mentorship and acculturation support for nurses with an international diploma; University of Waterloo, developing a program to address identified gaps in knowledge and/or skills of internationally trained optometrists. (Government of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2006). The aim of these partnerships is to develop new training programs intended to reduce barriers to employment faced by internationally trained professionals in the Ontario labour market.

The typical barriers to employment that Bridging Programs address are gaps in professional knowledge and knowledge of Canadian workplace culture. A component of many Bridging Programs is, therefore, a work placement that gives the client relevant Canadian workplace experience and knowledge of Canadian workplace culture. This professional experience and knowledge provides support in the process of obtaining licensure, registration or certification. While some Bridging Programs may have ESL components, their program focus is not explicit language training. Criteria for admission to Bridging Programs usually include a completed credentials assessment and recognition (academic

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***"A component of many  
Bridging Programs is...  
a work placement that  
gives the client relevant  
Canadian workplace  
experience."***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

*(Continued from page 87)*

training and work experience), a successfully completed language proficiency examination, and a successfully completed professional practice examination.

Given that the pool of internationally trained immigrants is largely comprised of English as a subsequent language (ESL) speakers, language competency is an issue for many potential clients of Bridging Programs. While there are many government-funded settlement language training programs, participation in a Bridging Program requires a level and range of competency that is different from what normally is offered in settlement language training programs. Clients in Bridging Programs must be able to communicate in an academic environment (e.g., a university or college training program) and in the workplace during a work placement (e.g., a hospital, pharmacy, or clinic). Therefore, for clients to participate successfully in both the academic and workplace components of their programs, demonstration of adequate communicative competence is necessary before they can be admitted into the program.

### ***Issues in Language Assessment***

In the process of deciding on an appropriate language assessment, many Bridging Programs naturally deferred to generic English-language proficiency assessments that were already in place for university or college admission or for professional licensure, registration or certification. However, these projects identified a number of issues related to language competency that were not anticipated. One issue that arose around language assessment was whether the current language assessments could accurately predict the communicative competency required within a specific occupational domain. Discussing the results of research on the International Pharmacy Graduate Program at the University of Toronto, which was initiated under the Bridging Program, Austin (2003) arrived at the following conclusion about language assessment:

A major finding of this research is the inadequacy of generic English-language proficiency assessment tools in providing assurance of cultural or communicative competency in pharmacy practice. This is of significant interest since, heretofore, these generic assessments have been relied upon to provide such assurance. The development of pharmacy-specific linguistic, communicative and cultural competency assessment instruments is an important outcome of this research. (p. 95)

As a result of these findings, staff at the International Pharmacy Graduate Program (IPG Program) at the University of Toronto decided to design an occupation-specific language assessment that would give program information about pharmacy-specific linguistic, communicative and sociocultural competencies.

*(Continued on page 89)*

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***“Clients in Bridging Programs must be able to communicate in an academic environment ...”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments

(cont'd)

(Continued from page 88)

Questions also arose in the Bridging Program at The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences around the ability of generic language assessments to provide assurance of cultural or communicative competency in health care occupations. Administrators at Access and Options (A & O) at The Michener Institute noticed that scores on generic language tests were not always reliable predictors of communicative performance of clients in A & O. Their observations were based on program participants' success or failure in clinical settings and resulted in a reluctance to rely solely upon scores from generic language tests as criteria for program admission. Like staff at the IPG Program at the University of Toronto, staff at A & O at The Michener Institute decided to develop an occupation-specific language assessment. The assessment was to determine entrance readiness of internationally trained health professionals for programs in Access and Options at The Michener Institute.

### Canadian Language Benchmarks

The funding of Bridging Programs by the Government of Ontario required the use of the *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (Pawlikowka-Smith, G., 2000) to describe the language levels of clients in these programs. *The Canadian Language Benchmarks* (CLB) are intended as a Canadian national standard of communicative proficiency in ESL and are promoted by both the federal and provincial governments for use in government-funded immigrant programs.

