

CURRICULUM META-ORIENTATIONS IN THE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA PROGRAM¹

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Abstract

This article explores curriculum meta-orientations in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, as reflected in its hidden curriculum, on three levels: instruction, approaches to teaching Canadian culture to recent adult immigrant learners, and LINC instructors' self-perceived teaching roles. The data collection process consisted of interviews and class observations. Most participants defined themselves as facilitators rather than teachers, embraced a transaction stance, and took a prescriptive approach to teaching Canadian culture to newcomers. We make the case that a participatory transformation curriculum meta-orientation is more suited for adult English-language learners than the prevalent transaction pedagogy because the former addresses the real issues and challenges that immigrants face in their first years in Canada.

Résumé

Cet article explore les méta-orientations du curriculum du programme CLIC (Cours de Langue pour les immigrants au Canada), reflétées dans son curriculum caché à trois différents niveaux : celui de l'instruction, celui des approches pour l'enseignement de la culture canadienne aux apprenants adultes récemment immigrés, et celui du rôle auto-évaluateur des enseignants du programme CLIC. Le procédé de collecte de données consiste en des entretiens et des observations de classes. La plupart des participants se définissent plutôt comme facilitateurs que comme enseignants : ils suivent les principes de la pédagogie de la transaction et optent pour une approche prescriptive quant à l'enseignement de la culture canadienne aux immigrants. Selon nous, la transformation participative d'un curriculum à méta-orientations est plus adaptée aux adultes apprenant l'anglais que la pédagogie de la transaction prévalant actuellement, puisqu'elle prend en

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compte les vrais problèmes et défis auxquels les immigrants seront confrontés durant leurs premières années au Canada.

Introduction

This article explores curriculum meta-orientations in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, as reflected in the *hidden curriculum*. Broadly speaking, curriculum development is an ongoing and circular process, constantly recycling four major components: educators' meta-orientations, design, implementation, and evaluation. The hidden curriculum is a reflection of educators' meta-orientations or curriculum positions (Miller & Seller, 1990), which are models of reality that shape their beliefs about the purposes and methodologies of education. Curriculum meta-orientations link educational practices to the philosophical, psychological, and social contexts that shaped them and express different points of view on learning goals, the role of the learner, instruction, and the role of the teacher.

LINC instructors all over Canada have access to an online competency-based curriculum document, *LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines* (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2002). The curriculum guidelines include "Topic Development Ideas," "Strategies for Learners," "Resources for Developing and Teaching Topics," "Topic Outcomes," and "Sample Tasks." The curriculum guidelines recommend various resources and textbooks for each theme and topic. The *LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines* constitute the *explicit* or *written curriculum*, which is a roadmap available to instructors only as a reference. This article focuses on the *hidden curriculum*, defined by Giroux and Penna (1983) as "the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning, in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom" (p. 102). In this light, the LINC program is positioned within the larger context of Canadian society and conceptualized as an agent of socialization rather than solely a language-learning program. This article uncovers the ideological messages embedded in the hidden curriculum on three levels: instruction, approaches to teaching Canadian culture to recent adult immigrant learners, and LINC instructors' self-perceived teaching roles.

The hidden curriculum is understood as a reflection or byproduct of educators' ideologies as opposed to a concerted, intentional effort of a certain group or faction to impose their political, philosophical, and psychological views on LINC learners. Ultimately, the hidden curriculum is shaped by the ideology of educators who teach according to their own world view or their own model of reality, which shape their beliefs on the purpose and approach to education. In the LINC program, in which there are curriculum guidelines as opposed to a rigid curriculum document to which teachers are expected to remain faithful, the hidden curriculum is more likely to be an accurate reflection of teachers' underlying educational ideologies or curriculum meta-orientations.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this article draws on Miller and Seller's (1990) curriculum meta-orientations, Auerbach's (1992) model of participatory ESL (English as a second language) education, and related critical constructs such as the hidden curriculum (Curry, 2001; Giroux & Penna, 1983; Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, & Gair, 2001), Knowles et al.'s (1984) theory of andragogy, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory of symbolic violence, and Freire's (2005) distinction between integration and adaptation as well as his concept of education for conscientization.

