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The Adult ESL Context in Urban Quebec: A Look at Culture and Interculturality

Nancy Dytynyshyn
Concordia University

Laura Collins
Concordia University

Abstract

The adult second language class has been identified as a potentially rich context for the development of interculturality due to direct contact between students from diverse cultures (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009). According to Warwick-Menard (2009) addressing areas of cultural misunderstandings (discursive faultlines) may be an essential part of the process. In this study we examined the treatment of culture and development of interculturality in the transcripts of a complete 36-hour ESL class offered by a community centre in Montreal, Quebec. The research questions relate to the representation of Canadian culture, the teacher's general approach to cultural issues, and any evidence that this approach promoted intercultural competence. Results show Canada represented as a culturally-diverse community with no particular attention paid to the French Canadian culture of the research context. The teacher emphasized cultural adaptation and commonality of student experience across cultures. There was little evidence of the use of discursive faultlines to promote intercultural competence. However, the various ways in which the teacher facilitated genuine contact among the multiethnic learners did provide opportunities for the development of intercultural competence.

THE ADULT ESL CONTEXT IN URBAN QUEBEC: A LOOK AT CULTURE AND INTERCULTURALITY

Canada is a collection of people with roots in a multitude of cultural backgrounds. New Canadians are making their way not only to urban centres, but increasingly into suburban areas and regional centres. At the same time, Canadians are traveling, studying, and working abroad as never before. What challenges do these meetings and mixings of culture present? While many Canadians are becoming more culturally aware, simply learning about and acknowledging cultural differences is only the beginning. Intercultural competence or interculturality includes a “respect of difference, as well as the socioaffective capacity to see oneself through the eyes of others” (Kramsch, 2005, p. 553). Many would argue that interculturality is increasingly required for a peaceful, fully-functional, multiethnic society (see, for example, the recent initiatives by the United Nations to facilitate intercultural innovation, 2011).

The foreign language (FL) classroom has long been considered an ideal site for promoting awareness of the culture(s) associated with the target language. For the past decade it has also been common to speak of teachers’ and learners’ development of interculturality through the FL curriculum (Knutson, 2006; Liddicoat, 2004; Sercu, 2006). However, does actual practice in the foreign language classroom promote the teaching of interculturality? A small number of case studies have examined particular foreign language teachers’ approaches to teaching intercultural competence (e.g., Duff & Uchida, 1997; Ryan, 1998). In a multinational survey of FL teacher opinion, Sercu (2006) concluded that while the majority of those in the foreign language teaching profession may value cultural awareness and intercultural competence, in reality, these goals often take a back seat to linguistic objectives. In addition, many FL teachers feel ill-prepared to tackle cultural issues.

The foreign language classroom is not the only potential context for promoting interculturality. The adult second language (SL) class would seem to hold great promise for the development of interculturality, particularly multiethnic classes where people from various backgrounds come together to learn a community language, using the new language as a lingua franca to communicate with one another and to relate to their adoptive community. The Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954) maintains that interpersonal contact has the potential to change the way individuals and groups think about and behave towards one another. The multiethnic

adult SL classroom can provide this interpersonal contact. However, only a handful of studies have looked at interculturality in this context. Menard-Warwick (2008) compared an adult ESL teacher in California to an EFL teacher in Chile. She found that the ESL teacher focused more on comparisons between her students' cultures, whereas her EFL teacher in Chile emphasized cultural change within the students' own society. However, Menard-Warwick's (2009) classroom observation of three multiethnic, adult ESL groups in California was inconclusive in terms of whether or not the teachers' pedagogical strategies promoted interculturality. Magos and Simopoulos (2009) observed and interviewed 20 teachers of Greek as a second language in Athens. The researchers concluded that the majority of these teachers could not be considered interculturally competent themselves, and therefore were not equipped to promote interculturality among their adult immigrant learners.

How do the above findings compare with what is happening in Canadian adult ESL classrooms? More specifically, how do they compare with the multiethnic adult ESL classes common in Montreal, Quebec? Unlike most ESL contexts, the language the students are learning is not the dominant language of the immediate community. Students are learning English in a city whose official language is French (although the dominant language spoken actually depends on the neighbourhood), within a province that is predominantly French-speaking, while becoming citizens of a nation that is predominantly English-speaking. These learners have moved to Canada for an extended period (if not permanently) and bring their own cultural and linguistic experiences to classes that operate in a culturally diverse context. What might the teaching of culture and development of interculturality look like in this learning context?

We know through anecdotal evidence, including our own teaching experiences, that students from widely different ethnic, national and religious backgrounds routinely exchange phone numbers, develop friendships, and share personal confidences with one another (Dytynyshyn, 2008). However, there is little published research into the dynamics of culture and interculturality in this context. The goal of the study reported on here was to examine one particular teacher's general approach to culture and the degree to which pedagogical practices in this multiethnic adult ESL class in Montreal promoted the development of interculturality.