The CLB are a series of descriptive scales of language proficiency used to describe ESL ability from beginner (CLB 1) to native levels (CLB 12). There are 12 benchmarks for the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and a detailed description of the performance conditions and competency outcomes for each skill area. This comprehensive benchmark system is based on current research in subsequent language acquisition and communicative competence (e.g., Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1984; Canale and Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972). The CLB address sociocultural competency, an important component of the communication demands that internationally trained immigrants must negotiate on their path to licensure. For example, professions in health technologies and pharmacy use competency-based exams where examinees must demonstrate professional knowledge within a professional practice setting (e.g., a hospital). A language assessment in this context should therefore take into account the sociocultural nature of the communication. The CLB, therefore, are an appropriate language framework for an occupation-specific assessment because they include sociocultural and sociolinguistic competency within their theoretical framework. Stewart (2005) describes the range of behaviours that are captured by the CLB:

Describing a hierarchy of skills and strategies applied within a sociocultural context for the accomplishment of specific essential tasks, the document is intended to reflect the increasing linguistic demands placed on Canadian immigrants as they attempt to settle and integrate in the new culture. (p. 29)

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***“A language assessment...should take into account the sociocultural nature of the communication. ...”***

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(Continued on page 90)

## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

(Continued from page 89)

Not only does the CLB framework describe 12 levels of language competency, it also supports the development of language assessments. According to Stewart (2005), one of the purposes of the Canadian Language Benchmarks is to “provide a clear definition of the communicative construct and a description of the corresponding domain that can be applied in the development of assessment instruments” (p. 29). In terms of occupation-specific language assessments, the CLB offer a set of descriptors for language competency as well as a model of how to integrate situational and performance conditions, sociocultural competence and linguistic competence. Although the funding agency of the Bridging Programs (Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities) mandated the use of the CLB framework, the germane characteristics of the benchmarks suited the development of the two language assessments to be designed for A & O at The Michener Institute and the IPG Program at the University of Toronto.

### Development of the International Pharmacy Graduate Language Assessment (IPGLA) and The Michener English Language Assessment (MELA)

The development of both the IPGLA and the MELA followed the same steps; the test development process is divided into eight steps. Each step will be discussed in order, leading up to a discussion of the validation and longitudinal studies that the test developers recommend be conducted if test results are to be used for high-stake purposes.

(Continued on page 91)

**“Language performance varies with context, and specific purpose language is precise.”**

<b>Step 1: Review of Selected Literature</b>	
Language Testing References: <i>Assessing Language for Specific Purposes</i> Dan Douglas (2000) <i>Language Testing in Practice</i> Bachman & Palmer (1996) <i>Canadian Language Benchmarks</i> CCLB (2000) <i>CLB 2000: Theoretical Framework</i> CCLB (2002)	
<b>Step 2: Proposed Test Specifications</b>	
<b>Step 3: Identification of Target language Use</b>	
MELA Occupation Specific References:  Standards of Practice for Respiratory Therapists, Medical Radiological Technologists, Medical Laboratory Technologists  Professional Competencies (CMTO, CMLTO, CRTO)  Benchmarking program materials: observations of classes and clinical placements and review of reading materials and assignments  Review of workplace technical documents and operational manuals	IPGLA Occupation Specific References:  Ontario College of Pharmacy Standards of Practice  NAPRA Competencies  Benchmarked Pharmacy Language Tasks Analysis (IPG Program)  Review of International Pharmacy Graduate Program language support materials and assessments
<b>Step 4: Content Review with Practitioners</b>	
<b>Step 5: Development of Test Tasks</b>	
<b>Step 6: Development of Rating System</b>	
<b>Step 7: Pre-testing Sessions</b>	
<b>Step 8: Pilot Test and Revisions</b>	
MELA – Version 1	IPGLA – Version 1
<b>Proposed Next Steps:</b> Longitudinal & Validation Studies	

**Table 1: Steps in the development of the MELA and the IPGLA**

## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

(Continued from page 90)

### **Step 1: Literature Review**

While it was not within the scope of the project to conduct an exhaustive review of the research in language assessment for this project, the test developers incorporated the framework for developing occupation-specific language assessments from Douglas (2000) and Bachman & Palmer (1996). In particular, a model for developing test specifications for both assessments was adapted from Douglas (2000) who claims that language assessments for specific purposes are advisable because language performance varies with context and specific purpose language is precise. His test development methodology is therefore grounded in a survey of the target language use and situation. Although he recognizes the potential constraints of a narrowly focused test design, the specific purpose test results offer a stronger ability to generalize about the test taker's ability to perform in the target situation.

