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Canadian history and traditions have created a country where our values include tolerance and respect for cultural differences, and a commitment to social justice. We are proud of the fact that we are a peaceful nation and that we are accepted in many places around the world as peacekeepers. As a small population occupying a vast northern land enriched by immigration throughout its history, Canadians have developed a kind of genius for compromise and co-existence.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002a

Canada faces demographic challenges. Birth rates are at a historic low, and Canada's largest age cohort--the baby boomers--is ageing... Immigration will likely account for all net labour force growth by 2011, and projections indicate it will account for total population growth by 2031. For these reasons, ensuring that immigrants and refugees have the skills to succeed in the labour market is key to Canada's future prosperity.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada Immigration Plan, 2002b

Each and every form of ethnic, linguistic, religious, racial and indeed national social identity in Canada has been fabricated into a certain *nationality* through maintaining the dominance of some social identity (a certain patriarchal Englishness) against and under which... all others are subordinated.

Young, 1984; pp.10-12

For all its rhetoric about a cultural "mosaic," Canada refuses to renovate its national self-image to include its changing complexion. It is a New World country with Old World concepts of a fixed, exclusionist national identity... Canadians of colour were routinely treated as "not real" Canadians.

Mukherjee, 1997

## **Introduction**

As is indicated by the first quotation that introduces this chapter, the Canadian government likes to indulge in self-congratulatory and often smug statements about how generous it is to the large numbers of newcomers who immigrate into the country.

Individual Canadians do indeed seem to be generous and welcoming to immigrants, as is shown in recent polling (Migration News, 2002) and exemplified by newspaper editorials (Toronto Star, 2002a). However, as the second quotation reveals, these tendencies should not mask the fact that the national government's policy developers support high levels of immigration primarily because this is vital to their perception of Canada's long-term economic and political interests.

Canada obtains the full financial benefits of immigration only if newcomers can be integrated into the fabric of the nation's economic life. In that regard, second language education programs are central to the removal of barriers to newcomer integration (Wong, Duff & Early, 2001) especially the inability to speak either English or French, the country's two official languages.

However crucial the economic contributions provided by these programs might be, it is also important to note they play a crucial role in identity formation, both in terms of what it means to individuals (Harris, Leung & Rampton, 2002; Ilieva, 2000; Kubata, 2001; Morgan, 1997; Norton, 2000) and the nation-state (Anderson, 1991; Burt, 1986; Courchêne, 1996; Fleming, in press; Hall, 1992; Kaplan, 1993; Kymlicka, 1992; Murphy, 1971; McNamara, 1997; Mitchell, 2001; Schechter & Bayley, 1997; White & Hunt, 2000). As I argue below, however, the ability of these programs to foster identity construction is

being limited by funding decisions that limit English language learning to basic levels of proficiency and increasingly place greater emphasis on the limited goals of job preparation.

Canadian national identity is a highly contested and notoriously slippery entity. Up to the present time, most English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have served to strengthen the privilege enjoyed by British-based culture in the ways criticised by Young and Mukherjee above. The current challenge is to break this mould and design programming that helps recreate Canadian national identity in a truly egalitarian manner and fulfils the real promise of multiculturalism, in its more critical forms (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1992; Cummins, 1988; McLaren, 2001).

In this chapter, I first sketch the historic context of immigration before outlining bilingualism and multiculturalism, the two policy initiatives that represent the Canadian government's strategic responses to pressing demographic and political pressures. In my third section, I provide a brief history of second language education program development in Canada. This is followed by a summary of how the more important features of current adult ESL policy and provision developed. I conclude with references to emerging trends in Canadian adult ESL programs and comment on the implications for nation-state identity formation in Canada.

### **The Historic Context of Immigration**

Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand have taken the lead among western countries in immigration planning. However, almost all economically developed countries are reassessing the benefits of immigration in the face of declining

birth rates, ageing populations and globalisation (Churchill, 1986). This trend is occurring at the same time that at least 150 million people are on the move on the globe at any one time, more than ever before in human history. Many of these emigrants are fleeing increased levels of war and violence, while others hope to escape the grinding forces of poverty that is deepening in many parts of the world. Increasingly, developed countries are competing with one another to attract skilled immigrants and take advantage of these vast diasporas (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002b).

