Examining Adult Oral Interaction Within an ESL Classroom: Influences of Gender and Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of student gender and culture on oral participation in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Seven adult students who had recently immigrated to Canada participated in the study. I examined the experiences of students in their adult education course. Gender was the primary focus of the research, and the influence of culture was also a secondary point of consideration. The study integrated a mixed-methods approach to data collection, using a Likert scale survey, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The results of the study displayed gender differences related to topics of discussion, frequency of participation, rate of interruption, and the home cultures of the students. By identifying gender-rooted imbalances, educators can actively implement educational structures that discourage gender-based inequalities in the ESL classroom. The findings of the study could, in turn, impact: the selected classroom activities, group pairings, and topics of discussion.

Keywords: ESL education, second language acquisition, educational inequalities, gender

Résumé

Cette étude examine comment les genres des étudiants influencent la participation orale dans les cours d'anglais langue seconde (ALS). Sept étudiants adultes récemment immigrés au Canada ont participé à l'étude. J'ai examiné les expériences des étudiants dans leur cours de langue pour adulte. Le genre des étudiants était l'objet principal de l'étude et l'influence culturelle était également un point de considération. L'étude utilise une approche de méthodes combinées pour la collection de données, un sondage dans une échelle de Likert, des observations en classes et des entrevues semi-structurés. Les résultats de l'étude démontrent des différences entre les genres en relation aux sujets de discussion, à la fréquence de participation, au taux d'interruption et aux cultures d'origine des étudiants. Avec l'identification des déséquilibres entre les genres, les éducateurs peuvent définir des structures éducatives qui vont décourager les inégalités entre les genres dans les cours de ALS. Les résultats de l'étude pourraient avoir un impact sur : les activités de classes choisies, les appariements de groupe et les sujets de discussion.

Mots clés : genre, éducation ALS, acquisition d'une langue seconde, inégalités d'éducation

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Abbreviation	Meaning
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ESL	English as a second language
L2	Second language
2SLGBTQQIA+	Two-Sprit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual, and others
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, and others
SLA	Second language acquisition
SLS	Second language socialization

Chapter 1: Introduction

The possible influence of gender and culture on second language (L2) learning presents a valuable opportunity to analyze oral participation within an English as a second language (ESL) classroom. The study's overarching goal seeks to investigate how gender and culture influence oral participation for a group of seven multicultural adults acquiring ESL within a large city in Quebec. The results that emerge from these relationships suggest areas where power imbalances and inequities can be observed in the classroom.

The study examined L2 learners who had recently immigrated to Canada. Furthermore, the study occurred at an Adult Education center within an ESL classroom. The focus of the course centred on oral proficiency. Conversation and the ability to share thoughts orally in a group were crucial components of each lesson. Additionally, the study used a mixed methods research design to analyze the connection between gender and culture and oral participation. A Likert scale survey was included as a quantitative research instrument to examine participants' attitudes. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were also used as qualitative research instruments.

The next section of the chapter discusses gender biases and their relationship to access and opportunities with education based on gender and culture. Gender biases impact academic experiences with second language learning and must therefore be considered a factor contributing to SLA.

1.1 Gender Bias

While gender bias is present in many educational contexts, it is often overlooked or unseen (Mougharbel & Bahous, 2010). Often, even teachers fail to identify power imbalances

related to gender in the classroom. This may be attributed to a lack of targeted training to address gender bias in the classroom, as pedagogical development sessions do not "prepare teachers to "see" the subtle, unintentional, but damaging gender bias that characterizes classrooms" (Sadker, 2000, p.80). While there has been a repeated sense of relief that gender inequities have been addressed in the field of education, this falsity is met with gender-related imbalances that emerge in new contexts (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). On this note, despite measures to improve gender equity in the classroom, gender discrimination in education remains a current issue (Kollmayer et al., 2018). The unfortunate repercussion paired with the failure to acknowledge gender-rooted biases is the failure to address and improve imbalances in the classroom. "[The] gender-blind classroom is built on the assumption-indeed, the stated maxim-that every student can learn and be successful regardless of social location" (Cooper & Stoll, 2013, p.124). While this approach celebrates diversity, an issue can be identified at its core, as it fails to address inequities and power imbalances at the institutional level. The influence of gender is deeply ingrained in classroom dynamics.

Language, at its core, advantages men, presenting a subjective reality as objective. Dale Spender (1985) unpacks sexism in language in the pivotal text, *Man Made Language.* Spender addresses how language was created and continuously controlled by men. Characteristics of speech and speech's purpose differ based on gender. As men are situated in a position of power, they do not require language features that may be beneficial to social positioning, such as politeness, in the same way, women do. Spender explains, "It is language which determines the limits of our world, which constructs our reality"(p.139).