In referencing the test tasks and rating system for both assessments to the CLB, the test developers used the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* (Pawlikowka-Smith, G., 2000) and the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework* (Pawlikowka-Smith, G., 2002).

### **Step 2: Proposed Test Specifications**

Test specifications based on a model presented by Douglas (2000) were established early in the development process. The components of the Douglas (2000) model that were used include the following: a statement of the test purpose, characteristics of the language users and test takers, a description of target language situations and target language tasks, constructs to measure, test content, and criteria for rating. The proposed test specifications for both the IPGLA and MELA essentially formed a draft for the assessments that was revised throughout the development process. For example, the description of test content changed as different tasks referenced to CLB competencies were proposed, piloted and then either adopted or abandoned. In addition, the scoring criteria described in the test specifications became more refined as tasks were developed. For example, in developing the scoring criteria for writing, the first draft of the test specifications stated that the following criteria recommended by the CLB should be scored: overall effectiveness, fluency, appropriateness, organization/coherence, vocabulary, grammar, intelligibility, legibility and mechanics, cohesion, relevance, adequacy of content. Obviously, each writing task could not be rated using all the above criteria. The test developers decided that five criteria would be a manageable number to use for each task. The decision of which five criteria to use was based on what the test developers felt were the important communicative features of the test task; the test developers believed this decision to be consistent with the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework* (Pawlikowka-Smith, G., 2002, p. 36). For the other three skill areas (reading, listening and speaking), the original test specifications were revised and refined as necessary in a similar way during the test development process.

(Continued on page 92)

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***“The specific purpose  
test results offer  
a stronger ability to  
generalize about the test  
taker's ability to perform  
in the target situation.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

(Continued from page 91)

### **Step 3: Identification of Target Language Use**

Step 3 in the test development process was to identify the target language and target language use. Current language testing research and practice recognize the interaction between the context of communication as well as the use of language for a purpose. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), target language use is "...a set of specific language use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside of the test itself, and to which we want our inferences about language ability to generalize" (p. 44).

The International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program had already conducted a pharmacy language task analysis using the CLB (Dillon, P., 2000). The developers of the IPGLA used this research as a starting point for identifying test tasks that were pharmacy specific and referenced to the CLB. The report for the study aligned communicative tasks performed by pharmacists with CLB competency descriptors. This task analysis served to create a list of pharmacy communication tasks that represented target language use situations and task sources for the assessment tool under development. The test developers also cross-referenced these target language use situations with the relevant pharmacy regulatory body competency statements. Finally, the test developers elicited feedback from a focus group of professional practitioners.

In identifying target language use situations for the MELA at The Michener Institute, the test developers considered language use in three areas 1) communicative competencies required within A & O; 2) requirements to complete the professional registration process (professional practice examinations, application process and interviews); and 3) communication observed in clinical practice. These areas form the key target language situations for the assessment. The types of information collected included: research on professional competencies with a focus on the communication requirements for each occupation represented in the project (i.e. regulatory body competency statements; HRDC Essential Skills Profiles); observation of courses offered to the Bridging Program participants; review of sample materials (e.g., lecture handouts and notes etc.), and observation of work placements (a sample is shown in Table 4 below).

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***"The original test specifications were revised and refined as necessary."***

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### **Step 4: Content Review with Practitioners**

As a result of the target language use research, the test developers produced a draft set of test tasks. Because the test tasks were occupation-specific, it was important that practitioners in the relevant occupations verified and provided feedback on occupation-specific test content. For both assessments, focus groups of professional practitioners were set up and feedback on test content was given. An example of this process for an IPGLA listening task

(Continued on page 93)

## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

Test Task	Description	Focus Group Discussion Notes & Comments/Resources
VI. Message 1: Listen to a voice-mail message (patient information) and write down details.	A voice mail message is played and the test taker is required to complete the form with the correct information, including numbers, names, dates, time, and message details.  <b>Pharmacy competencies:</b> listen to and record phone messages from patients and health care practitioners.  <b>CLB competencies:</b> following and recording instructions; reproducing information accurately.	Authenticity: Yes  Sample message topic: Instructions to refill prescription.  Form layout: blank pad for note taking (or a prepared patient profile form).  Relevant message information: name, phone number, prescription number, pick up date, prescription details.