Immigration has always played a major role in Canadian demographics. According to the latest census data (Statistics Canada, 2003), out of a total current population of thirty-one and a half million, only a little more than one million Canadians claim some form of aboriginal heritage. The vast majority of Canadians, on the other hand, have either descended from immigrants or are immigrants themselves.

In the aftermath of European contact and the devastation of native populations, the number of people in the French-speaking colonies of what would become Canada grew to approximately 1700. Soon after the British conquest of Quebec in 1759, however, large numbers of French-speaking Acadians was expelled from present-day Nova Scotia to Louisiana. Many of these exiles returned in large enough numbers to ensure the bilingual character of present-day New Brunswick, but not enough to turn the tide against successive waves of English-speaking immigration to what was now known as British North America. Not long after the American War of Independence, when those loyal to the British crown fled the United States, the English-speaking population became the majority in what would become Canada.

By 1900, the English-speaking majority made up of 57% of the total Canadian

population of 5,374,026. French speakers, both in and out of Quebec, amounted to 30%. Native peoples made up only 2.4% of the population. The remainder were principally immigrants from Central Europe recruited to populate the western prairies and those Chinese labourers (possibly up to 15,000) brought in to build the trans-continental railways.

Much of the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian immigration makes for upsetting reading (Knowles, 2000). There were strong preferences expressed by government for British immigrants. Those from Ireland or continental Europe were accepted for strategic reasons if those from the United Kingdom couldn't be found, particularly when the Canadian government moved to counteract American expansionism and Metis separatism in the west. These immigrants were often provided with significant land grants as incentives to immigrate. On the other hand, Asian applicants were either explicitly excluded or subject to prohibitive entry fees and regulations, even when holding British passports. The notorious 'head tax' created a significant economic barrier to Asians who wished to enter the country or reunite their families. Other immigration procedures discouraged black applicants and made it nearly impossible for Jews fleeing war-torn Europe to enter the country. Even those racial minorities already in Canada faced serious forms of discrimination. Many racial groups were bared from practising some professions, living in certain neighbourhoods or explicitly denied voting rights. Native peoples, to cite the worst example, only gained the federal franchise in 1960.

This sad history is littered with violence and the capricious exercise of power by government officials. A few of the worst examples demonstrates that Canadian history has not been the progress of sweetness and light that is often portrayed. In 1907, whites

rampaged through Chinese and Japanese neighbourhoods in Vancouver, threatening its residents and smashing storefronts. In 1914, the Komogata Maru, a ship containing 440 emigrants from India, was refused entry to British Columbia under various arbitrary pretexts even though it had adhered to the ridiculous regulations used at the time to prevent the entry of South Asians, even if they held British passports. Later in the century, most Canadians of Japanese descent had their possessions confiscated during the Second World War because they shared the same ethnicity as the enemy of the time.

In 1947, a long process of change in citizenship and immigration policies was inaugurated. Chinese and South Asian citizens were allowed to vote in that year, and Japanese citizens two years later. Canadian citizens were made distinct from British subjects. Married women gained the right to citizenship separate from their husbands. The ability to claim dual citizenship, a privilege enjoyed particularly by British citizens, was restricted. Residency requirements were instituted for all applicants, including those from Britain. In the 1960's, Canada removed quotas and racial criteria from its immigration selection process and adopted a 'point system', in which applications were assessed on the basis of a set of objective criteria.

These changes in immigration policy occurred in the context of important demographic changes in Canadian society that started soon after the end of the Second World War. After the short but significant jump immediately following 1945, the Canadian birth rate has steadily declined. The growth rate in births now stands at less than 1% annually and continues to fall. In the 1990's it became apparent that the Canadian labour force and tax base were declining to such a degree that it threatened the pensions and other state supports, such as state-run medical insurance, for the 'baby-

boomers' born just after the war. To answer that threat, significant increases in immigration were inaugurated.