INTERCULTURALITY IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CONTEXT

The notion of culture itself has been understood in a variety of ways. It has often referred to products such as literature and the arts, to history and institutions, and to practices such as festivals and popular phenomena (Liddicoat, 2004). In this study, however, culture will refer to “shared understandings and practices within groups of people” (Menard-Warwick, 2008, p. 622). This includes products and practices, but, more importantly, also includes “understandings”, or perspectives. Values and ways of seeing the world are also aspects of culture. Although these practices, perspectives and products are shared, they also show a great deal of within group differences, and are continually in the process of change.

A distinction will also be maintained between cultural awareness and interculturality. Cultural awareness is achieved when individuals learn about and acknowledge differences, while interculturality (Byram, 1997) includes a respect of these differences, as well as the capacity to see oneself and one’s culture through the eyes of another (Kramsch, 2005). In other words, intercultural competence refers to “the general ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behaviour in one or more different cultures” (Bennet, Bennet, & Allen, 1999). To describe this ability to see cultural issues from multiple perspectives and to interact with those of different cultural backgrounds in appropriate ways, in this paper the terms intercultural competence and interculturality will be used interchangeably. With these distinctions clarified we will now examine the existing literature dealing with culture and interculturality in the multiethnic adult second language context.

To begin, there is some evidence that second language teachers approach culture and interculturality differently from foreign language teachers. Menard-Warwick’s (2008) double case study compared two teachers who both had vast “transnational experience” (p. 618), having lived long-term (more than two decades) in both the United States and either Brazil or Chile. These teachers had culturally hybrid identities themselves and very high levels of competence in the target language (English). One taught a multiethnic adult ESL class in California, while the other taught EFL in a Chilean university. One of the main findings was that the ESL teacher in California focused on cultural comparisons between the US and her multiethnic learners’ countries of origin, while the EFL teacher in Chile focused on cultural change in Chile with her ethnically more homogenous Chilean students. These findings

demonstrate that the approach to teaching culture and interculturality may be influenced by the teaching context.

There was further evidence of this in Menard-Warwick's (2009) qualitative look at three university-level EFL classrooms in Chile and three community college ESL classrooms in California. Based on teacher interviews as well as eight hours of observation in each class, the author examined how teaching culture is approached in these classes, how national cultures are portrayed, the process of co-construction of cultural representations by teachers and students, and the extent to which these teachers' pedagogies encouraged interculturality. In her findings, the talk in the California ESL classrooms (which, like the context studied in this paper, grouped adult learners from multiple ethnic backgrounds) revolved around the cultural adaption of individuals as they adjust to a new living context, cultural comparisons, including both similarities and differences, and cultural values as participants weighed in on rightness or wrongness of particular cultural views. There was little talk of cultural change, which was frequent in the more homogenous Chilean EFL classrooms. Again, this suggests that FL and SL teachers may approach cultural issues differently.

Menard-Warwick (2009) also added a new dimension to the discussion of interculturality in the adult ESL context. She particularly focused on discursive faultlines (from Kramsch, 1993), defined by Menard-Warwick as "areas of cultural difference or misunderstanding that become manifest in classroom talk" (p. 31). The author believes that uncovering such faultlines is necessary for intercultural competence to develop and she used classroom excerpts to illustrate the handling of discursive faultlines. In the ESL classes, these appeared over students' different roles as parents or children, over the meaning of poverty in different cultures, and when the students' values with respect to immigration and education differed from those of certain political figures in the US. However, according to the author, the students often seemed more interested in convincing their classmates of the correctness of their point of view rather than listening to and understanding the other's perspective. In addition, the teachers' desire to cultivate a peaceful and collaborative atmosphere led them to "paper over differences before going on to the next activity" (p. 43). Menard-Warwick (2009) thus documented the handling of discursive faultlines, but the qualitative nature of the data provided insufficient direct evidence to claim increased interculturality as a result.

Finally, the literature also indicates that although the multiethnic adult SL class seems to provide a natural contact that could potentially favour

the development of interculturality, this advantage is not necessarily exploited by teachers. Magos and Simopoulos (2009) examined teachers of Greek as a second language in adult immigrant classes in Athens. They examined whether, and to what extent the teachers “promoted effective intercultural communication while teaching the second language” (p. 255), and whether or not they were able to take advantage of “the cultural diversity which characterized their classes” (p. 255). The teachers they studied represented all of the official institutes in Athens that provide Greek lessons to immigrants. They were all university graduates with diplomas in the teaching of Greek, and they were all relatively young (ages 28-38). The qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers and 22 students, and through observations made in each of the classes.

The results showed that only four of the teachers were able to take advantage of the experiences and backgrounds of their students. These four asked students about their past experiences and integrated their stories into the lesson plan. They supported the students personally and generally saw their learning difficulties as related to the challenging circumstances of their lives as immigrants. The other 16 saw the students’ experience only as a way to introduce a topic (for example, Who has been to a museum?), with many regarding students’ stories as unwelcome deviations in the lesson plan. They tended to remain aloof and uninvolved in the students’ lives and attributed student failure to learn to a deficient educational, cultural, or linguistic background. Students coming from cultures with perspectives closest to those of Greek culture were favoured. Unable to “transcend ethnocentrism” (Bennet, Bennet, & Allen, 1999), fully half of the teachers communicated in subtle or not so subtle ways, that Greek culture was somehow superior to the home cultures of the students. The students felt this keenly and reacted by dropping out of the courses. In Magos and Simopoulos’ (2009) view, the fact that the majority of the teachers were not interculturally competent themselves and were unable to take advantage of the natural contact between varying cultures in the classroom stems from inadequacies in teacher training.

