



## English Monolingualism in Canada

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**Abstract:** Looking at seven Canadian universities' several courses mainly serving what can loosely be called English as a second language (ESL) students, this paper exposes the presence—in scale from strong, overt to covert— of English monolingualism in these programs. Data obtained from the respective program's websites suggest that while most programs under question are guided by English monolingualism, in comparison, a few programs stand out as they seem to be reflective of today's linguistic and cultural plurality. Themes and patterns are developed based on available course descriptions, course objectives and policies. The explicit and implicit English monolingual orientation of most programs in question is at odds with the reality that English is increasingly pluralized, appropriated, and localized by today's users in ways that defy traditional insistence on standard and accuracy.

**Keywords:** World Englishes, multilingualism, literacy English Monolingualism, and Canadian Universities

### Introduction

Let us start with some facts and figures:

#### World

- Native speakers lost their majority in the 1970s.

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- In 2050, English as a second/additional language users will be 688 millions compared to 433 millions as its first language users. (David Graddol cited in Canagarajah, 2006, p. 588)

### Canada

- As of 2011, nearly 6.6 million persons reported speaking a language other than English or French at home.
- In 2011, 11.5% of the population reported speaking both English and a language other than French at home. The corresponding figure in 2006 was 9.1%. This is an increase of 960,000 persons, compared with about 410,000 between 2001 and 2006.
- In Toronto, 1.8 million speak an immigrant language most often at home.
- In Montreal, Arabic and Spanish account for nearly one-third of people speaking an immigrant language at home.
- In Vancouver, Punjabi is the most frequently reported immigrant home language.
- In Calgary and Edmonton, Punjabi and Tagalog are the top immigrant home languages.
- In Ottawa-Gatineau, Arabic and Spanish are the most frequently reported immigrant home languages. (Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011001-eng.cfm>)

I reproduced these facts just to highlight that the ownership of English has long slipped from the formerly English speaking countries as its users have expanded across the world, creating new Englishes. This expansion has also challenged the relevance of the idea of “native speakerism” (Canagarajah, 2015) simply because English is no longer native to the handful of countries or regions. With English taking various shapes, it is also no longer limitable and measurable in terms of certain standard features of grammar, norms and standard of accuracy and intelligibility. It needs no stressing that English has taken a local shape as users contextualize and appropriate to their own rhetorical and communicative needs (Canagarajah, 2002; 2006). The diversity of language users in Canada above, as well as in the United States, is no surprise. Only that, as we will see shortly, facts and figures about the linguistic and cultural composition and diversity of countries and institutions whose very existence has been possible because of the presence of bi/multilingual speakers seem to have little or no effect in how these countries and institutions function pedagogically.

While there is no doubt that the growing number of global English users worldwide has not only distributed the ownership of English, invalidating, thus, the descriptive valence of ‘native speaker’ and Standard English (Kramsch, 2009), certain forces at work still insist on standard version of English (Rubdy & Saraceny, 2006). The practices of testing proficiency and gatekeeping through English language tests such as TOEFL and IELTS persists, despite provocative discussions and findings about the various ways people use Englishes for their specific needs and contexts. Academic

institutions still rely on standard language test as the primary placement options and require their students to pass minimum language threshold. This practice persists despite research that standard tests cannot adequately account for students' different abilities and needs. Still in many college and universities in North America, ESL students take some kind of remedial courses.

Grounded in Canada, this essay sets out to respond to the following research question: What alternatives to standard test and language-requirement fulfilling courses do some Canadian universities offer for ESL students? It analyzes nine Canadian universities' take on Standard English by looking at such bridging and preparatory courses as English as a second language (ESL), English as an additional language (EAL), and English for academic purpose (EAP) that are offered from undergraduate to graduate students identified as ESL, non-native speakers. The programs under study are: U of Manitoba's EAP, Queen's Bridging Program QBridge and EAP, U of Ottawa's English Intensive Program (EIP), U of British Columbia's Intensive English Program (IEP), U of Alberta's Bridging Program (BP), McGill's Continuing Studies and English Language and Culture programs, and Carleton's Foundation Program (FP)<sup>2</sup>.