The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission created LINC in 1992 with the mandate of providing "basic language instruction to adult newcomers in both official languages and to facilitate the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003, p. 6). Freire (2005) makes a philosophical distinction between integration and adaptation. According to Freire, adapted people are passive, domesticated, and adjusted "objects" who tacitly accept the socio-cultural norms of the dominant group. Integrated people are subjects or agents capable of making personal and social changes and who create, re-create, and participate in their historical epochs. "Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality *plus* the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality" (Freire, 2005, p. 4). Drawing on Freire's distinction between integration and adaptation, this article explores how immigrants' integration is conceptualized in light of the hidden curriculum in LINC classes.

Miller and Seller (1990) define curriculum as

an explicitly and implicitly intentional set of interactions designed to facilitate learning and development and to impose meaning on experience. The explicit intentions usually are expressed in the written curricula and in courses of study; the implicit intentions are found in the "hidden curriculum", by which we mean the roles and norms that underlie interactions in schools. (pp. 3-4)

Miller and Seller (1990) identify and analyze three major curriculum meta-orientations: transmission, transaction, and transformation. The transmission meta-orientation views the learner as passive and the teacher as a taskmaster. It emphasizes rote learning, lecture, and teacher-centred instruction, and conceptualizes the learning experience as transmission of facts, concepts, rules, and cultural norms. The transmission meta-orientation has its philosophical roots in logical positivism, which proposes an atomistic view of reality (subject matter) broken down into separate pieces. It is psychologically linked to behaviourism and politically to conservatism.

In the transaction meta-orientation, the learner is seen as active and rational and the educational process focuses on problem solving and discovery. Learners construct knowledge and develop skills by engaging in dialogue with the educational materials, their peers, and the teacher, who acts as a facilitator or moderator. The transaction position is associated with philosophical pragmatism, cognitive developmentalism, and political liberalism.

The transformation meta-orientation teaches students skills and knowledge that promote personal and social transformation. It raises social awareness and empowers learners to participate in society and go beyond the "do their own thing" stance. The curriculum tends to integrate the inner and outer worlds, make students aware of their relations with the outside world, and promote self-actualization, interdisciplinary activities, and involvement in the community. It is associated with philosophical interconnectivism, transpersonal psychology, and political activism for social change. It motivates learners to become more socially involved in order to positively transform their own lives and society as a whole. The transformation meta-orientation is the most progressive of the three.

Miller and Seller's (1990) transformation meta-orientation has some elements in common with Auerbach's (1992) model of participatory ESL curriculum, such as the ideas of education for positive change and the empowerment of learners. The difference between transformative and participatory tasks is that the former are geared toward changing society as a whole while the latter are directly related to learners' lives, issues, or concerns. The participatory ESL curriculum model was inspired by Freire's (1970) vision of education for transformation through the linking of literacy and social change. Freire emphasizes that any curriculum has an implicit function and reflects a particular point of view that may or may not be explicitly acknowledged. A traditional curriculum perpetuates the marginalization of learners and the perpetuation of existing social structures. Teaching literacy "as a collection of decontextualized, meaningless skills, starting with letters and sounds divorced from any significance in learners' lives" (Auerbach, 1992, p. 16), turns students into objects of instruction and prepares them for submissive social roles outside the classroom. In contrast, in the participatory ESL model rooted in Freirian thinking, language and literacy learning are intertwined with thinking critically and engaging in reflection and dialogue on the students' own life conditions in a conscientization process.

In the participatory ESL curriculum (Auerbach, 1992), learners are involved in all stages of curriculum development; the ESL classroom is viewed as a model or microcosm of the outside world that prepares learners for various life roles such as parent, worker, tenant, or citizen; the focus is on strengths as opposed to inadequacies; and the content comes from students' lives outside the classroom and goes back to the social context, enabling them to make changes in their lives. Participatory ESL classroom tasks reflect the real issues and challenges that immigrants and refugees face in their first years in the new country.