To sum up, the teaching context may lead SL teachers to approach culture and interculturality somewhat differently than FL teachers with a greater focus on cultural adaptation and cultural comparisons. Although the empirical research data is minimal, it seems probable that the theoretical contact advantage of SL classes may not be capitalized on by all SL teachers. They may not be interculturally competent themselves, or linguistic goals may simply take priority with teachers feeling ill-

equipped for the task of addressing discursive faultlines in the classroom. Even when intercultural issues are approached, there is probably a great deal of variety from one teacher to another and possibly from one country to another.

The current study is undertaken to contribute to the body of literature exploring the teaching of culture and intercultural competence in multiethnic adult SL classrooms. It diverges in three important ways from previous studies. Firstly, the 'target' culture (C2) is more complex than most ESL or EFL contexts since Montreal is a multiethnic city within a French province within a bilingual nation. Thus, the representation of the C2 in this context could potentially include reference to French, English, and other communities. Secondly, the teacher was unaware of the researcher's interest in culture and interculturality. One of Menard-Warwick's (2008) teachers felt her approach had changed somewhat due to the presence of the author, whose research interests were known to the participants. Finally, other studies have observed only portions of a course, for example eight hours per teacher in the case of Warwick-Menard (2008, 2009). The present study examines the transcripts from an entire 36- hour ESL course. The research questions are therefore:

1. How is Canadian culture (the C2) represented in this ESL class?
2. What is this ESL teacher's approach to culture?
3. Does the teacher's pedagogical approach encourage the development of interculturality?

METHOD

Participants and Teaching Context

The data used to address the three research questions were collected in 2003 in an advanced adult ESL course offered by a Montreal community centre¹. The class met for two hours and fifteen minutes (including the 15-minute break), two mornings a week for nine weeks from January to March, either at the community centre or at a nearby university with which the centre had a partnership. There were 19 students in the class, 13 female and 6 male, with ages ranging from one teenager to one gentleman in his 60s. The majority of the students were in their 20s, 30s, or 40s. They

¹ The data were part of a larger study conducted by the second author of this paper.

came from 12 countries with 8 different L1s. Only two nationalities were represented more than once; there were two Koreans and seven Iranians in the class. A table listing the learners' age, sex, country of origin, and L1 is provided in Appendix A. Many of the learners had other second languages, but information on other known languages was not available. The teacher, whom we will call Jill, was a 30-year old female L1 speaker of English with EFL teaching experience in Korea and Central Asia and ESL teaching experience in both English Canada and Quebec. She also spoke French as a second language fluently. Jill had grown up in English Canada but had been living in Montreal for about five years at the time of the study. Both Jill and the research assistant handling the video recording were MA in applied linguistics students at the university in question at the time.

All 36 hours of class were video recorded. Whole-class discussions were transcribed, but pair and small group interaction is not represented in these transcripts except when Jill was interacting with a group and that interaction was audible. In the last half of the session six students volunteered to wear lapel microphones, thus allowing the researchers to look at a subset of pair and small group interactions. Data from five pairs working on a reading about adult children caring for aging parents (Collins, Dytynyshyn, & Milsom, 2008) were also considered in the present study, but no other pair or group work interactions were included. Since the data had been collected a number of years prior to this study, the decision was made not to interview Jill regarding her perspectives on the teaching of culture and on pedagogical decisions made, as too much time had elapsed for this information to be considered reliable.

The same students also met for two hours per week over the nine weeks for a conversation class taught by another teacher thus spending a total of six hours per week together in class (54 hours over the 9-week session). To summarize, this study is based on a qualitative examination of the 36 hours of class transcripts and data from five pairs working for about 20 minutes on one activity. A description of the thematic analysis is outlined below.

DATA ANALYSES

To address the first research question regarding the representation of the C2, all references to Canadian culture were identified and examined. This included talk about Canadian, English Canadian, and French Canadian

(including Quebecois) culture, as well as any mention of other cultural groups within Canada. The data was also examined to see if Jill considered the C2 as superior to the students' home cultures.

To address the second research question about the teacher's primary approach to culture, the categories outlined by Menard-Warwick (2009) and reproduced in Table 1 were adopted. Different coloured highlighting was used to identify instances of talk about culture so that their relative frequencies and length of instance would be more visually salient. References to both what Holliday (1999) would consider large cultures (those associated with countries, languages, or ethnic groups) and small cultures (other groupings that show cohesive behaviour, irrespective of national boundaries) were included. We use the terms large and small culture in this sense throughout the paper. For example, a discussion about hippies was considered cultural as well as one about adult children caring for aging parents. Both are what Risager (2007) would identify as cultural representations that are transnational in nature.