**Table 2: Sample IPGLA Listening Task**

(Continued from page 92)

appears in Table 2. The left-hand column reflects the test task number and a brief description of the task. The middle column gives a description of what the task requires of the test taker and how a pharmacy competency was matched to a CLB competency. The right-hand column shows the feedback received on the test task from the focus group of professional practitioners.

### Step 5: Development of Test Tasks

For the pharmacy-specific language assessment, a number of pharmacy-specific test tasks were proposed based on the CLB research on target language use and on consultations with professional practitioners (pharmacists). Table 3 lists the final test tasks that were adopted based on this review process and subsequent pilot testing.

For the development of the MELA, the test developers referenced the data collected for target language use situations to the CLB. This benchmarking process involved describing language use in different situations (academic upgrading and clinical workplace) and establishing a connection between these communication competencies and the competency standards in the different levels of the CLB. Each course observation, workplace observation, interview, and piece of sample

(Continued on page 94)

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***“It was important that practitioners in the relevant occupations verified and provided feedback on occupation-specific test content.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Interview 1: Personal back- ground & pro- fessional ex- perience CLB 7	Retrieve patient and prescription information from a voice mail message CLB 6	Find important details in a drug monograph/CPS CLB 6	Take simple to complex tele- phone messages CLB 6
Role play 1: Gathering pa- tient information CLB 8	Take notes about a pre- scription trans- fer CLB 7	Read an excerpt from a phar- macy textbook CLB 7	Write a work- place message CLB 7
Role-play 2: Giving drug information CLB 9	Understand situ- ational context and details in a video-taped pa- tient counselling interview CLB 7/8	Read a work- place text/ memo/letter CLB 8	Write a short opinion essay CLB 8
Interview 2: Complex dis- cussion CLB 9	Take notes on an excerpt from a lecture on a pharmacy topic CLB 9	Read a profes- sional journal editorial/ research paper excerpt CLB 9	Summarize lec- ture excerpt CLB 9

**Table 3: IPGLA Test tasks**

*(Continued from page 93)*

material was entered into a data collection table. Specific language competencies for each activity were then described and compared to benchmark descriptors. The descriptors were analyzed against the CLB competency standards using an expert-judgement standard-setting method where the two researchers assigned CLB equivalencies independently, then compared results and discussed any differences until arriving at an agreement.

*(Continued on page 95)*

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***“Test tasks were  
proposed based on the  
CLB research on target  
language use and on  
consultations with  
professional  
practitioners.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

Target Language Use Situation	Language Skills & CLBs				Rationale
	S	L	R	W	
MLT Lecture: Laboratory Safety		8/9	8/9	8	Listen to a presentation by a native speaker on a technical topic; make notes; follow visual cues on Power Point Presentation. Notes for presentation require inference and background knowledge.

**Table 4: MELA benchmark standard setting**

(Continued from page 94)

A sample result of this process is shown in Table 4. The left-hand column shows the target language use situation, based on an observation of an academic lecture, for a Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT) in Access and Options at The Michener Institute. The middle column shows the benchmarks assigned to the language skills observed after the test developers conducted the standard setting. The right-hand column captures the rationale behind the benchmarking decisions.

Once this benchmarking process was completed, test tasks were developed in consultations with the A & O staff and content experts from The Michener Institute. Similar to the procedure followed for the IPGLA, a core focus group of experts was established who agreed to participate in consultations with the test developers to provide workplace materials and review test tasks from a professional perspective. Table 5 shows the final test tasks based on the focus group review and subsequent pilot testing.

### Step 6: Developing the Rating System

The theoretical principles behind the rating scales for both assessments are derived from the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework* (Pawlikowka-Smith, G., 2002). In rating performance on a task, the CLB recommends a 4-point scale. A score of “4” indicates that the test taker is performing above the performance level (CLB level) required for the task. A score of “3” indicates that the test taker is performing at the CLB level required to complete the task. Scores of “2” and “1” indicate that the test taker is performing below the CLB level required for successful performance on the task.