These trends are continuing. In 2003, Canada again increased its immigration targets to between 220,000 and 245,000 newcomers. Immigrants now account for over 70% of the total national labour force growth. If current trends continue, immigration will account for 100% of total labour force growth within ten years and all population growth by 2031 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002b). The government's ability to account for expansion or inflation will thus soon be totally dependent on immigration.

It is important to note that these new immigrants increasingly tend to come from countries where the dominant language is neither English nor French. In recent years, up to 43% of all immigrants arriving in Canada have not been able to speak either official language beyond a marginal level. There have also been changes in the ethnic origins of immigrants. In 1966, 87% of all immigrants to Canada were from Europe. Today, 80.3% of all immigrants originate from Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central America. The need for adult language education is also clear, given the fact that over 70% of all immigrants to Canada are adults.

These immigrants arrive at a time when over 16% of the country's population already claim a mother tongue other than English and French. Recent immigrants make up large percentages of the population of the three largest urban regions: Toronto (42%), Montreal (18%) and Vancouver (35%). These percentages will only increase if current trends continue (Statistics Canada, 2003).

These newcomers will face many of the challenges previous generations of immigrants faced, not the least of which will be racism. This is because racism is not



simply a ‘historical fact’ in Canada. As a number of scholars have made quite plain, it is still very much part of the nation’s present condition (Bannerji, 2000; Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 2000; Li, 1990; Ng, 1993).

### **Bilingualism and Multiculturalism: The Policy Context**

Since the 1970’s, the Canadian government has embarked on two major policy initiatives to remake the nation-state: bilingualism and multiculturalism. The first of these, bilingualism, is a central part of the federal strategy to maintain national unity in the face of one of the greatest political challenges facing the modern Canadian nation state: Quebec separatism (Esses & Gardiner, 1996). The second, multiculturalism, is designed as a way to integrate the increased numbers of immigrants discussed above. Few nations have ever before attempted a project on this scale. Some have argued that Canada is the first country to remake itself in the contexts of post-modernism and globalisation (Fulford, 1993).

Before the advent of bilingualism and multiculturalism in Canada, language policies centred on the interactions (or lack thereof) between the two ‘founding peoples’, the English and the French. In most jurisdictions across the country, separate school systems were introduced for both language groups and little interaction occurred. The particular language education needs of other linguistic populations were not taken into account and they were simply expected to assimilate.

Bilingualism was instituted as official government policy as a result of the 1969 Official Languages Act, and was enshrined in the Canadian Constitution Act and Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. It strengthened the role of both English and French as

the official languages for the country, ensured equal access to government services and regulated the labelling of consumer goods in both languages. Bilingualism also financed the creation of English and French second language education programs in elementary and secondary schools throughout the country.

Bilingualism was in answer to the 'silent revolution' that occurred in Quebec during the 1950's and '60's. Long-simmering grievances on the part of the French-speaking majority in the province led to movements for greater autonomy and even independence. Many Quebecois expressed bitterness over the discrimination they faced in the workplace and government, noting the degree of privilege enjoyed by the English-speaking minority. More importantly, they expressed fears about their eventual complete assimilation into an English-speaking continent, citing the slow decline of French in other parts of North America where it was once more commonly spoken, such as Louisiana, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and northern Ontario.

Bilingualism developed in the context of the violent 1970 October Crisis in Quebec and the elections of separatist provincial governments in that province not long afterwards. As federal policy, bilingualism was designed to make French-speaking Canadians feel more at home in their own country by providing equal access to power structures. After the adoption of bilingualism, for example, it became difficult to have a career in the top levels of the federal civil service without a working knowledge of both official languages.

Multiculturalism, launched only one year after the October Crisis in Quebec, was developed quite clearly within the framework of bilingualism. It was adopted in response to increased immigration, the need to develop a distinct national identity in the face of an

increasingly aggressive American cultural presence and the discontent expressed by immigrant groups to the designation of French and English as official languages (Esses & Gardner, 1996). In speeches at the time, Prime Minister Trudeau (1971) explicitly made the links between creation of an officially bilingual and multicultural state to national unity and economic development. Principles related to multiculturalism, such as respect for diverse cultures and races and the full and equitable participation of all ethnic groups in Canadian social life were also subsequently enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. On a practical level, multiculturalism released funds for the support of cultural activities and, more importantly, advocacy organisations in a multitude of ethnic communities.