Table 1. Teacher's Approach to Culture (adapted from Warwick-Menard, 2009, p. 35)

Approach	Definition
Cultural Change	Discussion of how contemporary practices, products, and perspectives differ from those of the past
Cultural Adaptation	Discussion of the changes that individuals experience as they adjust to new contexts
Cultural Comparisons	Discussion of the ways that practices, perspectives, and products of one group differ from or are similar to those of another
Cultural Values	Discussion of a particular group's beliefs about what is right and wrong, valuable or worthless
Cultural Information	Description of a particular group's practices, products, or perspectives without reference to change, adaptation, comparison, or values

A decision about which classroom activities to code also had to be made. Menard-Warwick (2008) chose to exclude most form-focused activities, such as vocabulary exercises. In this dataset, however, there were many references to culture as vocabulary was being discussed, so the decision was made to code reference to culture in all activities regardless

of their pedagogical focus. As the coding proceeded, it became apparent that a good deal of talk about cultural representations was simply informational in nature. For example, the students read a piece about Canadian patterns of coffee consumption. A statement that 57% of Canadians drink coffee everyday (Berish & Thibauudeau, 1998) is definitely cultural, but does not fit neatly into cultural change, adaptation, comparison, or values (although any of these angles could be developed in the discourse). The discussion was oriented towards reading comprehension. Mentions of culture during vocabulary work also tended to be informational in nature. Therefore, a fifth coding category for cultural information was opened. To complete the observations of Jill's approach to culture, any sharing of personal experience or the elicitation of personal experience from the learners was noted. The extent to which the teacher drew on personal experience was pertinent in both Menard-Warwick (2008) and Magos and Simopoulos (2009).

Analysis to address the third research question was more problematic. Menard-Warwick (2008, 2009) did not code specifically for interculturality since identifying such in the data "requires particularly high levels of inference" (2008, p. 624). Instead, like Menard-Warwick, the analysis in this study looked for evidence of learners becoming able to see cultural issues from multiple perspectives. This included learners re-examining their own cultural views, demonstrating curiosity about and acceptance of other views, and the building of personal relationships across cultural groups. Particular attention was given to the handling of discursive faultlines and pedagogical practices reflecting a contact theory approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A few brief observations of a general nature will be made before examining each research question in detail. Jill's focus was clearly on language skills, primarily speaking and listening, then reading, and lastly writing. Discussion of vocabulary was more frequent than grammar, pronunciation or pragmatics. The approach was communicative, with learners working in pairs or small groups for about 30% of the class time (Springer & Collins, 2008). Although Jill never verbalized an intention to teach culture or interculturality, there was a great deal of reference to culture overall. Many references were brief with little critical analysis by the speaker or listener. Only once was any tension over cultural issues observed (this will be presented under research question 3). The results as they pertain to each research question will now be addressed.

Research Question 1: The Representation of Canadian Culture

The “heterogeneity of Montreal” (Knutson, 2006, p. 596) and Canada surfaced in the data. One reading on food trends in Canada discussed the variety of ethnic foods that are now available from supermarkets in take-out format. One of the radio ads Jill used for a listening activity was for a well-known Italian restaurant located within walking distance of the community centre. The students themselves brought examples of their eating experiences in Montreal’s Chinatown. Another student explained the Iranian New Year’s celebration and invited her classmates to attend the event. Montreal’s St. Patrick’s Day parade was discussed. These are relatively surface level aspects of multiculturalism, topics that Sercu (2006) identified as being within the comfort zone of most teachers.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, there were very few references to French Canadian practices, products, and perspectives. The entire 36 hours contained only 14 references to the cultural duality of the C2. Ten of these were references to the French language, with a learner or the teacher using French as a resource for clarifying the meaning of an English word. Jill once specifically corrected the expression *I’m agree by pointing out the negative transfer from French. However, in spite of the dearth of discussion about Quebecois culture, there was a tacit understanding among participants that the dominant language of Montreal is French, exemplified in Extract 1 below². The relevant sections of the transcripts have been bolded.

Extract 1

01 T: I am going to give you, for you to look at over the weekend, just some
02 information on... preparing for an interview. The the the types of things

² The following transcription conventions are used throughout this paper:

Transcription Conventions			
/---/	unintelligible speech	S:	an unidentified student
/---.../	an unintelligible section	T:	the teacher
% %	simultaneous speech	Ss:	a group of students/the whole class
...	pause	R:	the research assistant
--	interrupted speech	<i>italics</i>	transcriber’s comments

- 03 that you /---/(hands out sheets) **Cuz most of the time here, you'll have**
 04 **an interview in in French, but you might also have an interview in**
 English
 05 so... it's nice to be prepared.
 06 S: **I passed an inter/---/ in English.**
 07 T: **In English, oh, wow!** Okay, good. So this is very relevant.
 (March 6)

Since the decision was made not to interview Jill, we can only speculate as to why there were so few references to French Canadian culture. As noted previously, the teacher's focus was on language; culture was dealt with as it came up in student opinion or was presented in texts. Since the majority of talk about culture of any length was text-related, and the classroom text, *Canadian Concepts 5*, (Berish & Thibaut, 1998) makes no specific mention of Francophone culture in any of its readings, its absence from the classroom talk is perhaps less surprising.