### **Significance of the study**

As the background context should have served some purpose, this university website-available survey examines and evaluates ESL and similar courses primarily offered to English as a second/additional language and international students who are required to take these courses to fulfill language requirement or are recommended as a building block for their better English communication. Often the areas of second language teaching, ESL and similar labor, as well as the participants and people involved in it, tend to receive less scholarly attention (Matsuda, 1999). Part of our job as teachers of language and literacy is to pay equal attention to the diversity of population that we work for in today's globalized community.

To my knowledge, there is no such study that has focused on language and terms used in course description and language policy in Canada. This study also comes at a

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<sup>2</sup> Alberta's Bridging Program: <http://www.studyincanada.ualberta.ca/StudyAtUAlberta/BridgingProgram.aspx>  
Carlton's Foundation Program: <http://carleton.ca/slals/credit-esl/>  
Manitoba's English for Academic Purpose: <http://umanitoba.ca/student/elc/parttime/index.html>  
Ottawa's English Intensive Program: <http://eip.uottawa.ca>  
Queen's QBridge: <http://www.queensu.ca/qsoe/qbridge>  
Queen's English for Academic Purpose: <http://www.queensu.ca/qsoe/eap>  
UBC's Intensive English Program: <http://eli.ubc.ca/iep/>

time when scholars discussing pushing the matters of language from the issue limited to “rights” and “tolerance” to encouraging students to use their various linguistics resources and diverse meaning making tools, it is important that we see how institutions in an officially multicultural country such as Canada treat language diversity. Studies like this can shed light on any gaps and contradictions that institutions in general may not have paid attention to in their own ways of best serving the target population. Institutions can take benefit from the recommendations I make at the end if they want to revise, especially their language policies, but also the kinds of courses they offer. I believe that not only the institutions in question, but also literacy providers in general in all institutions across the world and teacher and scholars of language and literacy in higher education should find this discussion useful.

## **Methodology**

The primary method I have used is visiting university websites. Websites are relatively fair and neutral venues where they represent themselves to the public. Being able to see the actual syllabi, courses, teaching materials, teaching approaches and practices would lead to a more nuanced conclusion, however, it is important to note that what appears online is should be reflective of a program’s practices and policies.

Although randomly selected, the universities chosen are fairly representative of Canada’s regional diversity. Ottawa and Carlton are based in Ontario. Ottawa is a home to bilingual institute (OLBI) and CanTest, and its ESL program also claims to be “a centre for research in second language acquisition and pedagogy.” Similarly, Carlton is home to Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) test. McGill (based in French Canada), and Toronto, because of their ranking, attract great diversity of students from around the world.

All these universities have ‘minimum’ test score requirement: the score requirement varies depending on the reputation of the university and/or the program. Most of these universities also offer bridging programs as alternatives to low test scores that do not fulfill language requirement. While some bridging programs allow students under the “conditional admission” to earn academic credits (e.g., example, Carleton, Alberta, McGill, Memorial, and Toronto’s programs) while also helping them improve their language skills, other bridging programs (e.g., Ottawa, Queen’s, and UBC) do not carry credits.

I compare the alternatives (to language test and language requirement) offered by these programs and analyze common patterns and differences among these alternatives. I then observe common patterns among the programs as well as differences both among and within the same universities.

I benefit from discussions within ESL and Composition scholarship that critique tacit English monolingual policy underlying even the supposedly progressive programs. Horner and Trimbur (2002), Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011), Canagarajah (2002; 2006; 2013; 2015) among other scholars, identify that Standard English has become a proxy to discriminate against racial and ethnic minorities.

### **Limitations of the study**

1. The courses studied through a university website were lacking in detail, as they seemed to serve the purpose of pamphlets. However, to counter this limitation, one can easily argue that what appears on a *university* website's particular program is an intentional act done by serious people who are responsible for the population they serve as well as the intellectual community of which they are a part.
2. The courses studied range, as the program's target participants, from lower level language proficiency to something of an upper level. One can raise a question that the evaluative criteria would not be the same for the different categories of people served. However, my interest is not so much in devising an *accurate* measuring criteria to evaluate the relative merit of the program but to see how progressive, relevant, recent, well informed and responsive these programs, to current research, conversation in teaching literacy and language, and today's multilingual realities.