Given the historic and political contexts that went into the creation of the policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism, it is not surprising that multilingualism was not part of the agenda (Corson, 1990). Multiculturalism was not designed to compromise the privileged position enjoyed by French and English, the languages of the two ‘founding peoples’ or their corresponding cultures.

### **Adult ESL Program Development**

No priority was given to the development of national ESL programs, either for children or for adults, prior to the Second World War (Ashworth, 2001; Burnaby, 1996). Separate jurisdictions, such as individual school districts or provincial ministries of education administered second language programs, but usually on an ad hoc basis.

There are some interesting historical examples of how second languages, dialects and cultures were treated by educational institutions as things to be eradicated from Canadian social life. The first school in what would become Canada, founded in 1632 by

the Jesuit order in Quebec, exposed its multicultural student body to an explicitly Christian training. This tradition continued with residential schools, a notorious system in which aboriginal children were forcibly taken from their parents and communities for the express purpose of eradicating their languages and cultures. The residential school system, responsible for an enormous amount of sorrow in native communities, were administered by various Christian churches and supported by the federal government.

The racist attitudes of many administrators were evident in every part of the country. In 1844, Egerton Ryerson, the first Chief Superintendent of Schools in what would become Ontario, helped found an educational system explicitly mandated to assimilate the newly arrived Catholic Irish and promote protestant 'Anglo-conformity' (Tomkins, 1978).

On the prairies, one of the most influential educators of new Canadians, James Anderson, emphasised the need for teachers to adopt a 'missionary spirit' for the task of stamping out bilingualism and promoting Anglo-Canadian values and culture (Anderson, 1918). Anderson, later elected premier of Saskatchewan, headed a notoriously conservative government that restricted French and minority language rights until being defeated at the polls in 1934, accused of corruption and having links with the Ku Klux Klan.

British Columbia has also had a long history of racial conflict over education. The most important example of this is the local school authority's 1922 attempt to segregate Chinese-Canadian children in Victoria, the provincial capital. The Chinese community in that city, one of the oldest immigrant enclaves in the country, organised a boycott that ended the practice a year later (Stanley, 1991). The Vancouver School Board opened the

first ESL programs for children in British Columbia in 1907, but no provincial body sponsored adult ESL programs until the advent of federal multicultural policy, over sixty years later.

Multicultural policy quickly opened the door for programs that promoted heritage languages for children, but did not lead immediately to the systematic provision of adult ESL. Many difficulties arose over conflicts between federal and provincial jurisdictions. Under the Canadian Constitution, education is a provincial responsibility. Immigration and citizenship is federal. Both jurisdictions claimed that adult second language education was the responsibility of the other. Ontario and Quebec developed provincial funding formulas that allowed various bodies, such as school districts, colleges and community agencies to provide limited access to English and French language education, respectively. This led to some innovative and far-reaching program planning, most notably by the Toronto School Board, which had to cope with the enormous demographic changes of a city subject to a massive influx of immigrants. Few other jurisdictions in the country acted.

In 1978, the federal government, through the Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC), created the first national language training project as part of the Canadian Job Strategies (CJS) program. This program provided language training for adult migrants and native Canadians who could not find employment because they lacked proficiency in English or French. It did this through the use of ‘training seats’, where the federal government purchased the rights to enrol students they sponsored from the ranks of the unemployed. This training was usually full time with basic living allowances or unemployment insurance benefits provided to trainees who meet certain criteria. The

instructors, typically hired through community colleges, provided language instruction at a basic level of proficiency. Institutional providers applied for the funds, hired instructors, determined curricula, selected materials and conducted assessments on their own, sometimes on an ad hoc basis. It is interesting to note that many of these programming features are still extant in current Canadian language training programs. Canadian governments, whether federal or provincial, have provided the funds but have not provided much direct guidance historically on ESL methodology, curriculum development or teacher training. As I discuss below, however, this situation could be changing.