Prior to the clearly defined differentiation between gender and biological sex within research, Spender (1978) discusses the power imbalances present for learners based on their sex.

Spender unpacks the hidden curriculum by examining inequalities in knowledge and access in the classroom. She states, "Different knowledge is made available to students on the grounds of sex. In both the manifest and the hidden curriculum, the two sexes are being given different knowledge to use to make sense of the world" (p.2). Spender also states that students are given different definitions of success based on their sex. As a result, academic achievements do not impact both genders equally. It is, therefore, essential to consider the inequality present within education based on the gender of students. While some inequities are more challenging to identify than others, addressing discrepancies within learning is crucial.

Delving deeper into considering gender in the ESL classroom, limited research has examined gender in the context of ESL learning (Toohey & Scholefield, 1994). Researchers have also abandoned the idea that the understanding of gender is the same for all cultures, as well as the idea that "[Gender] is fixed, unproblematic, and can be easily isolated from other aspects of social identity" (Pavlenko et al., 2011, p.1). Additionally, gender stereotypes can begin in early education and continue to be reinforced by certain teaching practices and pedagogical material. The influence of gender within learning and the start of gender-related imbalances can be observed as early as Kindergarten. During childhood education, the power dynamics at play present the potential to shape the participation, contributions, and leadership skills of young students (Hruska, 2004). As the young students get older, the power imbalances observed throughout their elementary education do not disappear but continue into adulthood. Similarly, the influence of culture presents long-term implications that can be either beneficial or detrimental, depending on the context (Tong, 2002; Gordon, 2004). For this reason, the present study seeks to analyze the influence of gender and culture within the current education context to identify specific factors that foster oral participation.

1.2 Gender and Oral Participation

How individuals of various genders use language varies according to social positioning and power (Shehadeh, 1999). Shehadeh notes that men have been found to dominate various spheres of language. How men use language has also been found to reinforce their position of power. In contrast, women are found to use language in ways that limit their assertiveness and classroom engagement. The concept of "Women's language," coined by Robin Lakoff (1973) and recent studies (Shehadeh, 1999; Julé, 2004) both discuss how women use language. Language features include politeness, emotional emphasis, indirect requests, and limited participation. With her research, Performing Gender Identity: *Young Men's Talk…. Language and Masculinity,* Deborah Cameron (1997) also highlights the impact of gendering talk. Cameron states, "What is important in gendering talk is the 'performative gender work' the talk is doing; its role in constituting people as gendered subjects". (p.59).

Within the influential text *Language and Woman's Place*, Robin Lakoff (1973) discusses the foundational concept of "Women's Language" as she highlights linguistic inequalities experienced by women. The imbalance in power ultimately restricts how women can access and use language. Lakoff shares, "The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak and the ways in which women are spoken of " (p.45). Lakoff emphasizes that the implication of women's language is restrictive to women's self-expression and sense of self as women are "systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behaviour" (p.48). Lakoff also shares that sexist practices must be addressed for changes to be implemented.

Traditional gender roles have been rejected as women gain societal power based on their English skills. Additionally, through the acquisition of ESL, many women have been given freedoms and opportunities in North American culture that they did not have access to before. As

a result of these advantages, women gain new opportunities and benefits created through their English knowledge.

1.3 Cultural Influence

The influence of culture in language acquisition is deeply rooted in learners' previous experiences and core values. Brown (2014) defines culture as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time" (p.380). Brown also shares that culture is a set of behaviours and modes of perception. Over time, the students' perspectives have been ingrained into their behaviour. These behaviours are vital in the learning of an L2. Especially in multicultural classroom settings, each student's behaviour will differ depending on their cultural background. The participants have immigrated to Canada from all over the world and possess different perspectives and values. While they will gradually begin to feel comfortable with time, the process of adjusting to a new language may present challenges.

The influence of culture begins during the early years of childhood. Previous research has found that as young children, the process of "appropriate symbolic cultural tools of their culture through joint goal-directed activity with adults" can be observed (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p.25). Farrell (2017) emphasizes the direct relationship between learners' identities and culture. When students whose first language is not English first encounter the acquisition of ESL, their learner identity cannot be avoided. As a result, students are tasked with participating in a new community that is different from what they were used to in the past.

For this reason, language socialization requires observation beyond development in the linguistic sphere to examine other forms of knowledge that can be learned through socialization, such as culture (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p.96). As Duff and Talmy share, "Ethnographic research involves understanding the cultural patterns and values of groups in their local contexts" (2011,

p.98). In the context of the present study, understanding cultural patterns and the unique ways they contribute to the oral participation of the seven participants in the study provides valuable insight into effective strategies for verbal engagement during class discussions.