### **English monolingualism and instrumentalism**

There is no dearth of literature that suggests that higher education institutions have historically adopted a monolingual orientation to teaching English. This is particularly true the former English speaking countries, which Kachru (1992) called the "norm providing" "inner circle" countries, such as UK, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, but no less true in what Kachru called the "norm-dependent" "expanding circle" such as China and other East Asia, South America. Historically, programs that aim to immerse students into the mainstream language and culture have been monolingual in orientation, and such programs tend to view learners' first/home/native language and culture as a barrier to their learning of second language. English language teaching (ELT) as a profession came as a direct response to British colonial imperative, which needed English as a tool to spread its empire. As Auerbach (1993) cites Phillipson, taking us back to the context of the 1960s, when ELT established this doctrine of teaching English: "English is best taught monolingually, and by NES teacher. The more

and the earlier it is taught, the better the results. If other languages are used too much, standard of English will drop” (p. 14). It is within this ideological context of English monolingualism that Sarah Benesch (2001) points out in, *Critical English for academic purposes*, the need to balance “needs analysis” and “rights analysis” for a more critical offering of EAP. ESL and EAP programs we have examined miss the critical, political edge while overemphasizing the “instrumental” logic which directly or indirectly supports monolingualism as the only pragmatic option, ignoring the fact that what they consider pragmatic is not in itself devoid of ideology.

In a his analysis of various academic programs intended to teach language and academic writing, Canagarajah (2002) finds that English for academic purposes (EAP) “assert[s] boundaries” (p. 32) although acknowledging that the school of EAP has contributed greatly to understanding the ways of communicating in the academic community by teaching learners genres and resisters. However, Canagarajah further explains, “EAP adopts the normative attitude” by assuming that “the discourses of academic communities are not open to negotiation and criticism” (p. 32). The consequences is that this school orientates to the academic community as a homogenous circle, where is mixing the discourse features are treated as a sign of incompetence.

A traditional monolingual approach tries to keep students away from their first/home language. Students’ errors are seen as evidence of first language interfering with their successful leaning of second, important language; consequently, this approach would lead teachers to eradicate errors from students’ writing and speech (Horner & Lu, 2007, call this an “eradicationist” approach). In the model, the ideal speaker is the native speaker, whom the nonnative students are expected to approximate. In Horner and mapping (below), the second language approach (SLA) is better than the eradicationist approaches that ask student to abandon their home languages as the home language are thought to interfere their successful acquiring of the second language. However, it eventually treats language difference as interlingual and explains the difference as a result of “idiosyncratic rules” and “proofreading habits” that are “intuitive” to the native speaker (p. 144). In SLA too, students’ first language proves to be a barrier.

Approach	Status given difference	Explanation of difference	Pedagogy aims and means	Value assigned EAE
Educationalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ignorance</li> <li>Indifference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eradicate error</li> <li>Eradicate error marker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correct writing</li> </ul>
Second-language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interlanguage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meditation of writing</li> <li>Idiosyncratic rules</li> <li>Proofreading habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnose and treat idiosyncrasies</li> <li>Teach editing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correct</li> <li>‘Target’ language</li> </ul>
Accommodationist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discourse clash</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambivalence to dominant Discourse</li> <li>Discourse interference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translation from unprivileged to privileged Discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dominant</li> <li>‘Power’ Discourse</li> </ul>

Multilingual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Code-meshing'</li> <li>• Discourse-blending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic design to create new discourses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of language and languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• False ideal</li> <li>• Contingent</li> </ul>
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Figure 1: Table from Horner and Lu (2007)

Accommodationist stance considers discourse still as discrete and orientates learners to power discourse. Finally, multilingual position recognizes code-meshing and discourse blending.

English monolingualists (assimilationists, immersionists, instrumentalists) forward pragmatic and instrumental logic, where the term pragmatic is used in a very narrow sense to mean efficiency, often cast in terms of English as a language that makes its learners successful. Instrumentalist choices are framed around such words as *success*, *proficiency* and *competence*. Pragmatists and instrumentalists think that asking questions about the underlying values and rationale for academic discourses would distract students from the immediate objective of becoming proficient in this writing (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 33). He cites an example of Swales (1990), who explains that he left out ideological considerations about academic discourse in his work because he was more concerned “to help people, both non-native and native speakers, to develop their academic communicative competence” (Canagarajah, p. 33; original in Swales, p. 9).

The rationale for ‘English only’ is framed, according to Elsa R. Auerbach (1993), “in pedagogical terms”—that more exposure to English will help students internalize English better and quickly, and the only sure way they will learn is when forcing them to use it (p. 14-15). Language policies framed in terms of students, parents, and mostly markets’ needs, desires, and demands garner more support. For example, UBC’s English-only policy that we will come to shortly is said to be “initiated and supported by the ELI students and staff.”