There was no evidence of Jill portraying Canadian culture as superior to the learners' home cultures. Indeed, she highlighted some negative aspects of Canadian culture (such as a growing problem with credit card fraud), did not react defensively when students made comments that were critical of the C2, and was respectful of their home cultures. For instance, she indicated that she preferred to be addressed by her first name, but that students who were uncomfortable doing so could call her Miss Jill.

There is also evidence that Jill regarded the students' L1s as equal to the target language. Some of the teachers in Magos and Simopoulos (2009) believed Greek to be superior and that their students' difficulty in learning Greek stemmed "from the fact that they don't have basic structures in their mother-tongue, or they developed them in the wrong way... so you have to get rid of them" (p. 260). In contrast, Jill used the learners' L1 as a pedagogical tool in her linguistic focus. Firstly, in pronunciation work Jill grouped students by their L1s and had them translate an English dialogue into that language. They then had to practice the dialogue as if they were anglophone tourists in their country, that is, in their mother tongue but with a strong English accent. This was to make them aware that they already had a good idea of what English sounds like; at the same time the learners found it very amusing. The learners then transferred this overall sound back to the original English dialogue. Secondly, in Extract 2 below, we see Jill drawing on the learner's L1s to bring out a transnational phenomenon: common tactics sellers use when trying to make a sale in any culture.

Extract 2

- 01 T: What else could you say if you're selling? **What do you say in your own language?**
- 02 Try and translate it into English.
- A number of turns later:
- 03 S1: **We also use another Persian, another word in Persian.**
- 04 /---/ I don't know. We say, occasion...occasion.
- 05 T: occasion?
- 06 S2: /---/ French
- 07 S1: For example, I want to buy, to sell my home
- 08 T: uh-huh.
- 09 S1: and the price is very...reasonable and...the...house is very nice house. This is, this
- 10 is occasion.
- 11 T: okay (writing)
- 12 S1: occasion
- 13 T: Okay, it's **a once-in-a-lifetime deal**, right? You'll never get another chance, ever
- 14 again, to buy...this product at this price...never, ever.
- 15 S3: We say you are very lucky.
- 16 T: You're lucky.
- 17 S3: You are lucky /---/
- 18 T: Okay, **it's your lucky day**. It's your lucky day.
- (Feb. 26)

Finally, Jill does not set herself up as the expert on the C2. One student, N, had lived in Montreal for 10 years. Jill tells the class, "So, if you need to know something about Montreal, N is the person to go to" (January 15). These examples are indications that, unlike the majority of the teachers in Magos and Simopoulos' study (2009), Jill herself has acquired a certain intercultural competence.

Research Question 2: The Teacher's General Approach to Culture

In order to establish which of the five coding categories (Menard-Warwick's four plus our cultural information category) best captured Jill's focus, we considered primarily the length and depth of the discussions, rather than their frequency. The cultural references within form-focused activities (such as discussions of vocabulary) were generally short segments compared to those arising in meaning-focused work. Lengthier culture-related sections included the discussion of reading and listening

texts presenting Canadian cultural issues (coffee consumption, fast-food trends, credit-card theft, Valentine's Day shopping, advertising). In the only lengthy writing activity the students worked in groups over several class periods to co-author a booklet destined for distribution through the community centre to newcomers to Canada like themselves. In it they gave their advice on issues such as housing, climate, health services, and schooling in Montreal.

Overall, in terms of the five categories, Jill's dominant approach was one of cultural information and cultural adaptation. Cultural change also surfaced through a transnational look at the culture of beauty over the ages and the Canadian food trends text. Cultural comparisons tended to be multiple, shorter interactions, while there was very little in the way of discussion of cultural values. However, it must be noted that Jill generally handled discussion of opinion in a small group format, rather than as a whole class activity, so much discussion of cultural values would not have been recorded. For example, following the listening text on beauty over the ages, the learners discussed value-based questions in pairs. One question had them rank wealth, intelligence, physical appearance, character, and personality from most to least important, which likely sparked many discussions of cultural values. However, while the whole-class wrap-up appears in the transcript, the pair discussions do not. This pattern was repeated many times throughout the data, leading to a possible skewing of the assessment of the dominant categories towards information and adaptation and away from cultural values.

Another way of looking at the teacher's general approach relates to national versus transnational concepts of culture (Risager, 2007). Kubota (1999) is very critical of promoting a homogenous view of national cultures, claiming this usually serves to maintain unequal power relationships. Jill did elicit students' contributions about *your countries*, as Menard-Warwick (2008) documents in her multiethnic ESL teacher's case, but did so comparatively infrequently. In the first eight hours of the course (a period consistent with Warwick-Menard, 2008), the teacher used the concept of *your country* only twice. Both usages came in one pre-activity introducing the text on the growth of pre-prepared meals in Canada as Jill sought out cultural comparisons about the length of time people spend preparing food. The relative de-emphasis on *your countries* was evident even in the very first mingling activity. The students were instructed to exchange names, not countries of origin, although the students automatically did this anyway! Jill seems to have focused less on the learners' national cultures than the ESL teacher in Menard-Warwick

(2008). However, like Menard-Warwick (2008), we found little evidence of the essentializing of differences between nations that Kubota (1999) writes about. Opinions were solicited and treated as personal opinions, not as representations of a particular nation or language group. We could identify only one occasion when a comment of Jill's could be construed as essentializing differences. As she introduced the reading on credit card fraud, she asked the learners to list items one might find in a purse or hand bag. After listing perhaps 25 different items, one student proposed a gun. To this Jill replied, "Gun? Maybe if you're in the US," which brought laughter from the class.