Auerbach's (1992) model of participatory ESL curriculum draws on the theoretical principles of andragogy (Knowles et al., 1984), which is the process, methods, and techniques used to teach adults. Andragogy differs substantially from pedagogy, or the process, methods, and techniques used to teach children, mainly because adults learn differently and for different purposes. Adult learners need to know why they have to learn something before they learn it, be responsible for their own learning decisions, be involved in curriculum choices, and be given credit for their life experiences, which represent their richest resource for learning. Adults are intrinsically motivated to learn the things that help them cope more effectively with life situations. They are less likely than children to be influenced by the hidden curriculum. However, adult ESL learners, particularly recent immigrants and refugees who find themselves in an unfamiliar environment with limited

socio-economic and linguistic resources to draw on, are in a more vulnerable position than other categories of adult learners. They are more susceptible to the implications of the hidden curriculum of the language schools they attend, which in essence serve as models or microcosms of the larger society.

The hidden curriculum can serve as a form of social control and a way of promoting the acceptance and perpetuation of existing social structures. Vallance (1983) identifies “the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterized generally as social control” (p. 9) as the common functions of most hidden curricula. Their effects can be homogeneous, docile lenses of perception and thought, similar to those of the socialized masses in the fairy tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” who were misled to believe that if they could not see the emperor’s beautiful clothes, they were stupid (Margolis et al., 2001). From this distorted perspective, economic and social inequalities can appear as legitimate consequences of educational attainment without taking into consideration that students come to class with a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1973), which is a certain system of meanings and understandings that reflects their class and access to socio-cultural resources. Hidden curricula can become vehicles for symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), meaning the imposition of thought and perception by dominant agents upon dominated agents, who end up unconsciously adopting the social structures of the dominant and believing them to be right without even conceiving of an alternative way of thinking or realizing that they are subconsciously manipulated or dominated.

Previous research indicates that the hidden curriculum of ESL schools in the U.S. tends to socialize immigrants and refugees to be docile, have low expectations, and internalize failure (Morrow & Torres, 1998). Curry (2001) analyzed the hidden curriculum of adult community college ESL writing classes in the U.S. on three levels: institutional, classroom, and economic. At the institutional level, the hidden curriculum endorses the commodification of immigrants who embody the diversity the college intends to display. At the classroom level, it promotes passivity and focuses on grammar, pronunciation, and isolated language skills. Students are expected to give the facts and select “nice” or unproblematic writing topics. They are penalized for thinking critically and expressing different opinions. Gender roles are stereotyped (e.g., even mature women with children are referred to as “girls”) and immigrants are viewed as a monolithic group, where individual histories and future goals are disregarded. The economic layer of the hidden curriculum inculcates conformity and the “cooling out” of immigrants’ professional aspirations so they can be retained in the low-paying labour force. The tacit message is that it does not matter how qualified immigrants might be (as doctors or engineers, for example); they have to start fresh, have low professional expectations, and be happy with their status quo.

Previous Research on the LINC Curriculum

Cray (1997) conducted interviews with six teachers in Ottawa and observed a few classes to inquire into teachers’ perceptions of the LINC program, including the curriculum. Part of the research focus was to determine how much the curriculum guidelines influenced teaching. Cray’s findings indicate that teachers do not consider the LINC curriculum as having much impact on their teaching practices. Most of them occasionally “flipped

through” the document to get ideas of topics to cover. In addition, “for these teachers, the document was too detailed and long to be useful” (p. 33).

Cray and Currie (2004) question the effectiveness of the LINC curriculum guidelines for teaching writing. The researchers conclude that “there is very little in the LINC implementation documentation that guides teachers towards an understanding of writing as social practice or that recognizes the importance of learning to write within a community” (p. 59).