What do such monolingual approaches ignore? First and foremost, the monolingual approaches, whatever form they assume, blatantly ignore students’ rights to their own language, rights fundamental to a functioning multilingual and multicultural country such as Canada and the U.S.A. Moreover, as Horner et al. (2011) comment, arguing for an a “translingual” approach, that monolingual approaches ignore the simple fact that English itself has never remained the same over time and across places (p. 306). Given the fact that people have appropriated and localized English to serve their own purposes, and thus also brought about many changes within English, these approaches fail to acknowledge the role and power of English(es) users worldwide (p. 306). Monolingual approaches also ignore that English is best learned when students’ multilingual resources are put to use. World Englishes scholars tell us that apart from their linguistic and cultural richness, multilingual speakers come with psychological and attitudinal flexibility and openness to adapt to changes, partly because nonwestern societies believe in pluricentric approaches (Canagarajah, 2006). The incorporation of

WE over Standard English (SE) and a translingual approach means that pedagogies emphasize message over accuracy and correctness, context over cognition, agency over determinism, fluidity over fixity, inter-culture over target culture, dynamism over linearity, and emergence over system (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011, p. 10).

Canagarajah's (2006) "negotiation model" deemphasizes rule and boundaries encourages us to see texts as performative "social acts" where the subjects have agency to develop rules, make decisions while making rhetorical choices, engaging new meanings, rather than rather than produce a "rule-governed text" (p. 602). Rather than viewing a text as context-bound, the negotiation model views the text as "context-transforming" (p. 603). Under this model competence can be defined as writer's ability to view texts, contexts, and discourses changing variables that can be negotiated. Canagarajah adds, and I quote at length:

rather than studying multilingual writing as static, locating the writer within a language, we would study the movement of the writer between languages; rather than studying the product for descriptions of writing competence, we would study the process of composing in multiple languages; rather than studying the writer's stability in specific forms of linguistic or cultural competence, we would analyze his or her versatility (for example, life between multiple languages and cultures); rather than treating language or culture as the main variable, we would focus more on the changing contexts of communication, perhaps treating context as the main variable as writers switch their languages, discourses, and identities in response to this contextual change; rather than treating writers as passive, conditioned by their language and culture, we would treat them as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives. As a precondition for conducting this inquiry, we have to stop treating any textual difference as an unconscious error. We must consider it as a strategic and creative choice by the author to attain his or her rhetorical objectives. (590-91)

Is the goal of proficiency in only one language anymore relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of outsourcing and internalization of businesses? The changing landscape and volatility of businesses and jobs (which the rationale for Standard English hinges on) and the rise of emerging economic powers such as India, China, Brazil, Korea, among others, should be enough reasons for these programs to *re-present* how they view proficiency and success. Proficiency in one language, one culture, one nation, and, we might add, one modality, is no longer tenable in the changing world. As for Canada, the striking facts cited in the beginning speak for themselves.

Because a significant portion of my findings and discussions section below mentions the work "skills," I want to provide a little of context why the discussion of



“skills” should matter. Literacy scholars Street (1984), among others, think that literacy teaching reduced to skills have often presented literacy as a transparent tool devoid of its ideological side. Literacy cast as “autonomous”, transparent medium often breaks down teaching into dividable, linear units such as grammar skills, editing skills in ways that mask language and ideology relations. As such what Street calls “autonomous” literacy objectifies teaching and learning, deprives students of being curious about questions about why things are the ways they are; the “autonomous literacy” treating literacy as a set of autonomous skills that can be learnt independently of the social context, and fails to acknowledge that literacy is context-dependent and power-produced. In Freire’s (1970) term, such pedagogy is an oppressive pedagogy.

## Findings and discussions

Of the institutions studied, all universities rely heavily, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Management (STEM) on international and ESL students, which could be the justification for the presence of the programs we will study. The following graph from Statistics Canada, although a bit dated, shows the math as to the presence of international students in Canada.