(Continued on page 96)

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**“A core focus group of experts was established who agreed to participate in consultations with the test developers to provide workplace materials and review test tasks.”**

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Interview Part 1: personal background & professional experience CLB 6/7	Take workplace phone messages CLB 6/7	Read the description of a health and safety incident in a hospital CLB 6	Take simple to complex telephone messages CLB 6
Photo Story: describe workplace process using a photo story CLB 7/8	Receive workplace related instructions over the telephone CLB 7/8	Read a Workplace memo CLB 7	Fill out incident report form CLB 7
Role-play: give detailed technical instructions in the workplace CLB 8/9	Listen to a workplace conversation CLB 8/9	Read a complex interdisciplinary text CLB 8	Write a short opinion essay CLB 8
Interview Part 2: Problem-solving discussion CLB 9	Take notes from a professional development lecture CLB 9	Read a professional journal editorial CLB 9	Summarize lecture CLB 9

**Table 5: MELA test tasks**

(Continued from page 95)

### **Test tasks and CLB levels**

The test tasks in both assessments are referenced to CLB levels (see Tables 2 & 3). The test developers recognize that each test task prompts the test taker to display a level of performance that may surpass the task requirements, not meet the task requirements or simply meet the task requirements. In other words, performance on each task is not exclusively tied to one bench-

(Continued on page 97)

**“Each test task prompts the test taker to display a level of performance that may surpass the task requirements.”**

## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

*(Continued from page 96)*

mark level. In commenting on CLB level and task alignment, Stewart (2005) observes that:

In working with the CLB, it is often difficult to separate behaviours from tasks, but it is essential to do so because a single task can never reliably be pegged to a single benchmark. (p. 34).

and suggests that

From an assessment perspective, then, tasks are best viewed not as exclusive indicators of benchmark status, but as springboards for eliciting a range of observable performance. (p. 35).

The implication for IPGLA and MELA test tasks is, therefore, that performance on each task is not merely a measure of pass or failure. For example, if a test taker demonstrates performance that exceeds the benchmark task expectations, then the test taker is assigned a higher benchmark. Conversely, if the test taker displays performance that is below benchmark expectations for the task, a lower benchmark is assigned.

### **Step 7: Pre-testing Sessions**

Before the pilot test, test tasks were tried out in several pre-testing sessions with small groups of participants in both Bridging Programs. For the IPGLA, 53 people participated in the pre-testing session and for the MELA 41 people participated. These pre-testing sessions allowed the test developers to make revisions to task instructions and to reflect on how to best organize the testing session for the pilot. Because both assessments use a one-on-one interview format for the Speaking Test, considerable planning was involved in administering the assessment to a large number of test takers. This process was also helpful in establishing a protocol for the testing procedures. After the pre-testing sessions, both assessments underwent pilot testing with their respective target populations.

### **Step: 8 Pilot Test**

A pilot test of draft items was organized for both assessments. Forty-one people participated in the MELA pilot test and 50 people participated in the IPGLA pilot test. For the MELA, participants were drawn from A & O and The Michener Institute's full-time program. For the IPGLA, participants were drawn from outside the IPG Program as it was felt that IPG Program students would have consistently high language levels and the test developers were interested in seeing how test-takers with various language levels performed on the assessment. Test-

*(Continued on page 98)*

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***“Performance on each task is not merely a measure of pass or failure.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

(Continued from page 97)

takers were, however, recruited through the IPG Program as well as the Ontario College of Pharmacy (which are contact points for internationally trained pharmacists).

The test developers conducted the pilot test. In choosing evaluators for the productive test tasks (speaking and writing), the test developers decided to choose evaluators with CLB training. The test developers themselves have CLB training and are trained to administer the *Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test* (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks). The *Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test* (CLBPT) is an English language test developed and maintained by the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB) and is used for placement in settlement language training programs for immigrants across Canada. For the pilot tests, the test developers conducted the speaking interviews and rated the writing samples themselves as well as hiring some additional CLBPT-trained assessors.

As the assessments have moved out of the development phase and into the implementation phase, more evaluators have had to be hired. Presently, most of the evaluators conducting the assessments are CLBPT trained; however, every assessor for the Speaking Test is required to complete a training session conducted by the test developers that includes listening to interview samples and doing a calibration exercise.