Pinet (2006) analyzed the curriculum development of LINC levels 4 and 5 at three stages—production, reception, and implementation—and situates the findings within the theoretical framework of the curriculum meta-orientations proposed by Miller and Seller (1990). The production stage of the LINC 4 and 5 curriculum was explored by analyzing the interview responses provided by two members of the advisory committee who designed the LINC curriculum guidelines. The reception stage was investigated by taking a critical look at the language tasks and themes in the curriculum: business, Canada, Canadian culture and society, Canadian law, community and government services, education, employment, finance and banking, global issues, health and safety, relationships, and travel and tourism. Pinet (2006) concludes that language tasks range from the pragmatic to the more critical. Information about the implementation stage was provided by five experienced LINC teachers in the Toronto area. In the interviews, the researcher gathered information on how teachers approached various themes and how they dealt with controversial issues such as same-sex issues or women’s rights in LINC classes.

Three of the five interviewed teachers took a transmission approach to curriculum; they felt comfortable teaching practical and functional themes/issues that students would encounter in their everyday lives and preferred to ignore controversial issues that would make some students uncomfortable. One teacher took a transaction stance by posing Socratic questions and asking students to work in groups to generate and clarify values related to women’s rights. Only one participant adopted a transformation pedagogy by bringing in newspaper stories dealing with discriminatory situations in Canada and asking students to discuss, write, and present on these issues. This approach focused on consciousness-raising and community-based political action. Pinet (2006) advocates a more critical and transformational pedagogical approach. He concludes that the LINC document represents a liberal democratic approach to citizenship and a transactional pedagogical stance.

Khalideen (1998) examined the extent to which the LINC program in Edmonton can be perceived as adult education practice and identified the following basic principles of adult education: learners become partners in the learning process; educators are facilitators rather than teachers who control the learning process; learning activities are related to learners’ experiences; instruction is personalized; and facilitators assess learners’ wants and needs and create a friendly and informal educational climate. Khalideen recommends that LINC teachers undergo formal Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) training with a focus on adult learning principles, embrace the pedagogical stance of reflective practitioners and critical thinkers, and facilitate a more critical and creative function for learners in the classroom rather than a merely passive role.

The last two of these recommendations are in line with the findings of Morgan (2002), who discusses the relevance of community and identity to classroom practice and argues that community-based ESL pedagogies should be informed by socially engaged ideologies. The article takes a critical look at the history and key features of community-based programs in Canada. Some communities are organized around categories of identity such as ethnicity, race, gender, and age, while others focus on a settlement service such as employment and youth services. Classes are characterized by continuous intake and mixed levels/streaming. Students often stay in a class based on subjective preferences rather than the objective evaluation of their English level.

In the second part of the article, Morgan (2002) explores the significance of an ESL lesson on the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty as an example of how community ESL can be conceptualized as a form of transformative and reflexive critical practice. The teacher-researcher asked the students to discuss the similarities and differences between sovereignty (internal relations) and independence (external relations with other countries), using first language (L1) or bilingual dictionaries, if necessary. In groups, students constructed the meanings of the words and compared the political situation in Quebec to the one in China, advancing comments on power relations in society. In discussing the referendum, learners engaged in a process of identity negotiation and exploration of a new political culture.

Morgan (2002) advocates that identity should be viewed as an integral part of the curriculum and that classrooms should be integrated into the broader socio-political context of society. Morgan's stance is that a critical ESL teacher is one who helps learners develop language skills that challenge inequitable power relations beyond the classroom. He advocates participatory teaching, a model in which learners see themselves as partners who discuss issues relevant to their lives.

Research Methodology

The data for this study were collected from January to March 2008 in an institution that offers LINC classes in Calgary. We conducted interviews with nine LINC instructors and observed a class taught by each of them: one LINC literacy class, two LINC 1 classes, two LINC 2 classes, two LINC 3 classes, and two LINC 4 classes. We also had access to LINC curriculum documents, teaching materials, and other resources available to instructors. Participation in the study was voluntary and no remuneration was offered. All interviews and class observations were recorded. The interviews consisted of a combination of description-oriented questions and construct-forming questions. Sample interview questions are provided in Appendix A.

In the class observations, one researcher acted as a participant and the other as an observer. The rationale behind this choice was to minimize researchers' influence on participants' classroom behaviour. All class observations were recorded with participants' consent. The observer-researcher took notes in class, filling out a class observation record, while the participant-researcher acted as a LINC student involved in all activities. After class the participant-researcher filled out another observation record from the perspective of the student. In the data analysis stage, the notes of the participant-researcher and those

of the observer- researcher were triangulated. Class observation records contain descriptive information as well as analytical comments, lesson learning outcomes, a classroom layout, a participant roster, details on the nature of observed tasks and activities, and researchers’ reflections on each learning task.