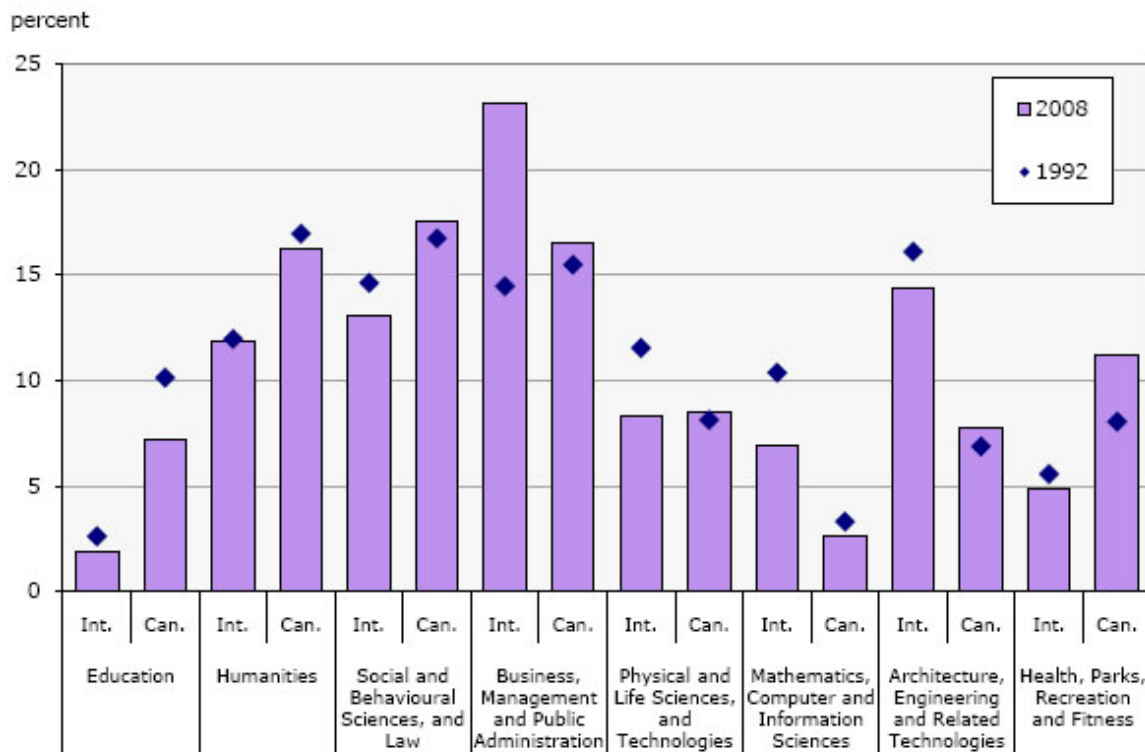


Figure 2. Source: Statistics Canada, [Postsecondary Student Information System \(PSIS\)](#).

As we can see, while the ratio of international figure lower number compared to Canadian students in Education, Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences and Law is lower, in Science, Technology, and Management, international students represent higher presence.

A quick look at these programs' descriptions, course offerings, pedagogical goals, and language policies suggest: (1) these programs have functioned as the custodians and gatekeepers of Standard English and native speaker norm (NSN); (2) they do not seem to be paying enough attention to the growing body of scholarship in bi/multi/translingualism which essentially argue for promoting language diversity and respecting writers' identity and agency; (3) these programs seem to undermine multicultural realities and diversity of North America. Programs compared range, in terms of the nature of course offered and policy adopted, from assimilationist to sensitive to multilingual and diversity realities. While most programs can be called in Streetian terms to have adopted an "autonomous view of literacy" in their emphasis on decontextualized skills and focus on grammar and correctness.

### **Common patterns and themes**

An assortment of course descriptions, goals, and language policies put in the respective program's website can help us derive some themes and patterns. Course descriptions, goals and stated expectations from ESL students can also help us make reasonable guess about the assumptions underlying these programs. The first common theme observable in most of the programs is the emphasis they put on language skills that are deemed to be necessary to be successful, in come cases in a local university setting, in other cases in a broader North American context. Grammar, pronunciation, editing skills, accuracy has received most attention at the lower level language teaching, while the more rigorous courses (likely upper level) courses have added some research component in their course description.