Over time, several deficiencies of the CJS program became apparent. The total number of students enrolled in its language training components was never very large, rarely numbering more than 15,000 in any one year. This was far fewer than the estimated number of people in the country who needed language training, a fact undoubtedly due to the restricted nature of its eligibility requirements. More importantly, due to the fact that the program was geared for reemployment, only “heads of households” (i.e. the principal family wage earner) were eligible. Given the long-standing wage gap between the genders, this meant that almost all the participants in the program were men. In addition, recent immigrants with little or no Canadian work experience were ineligible because they were not on the unemployment insurance rolls.

As a result of a court challenge sponsored by several immigrant organisations in regards to these inequities, the federal government created three new language-training programs that had broader community foci. Two of these, the Secretary of State Citizenship and Language Training Program and the Citizenship and Community

Participation Program were short-lived. They subsidised the wages of instructors in selected citizenship programs and provided money for textbooks. Both programs were part-time and offered no living allowances for participants.

The third program, the Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP), was more substantial. Created in 1986, it was designed to meet the needs of adult immigrants, primarily women and seniors, who are not destined for the labour force. The SLTP had the advantages of being flexible and the ability to provide onsite childcare and the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses such as bus fare. Immigrant organisations received substantial funding to enter the field with school districts and colleges as language training providers. Many formed alliances with already existing providers in the development of new and innovative programming, particularly in the Toronto region with the local school boards.

Over time, deficiencies also became apparent in the SLTP. Many immigrant organisations and providers complained that the program was chronically underfunded, with a variety of inequities in application, inferior facilities, poorly trained staff, and inconsistent curricula and methodology (Health and Welfare Canada, 1988).

### **The Current Structure of Adult ESL Provision**

The string of events that led to the creation of the current structure of adult ESL programming in Canada started in 1990, with the release of the federal government's four year immigration plan (Government of Canada, 1991). The plan was a major change in direction for the federal government and came at a time when the demographic changes in Canadian society discussed above were becoming more evident.

The plan garnered a great deal of press at the time because it increased levels of immigration while extolling the associated economic benefits. The plan also prioritised the procurement of immigrants who had particular business and career skills, called for a streamlining of the immigration process, and indicated a need for greater provincial/ federal cooperation. Most importantly, the plan set immigrant language training as a major national priority for the first time.

Responding to the need for greater provincial/ federal cooperation, Quebec negotiated an accord with Ottawa in 1991 that gave the province immigration selection powers and the responsibility to provide integration services and French language training. The federal government turned over the funds apportioned for immigrants in Quebec to the province and retained only the power to set general guidelines.

In the rest of the provinces, however, no agreements regarding language policy were immediately forthcoming. In 1991, the federal government took the initiative and formed a special advisory council made up of various stakeholders in immigration and settlement. This body provided a set of recommendations that called for greater consistency in adult ESL provision, the development of professional development and training standards for teachers, valid language assessment tests, an increase in training periods, limits to class sizes, and national curriculum documents.

The following year, two adult immigrant training programs were initiated that attempted to implement the recommendations of the advisory council: Labour Market Language Training (LMLT) and Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC). LMLT focused on higher levels of English proficiency and was modelled on language training programs in Australia that were career specific. It was short-lived, however.



LINC and the provincial counterparts it has spawned, however, has become the dominant adult ESL structure in Canada. It has gradually replaced almost all other English training programs in the country and has been instrumental in the development of a myriad of national assessment and curriculum projects.

LINC has been designed for basic language training and can be accessed by any recent landed immigrant (official resident) of Canada. It features better levels of funding than existed in previous programs and more consistent assessment and placement procedures. A greater degree of accountability in regards to attendance and record keeping has also been set up. Like in other programs that preceded it, LINC providers have to apply yearly for funds, hire instructors, arrange classroom space and determine curricula and materials. However, important differences in the funding application processes have led to a much wider range of providers. Community agencies (especially in Ontario), and for-profit businesses (especially in British Columbia) have become bigger players, much to the chagrin of more traditional providers such as community colleges. In order to compete with these new players, traditional providers have had to cut costs to survive, principally by restricting the salary demands of their professional staff.