To explore the curriculum meta-orientations in the LINC program and the resulting hidden curriculum, we analyzed critically the ideological messages embedded in the classes observed and the interviews conducted and linked them to the theoretical framework for this study, which draws on Miller and Seller (1990), Auerbach (1992), Curry (2001), Giroux and Penna (1983), Margolis et al. (2001), Knowles et al. (1984), Bourdieu (1973), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), and Freire (2005). The curriculum meta-orientations reflected in instruction are based on the LINC classes we observed, while the curriculum meta-orientations reflected in the teaching of Canadian culture and in instructors’ perceived teaching roles emerge from the critical analysis of our interviews with LINC instructors.

Findings

Based on the LINC classes observed and the interviews conducted, the predominant curriculum meta-orientations are situated at the nexus between the transmission and the transaction ideology, meaning the political intersection between conservatism and liberalism, the psychological intersection between behaviourism and cognitive developmentalism, and the philosophical intersection between positivism and pragmatism. Table 1 situates these curriculum meta-orientations—as reflected in instruction, approach to teaching Canadian culture, and self-perceived teaching roles—on a theoretical matrix resulting from the juxtaposition of Miller and Seller’s (1990) taxonomy of curriculum meta-orientations and Auerbach’s (1992) model of participatory ESL education.

Table 1: *LINC Curriculum Meta-orientations Reflected in Instruction, Canadian Culture, and Teaching Roles*

	Transmission	Transaction	Participatory Transformation
Instruction	2 Classes	7 Classes	—
Canadian Culture	6 Instructors	2 Instructors	1 Instructor
Teaching Roles	2 Instructors	6 Instructors	1 Instructor

Curriculum Meta-orientations Reflected in Instruction

The majority of instructors (seven out of nine) took a transaction instructional stance characterized by educational activities that promote problem solving, some form of

discovery learning, negotiation of meaning, group work, and dialogue. For instance, in one class, learners worked in pairs to complete odd-one-out tasks in which they were asked to identify the word that does not belong to the same logical category and to explain their choice. This type of activity fosters higher-order thinking, problem solving, negotiation of meaning, and collaboration.

Another teacher who adopted a transaction methodology used music to guide learners toward the discovery of word meanings and cultural references. In the class observed, this instructor played the song “I Will Take Care of You” while students filled out the missing words on a sheet with the lyrics. Students were also asked to complete a crossword puzzle, which is a typical left-brain, problem-solving type of activity.

In another class, learners worked in groups to revise and edit their essay titled “When I Came to Canada and Now.” Students read aloud their compositions to the members of their group and gave feedback to each other. The instructor acted as a facilitator, moving from one group to another and providing sample prompts such as “Is there anything you would like to change or add?” or “Is everything right; is the tense right?” Learners negotiated error correction and meaning to reach a consensus.

The transmission type of instruction, which is repetitive, mechanical, and teacher-fronted, was evident in two out of the nine LINC classes observed. For instance, in a low-level class, learners worked on phonics and were asked simply to repeat sounds and words while the teacher corrected their pronunciation. They copied the new words and sentences into their notebooks several times.

Another example of a transmission approach was a teacher-fronted grammar lecture on count and non-count nouns. Learners were asked to repeat or respond to structured prompts and there was virtually no communicative focus. Grammar concepts were taught in a top-down, decontextualized manner, from explanations to examples, and students were expected to complete worksheets individually.