A discussion of the different components of the pilot test appears below. Each part of the assessment including the Speaking Test, the Listening Test, the Reading Test, and the Writing Test will be discussed separately.

*Speaking Test:* During the pilot test all interviews were recorded and rated by one assessor and reviewed by a second assessor (a test developer). Assessors reported that the prompts on the interview script succeeded in eliciting the type of input required for each task. They found the format of the Speaking Test easy to use, the flow logical and the instructions clear to them and to the test takers. Most assessors were able to complete their interviews in the time recommended (30 minutes), although this is an area where training will prove useful as a way to ensure that the interviews are efficient and conducted in a timely manner.

Inter-rater reliability for the assessment of the speaking tasks was very good. A comparison of scores showed that both raters agreed 77% of the time, meaning that 7 times out of 10 the assessors agreed. Of the remaining 33%, assessors disagreed by one point only. The test developers then looked at the scores that were different and either changed their rating based on a discussion of the samples or decided to make changes to the wording of some of the rating descriptors based on the consensus reached in their discussion. The intent was to make the rating descriptors clearer and, therefore, easier to use.

*Listening Test:* The results of scores on individual test items were tabulated and then converted to a score out of four based on a percentage of correct items recommended by the CLB. Table 6 shows CLB performance ratings for listening and reading. For example, a score of 80% or more of correct items on a reading or listening task indicates a performance exceeding task

(Continued on page 99)

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**“Every assessor for the Speaking Test is required to complete a training session conducted by the test developers that includes listening to interview samples and doing a calibration exercise.”**

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments

(cont'd)

CLB ratings for performance levels in listening and reading		
1	Fewer than 50% of the items	Performance not successful relative to task requirements; learner responds correctly to fewer than 50% of the items in the measured category
2	50 – 69% of the items	Performance marginally successful relative to task requirements: learner responds correctly to more than 49% but fewer than 70% of the items in the measured category
3	70 – 80 % of the items	Performance successful relative to task requirements; learner responds correctly to 70-80% of the items in the measured category
4	More than 80% of the items	Performance very successful relative to task requirements, learner responds correctly to more than 80% of the items in the measured category

**Table 6: CLB Performance Ratings – Listening and Reading**

**Source: Pawlikowka-Smith, G. (2002)**

(Continued from page 98)

requirements and receives a score of four.

The test developers compared the Listening Test results and made revisions to the test tasks. Some revisions were made to achieve clearer test instructions and to make adjustments to test items that were not discriminating well (e.g., a comparison of responses indicated some items that were too easy or too difficult).

In the lecture summary task, where the test takers take notes in order to demonstrate their ability to understand an academic lecture, the challenge was in deciding precisely what content constituted the key points and supporting details of the lecture. The test developers looked at all the samples, which displayed a wide range of performance, and used the samples to determine which items would be included in the rating key.

*Reading Test:* The Reading Tests were scored and then reviewed by the test developers. For the test tasks that used multiple-choice formats, a comparison of responses was carried out and, once results were compared, problematic items were revised (e.g. unclear stems, lack of strong distracters). The reading tasks were scored using answer keys and then the total was converted to a score out of four using the CLB recommended percentages (as in the listening test tasks).

(Continued on page 100)

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***“The challenge was in deciding precisely what content constituted the key points and supporting details of the lecture.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (cont'd)

(Continued from page 99)

*Writing Test:* For rating the writing tasks of the test it was important to verify that the rating system was reliable given that these tasks are productive and are rated using CLB referenced descriptors. Two CLB-trained evaluators scored the pilot test writing samples and compared results. For writing samples that had different scores, the ratings were discussed and decisions were made to revise the language in the rating grids with the aim of making the descriptors clearer.

Each writing task in the Writing Test has its own rating chart with holistic and analytic evaluation criteria chosen based on the task requirement. For example, the rating criteria used for IPGLA Writing Task 3 (lecture summary) are effectiveness, organization, structure, meaning and naturalness of expression. (For an explanation of CLB rating criteria for writing, see Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework (Pawlikowka-Smith, 2002).