Except in rare and isolated instances, LINC learners are not eligible for living allowances or significant subsidies. In some jurisdictions, learners are provided transportation allowances and access to childminding. A very small minority, with the cooperation of other government service agencies, can draw on welfare or unemployment benefits while attending classes. The vast majority, however, either attend evening classes while working during the day or depend on the financial resources of family members while taking day programs.

LINC learners generally participate in the program roughly 900 hours of instruction (close to one year of full-time classes or three years of part-time classes) from the time they start (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2002c). They are assessed prior to entering the program by an independent agency and placed in one of three levels of English language proficiency. These levels correspond to the most basic of the 12 level Canadian benchmark system discussed below. Some variation in program delivery models exist, but in most cases LINC, and the provincial programs associated with it, feature continuous enrolment, unilingual instruction, limited access to computer assisted learning, and a frequent changes of instructor. In some cases, however, circumstances permit the same instructor at all levels, and staggered or semestered enrolment. Occasionally, classes are tailored for particular ethnic communities or women.

Although some of these programs are sponsored by community agencies and have a good grounding in neighbourhoods and workplaces, the vast majority of LINC programs are housed in institutional settings, such as secondary schools and libraries. The model used most often emphasises individualism and personal achievement. Programs often set college or university entrance as eventual goals for its learners.

LINC provided only limited amounts of guidance in terms of methodology and delivery, also much like previously existing programs. There have been a few exceptions, however, such as when the Ontario region of Canada Immigration and Citizenship developed province-wide curricula and materials. Most aspects of provision, however, became decentralised, as part of the federal government's cost-saving divestiture of responsibilities for direct service.

Although most aspects of the program have remained uniform and consistent, LINC has occasionally been fine-tuned. The level of English proficiency it covers has been expanded in some programs in Ontario. In other isolated examples, more flexible forms of delivery have been developed to cover the special needs of women or seniors in certain jurisdictions.

Since the creation of LINC, several provincial and territorial governments in addition to Quebec have signed formal agreements with the federal government in regards to language policy. The federal goal is to have agreements in place with all provinces in the near future. To date, the Yukon, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island have signed general agreements around processes of consultation and planning. British Columbia signed an agreement in 1998 that transferred federal responsibility for settlement services to the province. LINC programs in B.C. are now known as English Language Service to Adults (ELSA) and operate under a different funding structure. Manitoba signed a similar agreement in 1996, renaming its programs Adult English as a Second Language Services (A/ ESL).

These transfers of responsibility have been controversial. In Canada, most tax revenue is collected by the federal government, which transfers a large percentage of these funds to the provinces. Many disputes have occurred about whether or not these funds should be 'earmarked' for specific purposes. For example, in regards to healthcare, a provincial responsibility constitutionally, federal/ provincial agreements state that money transferred to the provinces is to be spent in that area. In the case of immigrant services such as language training, however, no such stipulation exists. The provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia put funds transferred for these programs into general

revenue and then allot the money to ELSA and A/ ESL that they feel is appropriate. In British Columbia, the provincial government provides a significantly smaller amount of money per capita than provinces such as Ontario, where language training is still under the direct control of the federal government.

At the current time, the total national cost of integrating immigrants is \$334.6M per year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002d). Of that figure, LINC costs the federal government \$100.4M. The money transferred to Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia for their language training and immigrant settlement programs amounts to \$45.1M. Immigrants pay a substantial portion of the costs of these programs themselves, principally through payment of the Canadian permanent residence fee, which currently stands at \$975 each.

At the same time as LINC was being developed, the federal government initiated a process that led to the creation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). In response to recommendations made by the immigration advisory council and a wide-ranging set of consultations conducted subsequently, the federal government set up a representative national working group in 1993 to facilitate the creation of a set of language proficiency benchmarks to inform assessment and curriculum development (Pierce & Stewart, 1997). The benchmarks were released as a working document in 1996 and finalised in 2000.

The CLB covers the full range of English proficiency (from beginning to full fluency), incorporates literacy and numeracy, emphasises tasks and situation, feature stand-alone descriptors per level, encourage local curriculum development, and include

proficiencies related to learning strategies, socio-cultural and strategic competencies (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1996).