No class included instructional tasks that could be considered transformational as well as participatory. Transformational tasks are geared toward changing society as a whole, while participatory activities are directly related to learners’ lives, issues, or concerns. Participatory activities are suggested by learners or are directly related to their real situations outside the ESL classroom, and help learners to cope better with their everyday problems and make positive changes in their lives. Participatory ESL activities reflect the social issues that recent immigrants face and use the type of language that helps them deal with real challenges. A few relevant examples extracted from Auerbach (1992) are critical discussions on a flyer with guidelines on how parents can help students with their homework; critical cultural analysis and strategies on how to find an apartment under conditions of housing shortages and discrimination faced by some immigrants (families with many children or visible minorities); discussion of the English-only policy; getting involved in an advocacy group and commenting on its activities in class; and discussion of how learners dealt with a critical incident from their community life.

The predominance of transaction and transmission instructional tasks in the LINC classes observed conveys hidden curriculum messages either of indifference to recent immigrants’ real social problems or the idyllic view that they face no challenges.

Teachers select “nice,” unproblematic reading and writing topics (Curry, 2001) that depict newcomers’ position in Canadian society as idealistic. Problem solving and discovery learning are encouraged in a way that facilitates language learning but does not promote critical thinking on real social issues related to immigrants’ lives. The classes observed are not based on andragogical principles (Knowles et al., 1984), as learners did not have input in the selection and content of the instructional activities and the topics were not related to their real lives and interests. The implicit ideological message is that, since ESL learners do not speak the dominant language well, a pedagogical (for children), patronizing, and paternalistic approach to instruction, rather than an andragogical one, is acceptable for them, even if they are adults.

Curriculum Meta-orientations Reflected in the Teaching of Canadian Culture

In the interviews, we asked instructors to comment on how they introduce Canadian culture to their LINC students. Six of the nine interviews revealed a transmission approach to teaching Canadian culture, which is basically prescriptive. A transmission approach identifies, presents, and explains various aspects of Canadian culture. It simply informs learners about the Canadian ways of doing things (e.g., buying a car, finding an apartment, going to the doctor, etc.) and provides descriptive information about geography, food, shopping, etiquette, and famous people (e.g., Wayne Gretzky). “We learned about hockey, because, hockey is an important part, and they know now who Wayne Gretzky is now, because that is an important part of Canadian culture” (LINC 3 male teacher, emphasis added).

Students are basically expected to retain information and imitate Canadian models in order to fit into society. The hidden curriculum that results from advocating the imitation of dominant cultural models promotes symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or the imposition of thought and perception by dominant agents upon dominated agents.

Based on the interview responses, two instructors introduced Canadian culture in a transaction manner. This approach introduces culture through discovery learning and problem solving by means of a contact assignment (e.g., asking students to find out about the electoral riding they are in and reporting this to the class) and hands-on learning (e.g., making waffles and describing the process in a class activity).

Only one of the nine interview responses showed a transformational approach to teaching Canadian culture. Students were asked to compare the impact of various aspects of culture on their past and current lives. By engaging students in a critical dialogue and analysis of the similarities and differences between their own cultures and Canadian culture, students became more aware of their current circumstances and were encouraged to act as agents of their own lives.

The dominant transmission curriculum meta-orientation, as reflected in the approaches to introducing Canadian culture in the majority of the LINC classes observed, is not in sync with the underlying principles of andragogy, as adult learners are not given credit for their life experiences prior to coming to Canada. A transmission model of teaching Canadian culture clearly promotes adaptation rather than integration, as understood by Freire (2005). Newcomers to Canada are expected to merely adapt, imitate, have a passive

role, and behave as domesticated “objects” (Freire, 2005) by tacitly accepting the socio-cultural norms of the dominant group. In a participatory transformation approach, they would be viewed as subjects who go through a process of integration, rather than mere adaptation, and are encouraged to develop the critical ability to make social and personal changes.

Curriculum Meta-orientations Reflected in LINC Instructors’ Perceived Teaching Roles

Self-reported teaching roles are clear indicators of teachers’ curriculum meta-orientations. One question we asked all nine instructors in the interviews was “What do you think is the teacher’s role in the LINC classes?” Based on their responses, we identified three major teaching roles that LINC teachers assume when interacting with their students: cultural model, language learning facilitator, and motivational facilitator, which roughly correspond to the three meta-orientations proposed by Miller and Seller (1990): transmission, transaction, and transformation.