**Skills, accuracy, and native speakerism:** There is a heavy focus on "skills" in most of these courses under the study. "Accuracy" is another word that gets emphasized. Take an example from Alberta's EAP 140/145 course description:

EAP 140 focuses on beginning to develop the language *skills* necessary to interact within a university setting. This is done by building listening, reading, writing and speaking vocabulary and comprehension, while emphasizing language *accuracy as the primary focus for all second-language learners*. Students will be introduced to some basic reading and

writing strategies, and will start to put into practice the study *skills* which will help them to succeed in *a North American setting*. (emphases added)

The emphasis on skills and specifically accuracy is inconsistent with conversations within New Literacy Studies, Writing Studies and Social and Applied Linguistics (Street, 1984; Leki, 1997; Canagarajah, 2002; 2006) the focus has to be on how writers appropriate a language to their own rhetorical and communicative needs, not on accuracy and norm. The focus falls on “basic reading and writing strategies,” and not surprisingly this speaks to why there exist a complain that ESL students are taught basic low-stake, content-poor, grammar- and vocabulary-centered courses that deprive them of the opportunities to take more challenging and competitive courses. Writing scholars agree that teaching isolated skills is often reduced to the teaching grammar and mechanics decontextualized from the actual text.

Moreover, Alberta’s EAP seems to assume that English skills are what “all second-language learners” *need*, and perhaps *want*, to succeed in “a North America.” As Composition scholars Lu and Horner (2007) suggest, one of the ways monolingualists argue for the place of standard variety of English is by arguing that standard English is what everybody wants. In the case of ESL students, there seems to an assumption that all ESL students want and need to acquire Standard English.

The course description in question has nothing to reflect critical thinking, writing, arguments and questioning abilities (critical here understood simply as the reductive version of asking questions about the text, let alone the more ambitious awareness, consciousness related things; this aim, although desirable, would be a far cry in this course for its apparently low, basic level target). The last sentence, which says that the proposed language “skills” and strategies will help students “to succeed in a North American setting,” while specific to a location, can be said to be limited considering today’s mobility, outsourcing, and migration.

Language learning becomes “skills” in this phrasing, and the claim that the skills will help student become successful in “a North America” may be a false promise for too many students. “Skills” is also the term used to describe Manitoba’s course Oral Presentations. The course description goes:

This course is designed to give students practice in speaking *skills* required for full participation in academic presentations. Students will learn *strategies that native speakers use in presenting information, in expressing opinions and in questioning others*. (my emphases)

As I have highlighted, Manitoba’s Oral Presentations specifically uses the problematic term, native speakers, when traditional definitions of ‘native speaker’ is no longer available with the distributed ownership of English across the world populations, and this course wants the second language users to aim for the native speaker norm. This insistence on norm sounds assimilatory its tone, and is colonial in nature as it suggests

taming different tongues. While this, as well as other courses under examination here, may have been very well intended, as well as in keeping with ESL students' demand in the first place, the framing of the course does not appeal to many scholars today.

The Oral Presentations course aims to achieve the following:

to enhance success for students, as well as potential students, whose first language is not English by building *skills* in academic communication in order that they may achieve their academic goals and participate with confidence in the University of Manitoba community.

Apart from its adherence to native speaker norm, this course has other problems. While it may be accurate in its claim that in the specific context U of Manitoba, English may be important for achieving academic goals, the terms "confidence" and "academic abilities" are associated with, neigh reduced to, the learning of English language. In other words, literacy in English is assumed to be *the* literacy.

Manitoba's Oral Presentations expects ESL students to "learn strategies that *native speakers* use in presenting information, in expressing opinions and in questioning others," the implication being that rather than building on the abilities and strengths ESL students bring with them, ESL students are required to learn the native speakers' strategies.

McGill offers several ESL courses. CESL 150 English as a Second Language (6 credits) is

designed to help students whose *native tongue* is not English and who have difficulty in a) understanding spoken English, b) speaking it, c) reading English text material, or d) writing assignments in English. Emphasis on *writing skills* in the high-intermediate and advanced sections. (emphasis added)

CESL 200 ESL: Academic English 1 (3 credits) is

for students who have a basic knowledge of English. Focus is on developing writing skills: sentence structure; formal paragraphs; short essays. Independent learning strategies for vocabulary building, *grammar, editing techniques*, structuring an oral presentation, and *improving pronunciation*.

There is some writing component mentioned in these courses. Otherwise, the focus is pretty much on skills, grammar and mechanics, editing techniques, pronunciation, not on content, writing skills, argument skills, and so on. More disconcertingly, CESL 150 uses the problematic native tongue metaphor irrespective of the debate within ESL that such terms carry racist, biological, and nationalistic connotation (Canagarajah, 2015).