Associated with the CLB are implementation documents, curriculum guidelines, instructional resources pertaining to literacy and numeracy, sets of assessment materials and a representative national centre in Ottawa that coordinates a wide-range of language training curriculum initiatives. Publishers have also used the CLB as a basis for a wide variety of instructional materials.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of programs that exist and learners serviced in Canada. The only attempt to collect data was conducted by the federal government in 1999 (Heritage Canada, 1999). Unfortunately, the principal focus of the survey was the large commercial market that provides academic English training to overseas students on temporary visas to Canada. Projections completed by the researchers indicate that something in the order of 177,000 Canadian citizens and immigrants are taking English language training at any one time. LINC practitioners often cite anecdotal evidence related to high dropout and low attendance rates. It is difficult at the time of writing to ascertain hard facts about these claims, however. Better statistical gathering processes, being put in place for both LINC and its provincial equivalents, should provide us with a better picture in the near future.

### **Emerging Trends and the Construction of Identity**

Adult ESL programs, as they currently exist, are designed to bring most newcomers up to a minimal level of English language proficiency. Little consideration to date has been given to the provision of instruction beyond levels 3 and 4 of the Canadian Language

Benchmark's 12 level scale. Most newcomers without independent means have had difficulty accessing programs that could give them the English language proficiency to gain non-menial employment. Higher levels of training and education have been available, but at increasingly greater costs. In addition, like in other social service sectors, financial cutbacks in the last decade have been common to all government funded adult ESL programs. These cuts have had devastating effects (Toronto Star, 2002b).

There has recent increased pressure to expand ESL programming to train and relicence immigrants in specific professions in which labour shortages are developing. The demographic trends I have outlined above are having their effects. A major development occurred in 2002, when the Ontario provincial government earmarked \$15 million for 'bridge training projects' to relicence and train newcomers in the specific fields of health care, education, the machining, millwright and tooling trades, financial services programming, engineering, life sciences and welding (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002). There has also been an expansion in funding for workplace specific literacy training that goes beyond a survival needs (Preparatory Training Program of Toronto, 2002). At the present time, these are the kinds of programs that are receiving increases in government funding.

These examples are part of a trend in adult ESL programming that emphasises skills and work-related training. Government funding priorities in adult ESL is clearly turning to workplace specific programming. While these programs are certainly practical, I would argue that they atomise learners into sets of marketable skills. This is a shift that has occurred in both Canada and Australia from learning skills and educational service models to an undesirable rationalised industry orientation (Cumming, 1998).

Why is this detrimental? Helen Moore (1996) criticises this trend towards rationalisation in the Australian ESL context for the way in which it homogenises programming, and ignores individual learner differences. I also contend that these programming policy decisions fail to take into account the entire individuality of our learners and their identities. The multifaceted and complex process of identity construction in the types of educational settings I have described can not be fully realised without opportunities for intermediate and advanced language learning that engages the entire individual. Basic level language learning and work specific training may be practical, but they are severely limited.

### **Nation-state Identity Formation**

Even though national identity and culture often appear to be unchanging and unidimensional, systems of symbols, behaviours and values that are somehow immutable or even ethereal, every modern nation-state must actively work on its creation. (Teepel, 2000; p.164). Like individual identity construction, this process is multifaceted, complex and dynamic.

Canadian cultural identity cannot be viewed as a pristine set of immutable facts to be transmitted to the immigrants in our ESL classes. Nor should our history be represented as an unproblematic and inevitable progress towards our status as the world's 'best place to live'. Our practice as ESL educators in countries like Canada must reflect the fact that newcomers are dynamically reconstructing identity, both in terms of their own personal and nation-state identities. In very real ways, they are transforming what

they encounter both in and out our classes into new visions of what it means to be a citizen of a particular country, or even, in fact, the world as a whole.

ESL programs can made a significant contribution to this process if it is given the scope to do so. Limiting these programs in the ways they are at present only helps perpetuate the situation that Young and Mukherjee criticise. The privileged position of British-based culture is now an anachronism, given Canada's emerging demographics. Our challenge now is to expand and design adult ESL programming that helps recreate Canadian national identity in a truly egalitarian manner.



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