The majority of instructors (six out of nine) viewed themselves as language learning facilitators, which is basically a transaction meta-orientation. Most participants believed that their primary role as LINC teachers was to facilitate language learning by stimulating inquiry skills, understanding, and thinking processes and by engaging learners in dialogue with their peers and the teacher. “My role is to facilitate their language learning. To give them the opportunity to learn from each other and to step in when necessary. To ensure that there is proper understanding” (LINC 1 female teacher).

Two of the nine interviewed instructors viewed their teaching role as that of a cultural model or “real or symbolic Canadian.” The role of a cultural model is essentially a transmission model. Learners are expected to imitate the teachers’ ways of doing things in order to fit into society. Teachers believe that their role as LINC instructors is to introduce and model Canadian culture for their immigrant students in an essentializing manner: “I see myself as being kind of a symbolic Canadian ... because a lot of newcomers don’t get to meet real Canadians” (LINC 4 female teacher).

It is questionable that the stereotyping, essentializing view that imitating real Canadians actually facilitates integration. In fact, previous research such as Norton’s (2000) study of adult immigrant women in Canada suggests that native speakers are actually more likely to avoid interaction with recent immigrants, particularly those with low levels of English proficiency, rather than extend them opportunities to negotiate meanings in conversations in order to improve their English proficiency.

The prevalent transmission and transaction teaching roles prepare students for passive or submissive roles outside the classroom. Modelling Canadian culture to be imitated by learners and teaching the language as isolated or divorced from the real issues and situations in immigrants’ lives turn students into objects of instruction and promote adaptation rather than integration.

Only one instructor viewed herself as a motivational facilitator, which is in essence a participatory role. She believes that her main responsibility, besides teaching English, is

to engage learners and make them feel optimistic and confident that they will accomplish their social and professional goals in Canada.

Besides helping students to learn English, my role is to engage people ... to get them excited, to ... make them feel confident in learning ... and confident in their ability so that they can get a job, so that they can talk to people, so that they're not afraid to go out of their door. (LINC 2 female teacher)

By assuming a participatory transformation role in the classroom—that is, by motivating learners and giving them the confidence that they can make positive changes in their lives such as finding a job, continuing their education, and participating in society—LINC teachers would promote immigrants' integration rather than mere adaptation (Freire, 2005). A participatory transformation teaching role is andragogical by definition, as it engages adult learners in acquiring the language and skills that help them cope better with real-life situations.

In the first years of their lives in Canada, many immigrants are so intimidated by the many new things in their environment that they may avoid social participation. It would be helpful if more and more instructors embraced the role of a motivational facilitator in order to give learners the confidence needed to interact with English-speaking people in authentic situations and to obtain employment. The transformational metaphorical role that we propose is that of motivational facilitator, someone who builds up learners' self-esteem, gets them excited about learning, and gives them confidence to transfer skills acquired in the classroom to the real world so they are not afraid to leave their homes.

A participatory transformation teaching role would include making links to the community and facilitating students' access to social networks outside the classroom so they can make positive changes in their lives and a difference in society. For instance, a transformational instructor would help students strengthen community ties by referring students to or mediating their contact with various organizations, encouraging them to participate in community and school organizations, and inviting guest speakers to class who can affect students' lives outside the classroom, such as government officials, landlords, and potential employers. By reflecting on real issues in their lives and learning to use the language to find solutions to real-life problems, immigrants are engaged in a conscientization process (Freire, 2005) in which language learning is intertwined with thinking critically on how to make positive personal and social changes.

Discussion and Analysis

In spite of the mandate stated in the written curriculum regarding the role of the LINC program in promoting immigrants' and refugees' integration, the ideological messages embedded in the hidden curriculum resulting from LINC teachers' curriculum meta-orientations suggest that, in light of Freire's (2005) philosophical distinction between integration and adaptation, newcomers to Canada are encouraged to adapt rather than integrate. An adaptation-oriented hidden curriculum leads to submission, adjustment, and an authoritarian and uncritical frame of mind. An integration-driven hidden curriculum,

more appropriate for an open, multicultural society like Canada's, would promote social participation and the development of critical consciousness.