Rather than seeing the learners as representatives of their home countries, Jill had more of a tendency to treat them as individuals and to draw out their shared experiences. The learners were members of a small (Holliday, 1999) but transnational (Risager, 2007) cultural group: new arrivals in Montreal. Jill viewed the learners as being in a position to give expert advice to other newcomers through the booklet project. The fact that shared perspectives existed within this cultural group was humorously illustrated in Extract 3 when Jill asked the class about the meaning of the expression *eyes wide as a toddler's* in the aging parent text the students were discussing.

Extract 3

- 01 T: "She looked at me eyes wide as a toddler's." What's a toddler?
 02 S1: Toddler is a baby, a baby, it's one euh two years.
 03 T: Yeah, a a child one or two years old. Toddler.
 04 S2: /---/
 05 T: Yeah, he's **just started to walk**, yeah, yeah.
 06 S3: **Like newcomer to Canada (laughter).**
 07 T: **Like, like a newcomer to Canada.**

(March 19)

In other discussions, the learners became members of more transnational groups; they were 'adult-children-caring-for-aging-parents', bargainers, judges, and witnesses of crime. In each case, the emphasis was on the commonalities of their experiences rather than national cultural differences. To sum up, like the SL teachers in Warwick-Menard (2008, 2009), Jill emphasized cultural adaptation over cultural change. However, due to Jill's more transnational approach, she did not develop cultural comparisons as much as Warwick-Menard's SL teachers.

Like the ESL teacher in Menard-Warwick's (2008) study and the interculturally competent minority of teachers in Magos and Simopoulos (2009), Jill drew heavily on the learners' experiences. However, she was more measured in sharing her own experience, and quite reserved in giving out her opinion. When she drew on her own experience it was usually brief and often to illustrate the meaning of a word or expression. Occasionally she used her own experience to make cultural comparisons and talk about cultural adaptation. In Extract 4 Jill is circulating while the students work on the newcomers' booklet. She interacts with the group writing about transportation, who have included advice about bus line-up etiquette in Montreal. Jill affirms their choice to include this information by sharing a personal cross-cultural experience. In doing so, she also identifies with them as having to adapt to new cultural norms.

Extract 4

- 01 T: **That's good information.** /---/ something that people /---/.
- 02 Do people wait in line in Mexico for the bus? Yeah. In China, in China it's like a
- 03 fight. ... In China, really, because there are so many people. **I was in China once**
- 04 and people are pushing each other to get on the bus. **Very shocking for a Canadian.**
- 05 **And at the end, I was pushing as well. I took a seat from an old lady**
(March 5)

To summarize, Jill tended to focus primarily on language; however, when discussing culture, information about Canadian culture and cultural adaptation to life in Canada were the most prominent categories in the whole class talk. She drew on information from the learners' national cultures and her own stories judiciously, but drew heavily on their personal experience and opinion as individuals.

Research Question 3: The Development of Interculturality

In examining the transcripts for evidence of developing interculturality, we did not see the kind of pedagogy Menard-Warwick (2009) described, that of using discursive faultlines (areas of difference or misunderstanding) as springboards for helping learners examine their own cultural views and interact with those expressed by others. In contrast, although discursive faultlines (especially areas of difference)

arose frequently, Jill missed many opportunities for exploration because of her focus on language or accomplishing the task. For example in Extract 5, the class has been focusing on the use of *still*, *anymore*, and *used to*. Students created a series of statements about themselves, some true, some lies. In small groups they had been trying to avoid lie detection and fool their questioning classmates. In the whole-class wrap up, this interesting exchange on hippies comes up. Although it was a natural opener for examining cultural change and the differing cultural values that led some societies but not others to experience the hippy movement (a potential discursive faultline), the teacher kept the discussion to a minimum and quickly returned to the task goal (line 14).

Extract 5

- 01 T: Was anyone here a hippy when they were young?
 02 S1: Too young, too young...
 03 S2: I was born /---/
 04 T: You wore, you wore long ah... you wore long hair... you played the guitar?
 05 S3: **It was in the United States, I think.**
 06 T: **But I think I think in other places, some other places too.**
 07 S: **In Mexico.**
 08 T: **Yeah, in, in Mexico. Yes? There were Mexican hippies?**
 09 S: /---/
 10 T: **Everywhere, well maybe not everywhere.**
 11 S: /---/
 12 T: **Not in Muslim but other countries, European countries.**
 13 S: /---/
 14 T: **Okay. T, T, did you fool anybody? Did you trick anyone?**

The only discussion where the transcripts showed evidence of tension over cultural issues was in the group preparation for the newcomers' booklet. In groups the students were to come up with a list of things they wish they had known (which was also the language focus of that particular task) about Canada before they arrived. In the teacher-fronted wrap-up the groups reported to the class. One group of three men dominated many turns as the discussion opened. They wished they had known about all the bureaucracy in Canada, how money is god, how little hospitality there is, how long hospital wait times are, and how artificial relationships are. Jill calmly listed these issues on the board, questioning only to clarify their point, but not reacting to or passing any judgement on their views, even though some of the other students appeared

uncomfortable with the string of complaints. When they next listed the closed mentality in Canada the research assistant, who had also developed a relationship with the learners by this point, interjected, "Don't you guys like it here at all?" The students' reply was unintelligible but the teacher diffused the tension by saying that a lot of interesting things were coming up, and asked if anyone had any practical advice (which was the anticipated task outcome). A few turns later, one of the men apologized to the research assistant, who accepted the apology, but the exact wording was not audible.