### **Proposed Longitudinal Studies**

The test developers felt that the issue of concurrent validity required additional attention. One of the challenges was that only the CanTEST has been formally validated against the benchmarks, and not all participants in the pilot test had taken the CanTEST. The test developers planned to compare IPGLA and MELA results to scores on other language tests, but in many cases pilot test participants had taken fluency tests some time before taking the IPGLA or MELA. The intervening time may have altered the fluency level of the test taker, rendering any comparison invalid.

Another obstacle to this kind of comparison was that it is difficult to compare CLB to scores on other tests that have no CLB reference. The ideal situation would be to conduct IPGLA or MELA sessions back-to-back with another CLB referenced assessment. However, to date, no other validated CLB tests at this level of language proficiency have been developed. It is recommended that this type of concurrent validity study be carried out as CLB tools for testing language proficiency at CLB 7-10 are developed.

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***“To date, no other validated CLB tests at this level of language proficiency have been developed.”***

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## Project Findings

### **Operationalization**

Traditionally, many training organizations have used scores on generic English-language proficiency assessments to provide a demonstration of language fluency. An obvious advantage of this practice is that the cost of test administration and test development is born solely outside of a training organization. However, should an institution or professional organization develop its own occupation-specific language assessment, it would have to take responsi-

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments

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*(Continued from page 100)*

bility for test administration and maintenance. Such organizational responsibilities could include: test site (appropriate space to conduct interviews and traditional group administrations), test administration (registration, promotion, score reporting, raters, etc.), test security (access and storage of test data), test item maintenance (ongoing development of new versions).

### **Training Assessors**

At present, the test developers are also the Speaking Test assessors. The test developers recommend that once enough Speaking Test samples have been generated, Speaking Test sample exemplars be created to train future assessors as part of an assessment or training package. A process of calibration using exemplars to train assessors for the Speaking Test has already been started and will inform the current development of assessor training materials.

### **Validity Questions**

An advantage of an occupation-specific language test administered to test takers trained in the occupation in which the test has been referenced is that test takers have the opportunity to engage closely with the test tasks. Wiggins (1993) makes this observation about the significance of engagement with test tasks:

A context is thus realistic to the extent that we so accept the premises, constraints, and “feel” of the challenge that our desire to master it makes us lose sight of any extrinsic or contrived factors at stake - factors such as the reality that someone is rating. (p. 232)

Of course, it is not expected that test takers will lose sight of the test situation, but it logically follows that test tasks that strongly engage the test taker should help the test taker better demonstrate his/her language competency.

While the test developers feel that the assessments have met their purpose, formal reliability and validity studies need to be carried out should the tests be used, especially where they are for high-stake purposes. At present, the purpose of both assessments is for program placement, not professional licensure. Should the purpose of the assessments change and the assessments be used to provide demonstrations of fluency for professional licensure, it would be imperative to conduct a longitudinal analysis beforehand to validate the construct validity of the assessments (i.e. determine whether the assessments are doing what they claim to do). A high-stake assessment requires a thoroughly valid and reliable instrument, especially in situations “where examinees’ future hangs in the balance or in which public safety is a concern” (Stewart, 2005, p. 34).

Another challenging area in establishing validity is designing CLB refer-

*(Continued on page 102)*

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***“Formal reliability and validity studies need to be carried out should the tests be used, especially where they are for high-stake purposes.”***

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## Developing CLB Referenced Assessments (References)

(Continued from page 101)

enced tasks for high-level benchmarks. High CLB competencies require high-stress-high-stake activities that are not always possible to simulate in a conventional test-taking situation. More research is required around the development of high-level CLB test tasks that can be administered in a cost effective testing situation.

### Conclusion

The aim in developing these assessments was to create test tasks on which performance in real life situations could be predicted. To achieve this aim, occupation-specific tasks were designed for a specific test taking population. The test developers agree with Stewart (2005) that task-based assessment is a worthy objective to pursue, “It is thus the responsibility of those who support democracy in education to continue the pursuit of a framework, a terminology and a research methodology to establish fully and defend the legitimacy of task-based assessment” (p. 39). The development of the International Pharmacy Graduate Language Assessment and The Michener English Language Assessment is a result of government and training institutions supporting each other towards a common objective. This joint initiative may lead the way to the development of additional CLB referenced task-based assessments that allow internationally trained professionals to integrate fairly and reliably into the Ontario workforce. ❖

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