Some shortcomings of the predominant transmission meta-orientation, reflected in the manner of teaching Canadian culture, are that it is artificial, inauthentic, patronizing, and non-andragogical. Learners' cultural capital is generally disregarded, their learning independence is not sufficiently fostered, and they are not given any credit for their own epistemological views and life experiences.

The transaction curriculum meta-orientation, reflected in instruction and self-perceived teaching roles, is preferable to the passive transmission model, as it promotes problem solving, discovery learning, negotiation of meaning, group work, and dialogue. It is more in sync with andragogical principles, as learners have a certain degree of independence and ownership over their learning process. However, the transaction model is not socially empowering, is somewhat artificial, and is divorced from reality, as learning tasks are not relevant enough to students' real-life issues.

A participatory transformation curriculum meta-orientation is more suitable for adult immigrant language learners, as it is based on andragogical principles and goes beyond mere adaptation to promote real integration and conscientization: "Their interests and concerns now extend beyond the simple vital sphere. Transitivity of consciousness makes man 'permeable'. It leads him to replace his disengagement from existence with almost total engagement" (Freire, 2005, p. 17).

A participatory transformation curriculum ideology is highly suitable for the LINC program for reasons that go beyond the arguments of moral and political correctness and philosophical superiority. A participatory transformation curriculum meta-orientation is the most practical and useful for adult immigrant language learners. It is relevant to their issues and socio-economic needs and interests and it impacts their lives beyond the classroom. It motivates and encourages learners to achieve their bigger life goals as human beings, such as continuing their education and securing meaningful employment. It improves their ability to navigate the complex social and cultural new world they inhabit and overcome challenges and barriers to better fulfill their roles as parents, workers, community members, and human beings in the socio-cultural context of their new country.

An adult ESL curriculum rooted in a participatory transformation ideology addresses the real issues and challenges that immigrants and refugees face in their first years in a new country. Research indicates that the major social issues that newcomers to Canada face are discrimination, difficulties in finding adequate housing, poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and lack of recognition of foreign credentials. In participatory transformation classes, learners understand that their opinions count and that their voices are important in the ESL class and in Canadian society. They learn the language and how to use it to make positive changes in their personal lives, in their community, and in society as a whole.

LINC teachers have different educational backgrounds and various levels of experience. Only some have formal training in TESL and knowledge of adult education principles. TESL programs can make a significant difference in shifting LINC educators' ideologies toward a participatory transformation curriculum meta-orientation that

replaces the dominant transmission and transaction paradigms, promotes adult learners' social integration and personal transformation, and encourages critical thinking and public participation. If LINC teachers subscribed to a participatory transformation meta-orientation, what happens in the classroom would have long-term positive social implications for adult immigrant language learners.

TESL programs that offer courses in critical applied linguistics (CAL) prepare teachers to move beyond the transmission and transaction paradigms to embrace a participatory transformation curriculum meta-orientation. CAL promotes a postmodern, post-structuralist, and problematizing type of praxis that views the language as self-reflexive, political, and relationist. CAL emphasizes the connection between language and social context; raises questions of power, disparity, and transformation; and promotes diversity, reflexivity, learners' enfranchisement, and critical emancipation in order to resist marginalization and exclusion (Pennycook, 2001). Language classes rooted in CAL principles do not teach language in isolation, but link it to social context, identity (re) construction, and transformation.

Allocating funds for professional development, providing tuition allowances, and partnering with local universities that offer CAL-oriented TESL programs are only some of the possible ways to offer LINC teachers opportunities to refine their educational meta-orientations in a manner that would optimally suit adult ESL immigrant learners.

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Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions

- Do you have easy access to a copy of the LINC curriculum guidelines?
- How relevant is the LINC curriculum in meeting newcomers' needs?
- How is Canadian culture approached in the LINC curriculum?
- What goals do you think are the main goals reflected in the LINC curriculum?
- What are the strengths of the LINC curriculum?
- What are the weaknesses of the LINC curriculum?
- What are your preferred teaching methods and practices?
- What do you believe is the teacher's role in LINC classes?