Jill also had a tendency to defer "big questions," by saying they could talk about it more at the break. This may reflect her concern to keep abreast of the language learning goals, rather than a fear or unwillingness to explore issues further. There was some evidence from the transcriber's comments that the learners did indeed engage in cultural talk during breaks. For example, the transcript on March 20 opens with this comment from the transcriber: T is writing a date on the board. One S is explaining her country's New Year traditions to another S. Again, it is important to remember that, although all 36 class hours were captured on video, the transcripts do not show pair and small group interaction, nor the interactions which took place before and after class and at break time.

Although it is quite clear that Jill did not promote intercultural competence by addressing discursive faultlines in a group context in the way envisioned by Menard-Warwick (2009), she did capitalize on the 'contact' potential offered by the multiethnic SL class. Ryan (1998) states that one way to acquire intercultural competence is through "direct and indirect personal contact" (p. 151). She maintains that "actively engaging" (p. 151) with people who have different cultural identities, values, and behaviours can help develop such competence. Since there was no teacher interview, we can not be sure Jill saw her practices as related to interculturality as opposed to linguistic competence, but she was certainly intentional about getting students to interact with each other.

First of all, Jill verbalized many times that the purpose of a particular activity (in addition to its linguistic target) was for them to get to know each other. For example, Jill had the learners survey each other about interesting past experience. Another time students were grouped according to their position in the family (oldest, middle child, and youngest) and spent time discussing the advantages and drawbacks of their (shared) positions. In another group activity they were to come up with a list of as many statements as possible that they all agreed with. On three occasions she had all the students draw pictures on the board to

represent how they were feeling (Jill herself drew a pancake to illustrate how she was feeling rather flat), what they wished they had done over the winter break, and what they planned to do with their mornings once the course ended. Each then interpreted his or her picture to a partner and to the whole class. Over and over students were contributing personal experiences and expressing opinions in small groups. A number of times Jill opened the post activity wrap-up by saying what interesting conversations they had been having.

Secondly, Jill ensured that students mingled rather than staying in comfortable little pairs and groups. The classroom was arranged in five groups of four desks pushed together. When students came to class, they generally sat at a certain desk. But Jill never left them there. In most classes there was at least one activity that could not be completed without everyone getting up, moving around, and interacting. Sometimes she grouped students for activities by having them line up in order of their birthdates or length of residence and forming groups from these lines. Often she paired and grouped students herself, making them change seats to form new groups. Evidently not all students liked this, but Jill made her purposes clear:

We're going to continue to change the groups. Some people said they didn't want to change the groups, but...the reason we change the groups is so that you get a chance to speak to other people...ah...so that um... you're not just sitting in the same place all the time, you get to meet other people, you get to talk to other people, so we're going to continue with the groups. (Feb. 21)

Finally, Jill promoted relationships, not just linguistic interactions. This was demonstrated in the last activity of the class where she says:

Everyone's been working a lot together in the class in different groups, in different pairs, and um... I've seen a lot of people, well, everyone, everyone has helped each other, I think. And uh, a nice way to end the class is to thank people for how they have helped you or for, for bringing something to the class that you enjoyed. Okay? So for example, I might thank J, for always smiling. Cuz she's always smiling, and it's very nice to see, you know. Or I might thank Z for, for showing... ah, courtesy, old-fashioned courtesy, and always calling me madame [laughter]. (March 20)

The students and teacher then circulated around and thanked each other.

Jill's ability to get the students to mix stands in contrast to the teacher reported on in an ethnographic study carried out in high school social studies classes in urban British Columbia (Duff, 2002). Sixty percent of the

learners in this class were non-native speakers of English from various Asian countries. Forty per cent were L1 English speakers, with half of those having Asian or First Nation heritages. In spite of the teachers desire to foster respect for cultural identity in order not to marginalize the non-native speakers, the discourse analysis did not reveal much success in the development of interculturality. Duff's (2002) teacher had a culturally mixed class, but the students didn't know each other, even at the half way mark of the school year. They sat in fixed, culturally homogenous groupings and those in the back could hardly hear the contributions of those in the front. The teacher came with issues that held good potential for intercultural competence building, but the students had had such little direct contact that there was no relationship or trust on which to build the sharing of views. Her attempts to get students to voice their views were largely unsuccessful. Our intention is not to blame the teacher; she was working in an entirely different and very challenging context. However, for the adult SL context much can be learned from Jill's approach.