**English-only policies:** Before analyzing individual examples, let us now turn to some university programs' English only policies, another theme that can be developed from this discussion. I have already shown that "native speaker" norm prevails in some

programs. In the context of the U.S., English Only (EO) movement is associated with an extreme rightist, conservative movement, and it is in this politically fraught milieu that Horner and Trimbur (2002) identify various overt and covert ways English monolingualism has crept into U.S. composition. Less politically invested practices, but no less complicitous in the colonial and imperial order, can be found in the following university programs. Ottawa's [language use policy](#) states that

students enrolled in the English Intensive Program ... *speak only English* in the classroom, the administration office, the student resource centre and lobby, and during socio-cultural activities.

The stricter English-only rule applies to Queen's QBridge, which are bound by its School of [English Language Policy](#), which states:

The exclusive use of English is *mandatory* for all students at all times and attendance in all classes is *compulsory*. Students who do not *comply with* these *rules* may be asked to *withdraw from the school with no refund of fees*.

Still regressive to me is UBC's [English Only Policy](#), as the name itself suggests. The program claims that the policy was initiated and supported by the English Language Institute (ELI) students and staff. UBC's English Only Policy states:

(students) *speak only English at the ELI*. This includes main UBC ELI building, all campus classrooms used of UBC ELI programs and during Social Cultural programs and events. The following penalties may be enforced with students who fail to speak English:

**First time:** *verbal warning* from UBC ELI student advisor or staff number

**Second time:** meeting with UBC ELI student advisor and *1 day suspension* from all classes and ELI faculties

**Third time:** *1 week suspension*

**Fourth time:** meeting with an ELI Director, *1 week suspension and may not be able to write final exams*. UBC ELI computer resources are for English-language only, with the exception of designated computers for sending and receiving email in other languages.

While one must pause a while before charging this policy for being dictatorial, because it says that these rules are agreed upon, "initiated and supported by the ELI students and staff," are not imposed, it makes me wonder "Which world are we living in?" Such agreed upon penal systems and regressive policies call for more serious scrutiny.

Obviously there is a circle of scholars and teachers who believe that not teaching standard English to students of other languages is depriving them of the prestigious and indirectly hurting their chance to succeed, the other side to the argument (Delpit, 1993; 1998), there is a more convincing argument that language learning is better done by encouraging students use their multiple resources rather than ask them to disown those resources (Canagarajah, 2002).

**Better programs:** In this subsection, I wanted to compare two different ESL directed programs of the same university offered to different level ESL students and discuss some glaring contradictions within the same school and what this might suggest in terms of evaluating those programs' progressive or regressive take, or in terms looking into the sources and reasons for those differences. My purpose is also to show that not all programs offered to ESL students are necessarily regressive and dated, thus to emphasize the need to be cautious and careful in making judgment about others.

Carleton's English as Second Language for Academic Purpose (ESLA):

Course Number	Course Name	Description	Additional degree credits permitted
ESLA 1300	Introductory ESL for Academic Purposes	This level introduces students to the skills and strategies they need for academic success at university including basic research methods.	0.5 credit
ESLA 1500	Intermediate ESL for Academic Purposes	This level further develops the skills and strategies required for academic success, and adds to basic research skills.	Up to 1.0 credit
ESLA 1900	Intermediate ESL for Academic Purposes	This level develops the students' research and analytic skills, primarily through reading and writing of academically oriented texts.	Up to 1.5 credits

Figure 3: Screenshot obtained from Carleton's ESLA website

These introductory to intermediate ESL for academic purpose courses, when compared to Alberta's EAP we discussed earlier seem much better. Nowhere do the courses draw native/nonnative terms; the goal— to make students successful in university academic context— seems local enough (although one may point out this is too local a success scope), and the programs mention “basic research methods” as their components. The language skills are extended here to include research skills, which makes a great sense, because it is not English language alone that students need to know; they need to know the basic ways things are done in academia such as writing conventions and

basic rhetorical moves (Bartholomae, 1986). Research skills go a long way to success, if by success we mean academic success.

**Better if internally inconsistent programs:** A glaring contrast can be found in Queen's QBridge program and its EAP program, which to me seems to distinctly progressive from what we have looked earlier (p. 11). Let me reproduce the QBridge program description to help us juxtapose this with the EAP. QBridge policy: "The exclusive use of English is *mandatory* for all students at all times and attendance in all classes is *compulsory*. Students who do not *comply with these rules* may be asked to *withdraw from the school with no refund of fees*" (my emphasis).

In sharp contrast, the EAP program description reads:

This program helps to build the *skills* necessary for academic success and helps you gain an understanding of the expectations for study at Queen's University. This student-centered immersion program integrates the four language skills... *It is more academically challenging and rigorous than standard lecture and test format courses* and more in keeping with the communicative classroom style.

As the highlights explain, Queen's program offers ESL students "*more academically challenging and rigorous than standard lecture and test format courses.*" Besides, it also seems to challenge lecturing method and teaching-to-test model. Teacher-centered lecturing and transmission pedagogy based on what Freire (1970) termed the "banking model" of teaching treat students as mere recipients of knowledge rather than as creators of knowledge. In such pedagogies students are "taught-to-test" (Reid, 2009). Queen's "student-centered" course in question seems in many ways a progressive course.

McGill also has glaring inconsistencies. As we already examined (on p. 16), the program offered for lower level ESL students is aimed at teaching native speaker ability; it focuses on grammar and pronunciation and the "English-speaking world." In contrast, a course named Certificate of Proficiency in English—Language and Culture aims to provide "an advanced level of fluency in English and an *in-depth understanding of culture in the English-speaking world*" (my emphasis). This program claims to have been "in line with the international benchmarks such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)." The discussion of CEFR may suffice, and I will go in some detail what this framework means to language teaching. CEFR rejects the idea that competence is speaker's discrete and independent level of proficiency and the easy notion that "coexistence of difference of languages in a given society can be attained by simply adding or diversifying

the languages” (p. 4). CEFR advocates for plurilingual model, which attempts to address the problem underlying the “additive” multilingualism. Unlike additive multilingualism, plurilingualism emphasizes speakers’ repertoire and integrated competence, whereby individuals no longer keep the languages and cultures in “strictly separated mental compartments” when they move from one linguistic and cultural context to another (p. 4).

A plurilingual approach that CEFR advocates holds that individuals interrelate and integrate all their linguistic and cultural experiences and knowledge for different contexts and purposes. Language competence from this perspective is treated as a form of social practice and intercultural competence. From this perspective, “the aim of educationists is not to help students achieve mastery of one language or more, each taken in isolation, with the ideal native speaker as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop and promote a linguistic repository, in which all linguistic abilities have a place” (p. 5). Similarly, CEFR recognizes language learning as “a lifelong task” rather than limited to acquiring a predefined skills. Such a recognition carriers redefined responsibilities to educational authorities, exams bodies, and teachers; their roles now would not simply be confined to help students attain a given level of proficiency in a particular language at a particular time but develop a degree of flexibility to face the unpredictable (p. 5). I wonder, how informed by this pedagogical goals did not exert enough influence on a sibling course, which, as we saw carries so dated approach and such a regressive policy.

## **Recommendations**

The programs we examined would sound more convincing if they updated their language policies keeping with the changes in language teaching and literacy practices. At the least, the concerned programs could avoid using native and nonnative categories, even for the sake of convenience, as these terms invoke nationality, blood, and ethnicity markers. Literacy providers and sponsors need to acknowledge that second language writers bring great linguistic and cultural resources that they can build on, value, and respect rather than abandon. This is not an argument of doing away with Standard English. Standard English should remain as one variety that has its specific uses, but even for a more effective learning of Standard English, all educational institutions could utilize students’ linguistic and cultural resources rather than assimilate them into one language. This is not again to mean that other languages should be used only as a medium to gain a prestige language.

The world of teaching language and learning has changed significantly from traditional ways of teaching English through grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, where correctness and standard received primary importance, to include the various ways people use Englishes to accommodate their needs. The Internet has



provided endless opportunity for people to learn through information technology such as social media, blogs and other participatory sites, through multimodal texts, and through several other exchanges. ESL programs should consider benefitting from how people practice languages for their communicative purposes, and from what strategies not recognized in the standard ways of learning and teaching language people use to communicate.

Learning from the scholarship in World Englishes, writing studies and other sources I drew on in this article, but more importantly, from the programs (McGill, Queen's, Carleton) that place focus on research, writing, content, critical skills, and programs that respect students' multilingual and multicultural resources, would be the first important, necessary, and desirable initiation.

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