Jill encouraged direct personal contact (Ryan, 1998), and whether intentional or not, there is evidence of what we would argue is an aspect of interculturality: developing relationships of closeness and trust with those who are culturally very different. In the 12th of the 18 classes, the *have you ever* activity led to the verbalization of students' experience that spilled over into the whole class wrap-up, including experiences of seeing missiles and facing impending death. This level of disclosure continued in the next class as two students reported in some detail on painful job experiences in their home countries. A few classes later one learner reported that she had cried when she read the aging parent story. In the wrap-up to this activity the teacher appeared to abandon her linguistic objectives as students shared very personal experiences and worries about their aging or geographically distant parents. Having access to the entire 36-hour course (as opposed to an 8-hour segment) allowed for observation of this developing trust over time.

Evidence of interculturality also came from the rare inside look at five pair interactions recorded as students worked on the aging parent story (Collins, Dytynyshyn, & Milsom, 2008). Recall that this was the only paired interaction of the data set examined for this study. An Eastern European man noticed his Mexican partner's silence and said, "talk to me". He then listened as his partner shared some immigration problems. In another pair, after finishing the task questions, the women discussed their job situations and exchanged phone numbers. In a third an Iranian and a Korean discussed their jobs before coming to Canada, the value of

stay-at-home mothering, and cultural representations from their home cities. All this came from pair interaction for only one 20-minute activity.

In summary, with respect to research question three, the teacher functioned as a facilitator by promoting interaction and relationship-building, such that interculturality may have developed naturally through direct contact. Unlike the majority of the SL teachers in the Greek context (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009), Jill was able to exploit the inherent potential (from the perspective of interculturality) in a culturally-diverse, adult ESL class. This is not to suggest that confronting discursive faultlines critically is not also a means of developing interculturality (as argued by Menard-Warwick, 2009), nor that tensions over cultural differences are to be avoided. Perhaps direct contact and critical discussion are but two sides of the interculturality coin.

This study is subject to a number of limitations. First of all, as with most of the published research, the data was coded only by one researcher without establishing inter-rater reliability. Given the subjective nature of the data, at times a given comment could have been placed in more than one category. However, two features mitigated this limitation. The study's goal was to identify broad tendencies, not detailed lists. In addition, conclusions were based on the length and depth of cultural discussions and not actual frequency counts. The second limitation is that this is not an ethnographic study, but is based on recorded observational data of which the researchers were not eyewitnesses. Since the original data were collected in 2003, there could be no triangulation with teacher or student interviews. Of course the advantage is that this study represents a look at what actually happens in a multiethnic adult ESL class, and not what the teacher or students want a researcher to think happens in their class. Furthermore, having access to data for the entire 36-hour class allowed trends to come to light that may have remained obscure in only eight hours of selective observation.

A third limitation, as mentioned above, is that a great deal of significant exchange on cultural issues and values may have taken place in the context of pair and group work, at break time, and in other informal contexts which were not captured in this data set. With the evidence presented that these may have been particularly rich exchanges in terms of culture and interculturality, this represents an open door for further research. Finally, any observed links between teaching approaches and students' subsequent intercultural competence can not be considered causal, because the study has focused on only one teacher and one class. In order to get a broader perspective on this issue, it would be interesting

to compare the intercultural competence of adult Canadian newcomers who have participated in SL courses upon arrival in Canada with those who have not. The multiethnic second language class experience would then become the treatment for an empirical study. Perhaps this experience not only improves a learner's communicative competence in the target language, but also changes their perspective towards other cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study examined 36 hours of transcripts representing an entire advanced-level adult ESL class in Montreal, Quebec. The French-English dual nature of the target culture was not a focus of the teacher's nor the students' attention. The teacher focused on language, yet brought cultural issues to the classroom through reading and listening texts and through a writing project. Culture-related exchanges were brief during form-focused work, while meaning-focused tasks led to lengthier considerations of cultural issues. Overall, in the whole-class time, issues of cultural adaptation and cultural information about Canada were the most prominent. The teacher drew heavily on the students' experience and opinion, generally approaching culture from a transnational perspective. Whether or not it was intentional, there is some evidence that her approach of promoting direct contact between her ethnically heterogeneous students fostered interculturality in terms of developing relationships of trust with those normally seen as 'other.' Future examination of the available pair and group work recordings, particularly as they related to the newcomers' booklet, could shed more light on how much discussion of cultural values actually took place, and further document developing interculturality.

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APPENDIX

LEARNERS AGE, SEX, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND L1

	Age	Sex	Country of origin	L1
1	30s	F	Korea	Korean
2	30s	F	Korea	Korean
3	20s	F	Argentina	Spanish
4	20s	M	Mexico	Spanish
5	teens	F	Chile	Spanish
6	50s	F	Romania	Romanian
7	50s	F	Poland	Polish
8	40s	M	Moldova	Russian
9	30s	F	Kazakhstan	Russian
10	40s	M	Ukraine	Russian
11	20s	F	Lebanon	Arabic
12	40s	M	France	French
13	50s	F	Iran	Farsi
14	20s	F	Iran	Farsi
15	20s	F	Iran	Farsi
16	40s	M	Iran	Farsi, Khansari
17	60s	M	Iran	Farsi
18	30s	F	Iran	Farsi
19	40s	F	Iran	Farsi