The introductory chapter of this thesis sought to provide a general overview of gender and culture while also discussing the imbalances present for both topics and presenting the focus of the research reported on in this study. In the following chapter, a review of the literature will discuss the factors related to the study that has been found to influence SLA. The next chapter will also discuss literature gaps and suggest future research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

SLA can be defined as "the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children" (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.2). As Saville-Troike and Barton explain, an additional language is also often called an L2 regardless of its third or additional status. SLA research does not typically examine acquisition as a social phenomenon influenced by men's and women's different positions vis-a-vis social, economic, and political changes (Gordon, 2004, p.452). While research does exist, the relationship between acquisition and social contexts is rarely a primary focus within current literature. The study reported on in this thesis seeks to address the social aspect of SLA by focusing on the degree that gender and culture contribute to oral participation in ESL learning. The primary focus of the research is to examine if gender influences verbal participation in the adult ESL classroom. The influence of gender is explored by examining the fine details that contribute to learner participation while also considering the gender identities of the learners. As participants encounter new perspectives in the ESL classroom, possible shifts in their understanding of gender will also be reflected upon. The participants' cultural backgrounds will also be analyzed as a potential secondary influence on oral interactions. To provide context to the research questions mentioned in the previous introductory chapter, the literature review expands upon sociolinguistics, gender identity, inequality, motivation, and power dynamics, all through the lens of SLA. The literature I include will examine how oral ESL education can contribute to conscious pedagogical choices that support balanced participation and gender equity. The study will also investigate potential shifts in one's gender and cultural identity and changes in understandings of gender and culture that shift due to their L2 experiences.

While second language socialization (SLS) is similar to language socialization, additional challenges emerge. Language socialization is "the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group" (Duff, 2007, p. 310). On the other hand, SLS includes "the added complexity of dealing with children or adults who already possess a repertoire of linguistic, discursive, and cultural traditions and community affiliations when encountering new ones" (Duff, 2007, p.310). SLS requires consideration of previous learner identities and the prior and ongoing communities of practice students possess. It is essential for the cultures of learners to be actively reflected upon in the SLS process. Therefore, the SLS model allows educators and researchers to identify features that enable or disable learner participation in previous learning contexts (Duff, 2007).

As Poole (1992) states, the lifelong duration of language socialization includes a plethora of contexts in which secondary socialization takes place. Contexts include school, work, or new living environments. Examining the context of the study, the L2 classroom is a robust environment for secondary socialization, especially when learners are situated away from their culture. Integrating critical features of SLS, the study will actively reflect on the past academic experiences of learners and their cultural backgrounds to gain insight into their previous learner identities. As the students enter the L2 classroom, they bring linguistic and cultural values and behaviours that will influence how they navigate new relationships with their peers. Observing the practices in which the students have guided the concept of gender, both through their gender identities and their understanding of gender as a social construct, will also be an essential element of SLS that the study will analyze.

2.2 Gender in Second Language Acquisition

The influence of gender in SLA is multifaceted and complex. Norton and Pavlenko (2004) articulate that instead of viewing gender as a singular variable, their research reveals that gender is, rather, "a complex system of social relations and discursive practices, differentially constructed in local contexts" (p.504). The authors acknowledge that gender influences and interact with various features, including social identity, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, age, and social status. Ultimately, the features mentioned by Norton and Pavlenko will contribute to framing students' language learning experiences and outcomes.

2.2.1 Gender Identity and Second Language

Previous research has explored various facets of the relationship between gender and L2 learning (Miller & Kubota, 2013; Pavlenko & Pillar, 2008; Shi, 2006; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). The gender identities of students play an integral role in SLA. Linked to power, participation, and conversational functions, gender is an influence in L2 learning that requires consideration. Miller and Kubota (2013) acknowledge the overlap of gender and second language acquisition. They note that gendered identities and L2 learning methods intersect as they are influenced by power, race, education, and nationality. Hruska (2004) states SLA facilitates the possibility for ideas and understandings of gender and gender norms to evolve as students encounter new ideas and perspectives. As students interact in the context of L2 learning, their newly gained views present differences in how they contribute to conversations. Ultimately, SLA offers advantages that support learners' eventual knowledge and long-term potential. However, Hruska notes these changes can also be particularly overwhelming, as students must also navigate a variety of new contexts as well. Situations where gender interacts with race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status may be particularly difficult for L2 learners (p.280).

Additionally, Song (2009) explains, "L2 learners' gender identity is a significant dimension of their (students') social identity, and interactions with others and encounters with new cultural and linguistic norms and ideologies in the L2 may challenge and modify understanding of how they perceive gender norms and their gender identity" (p.405). In the SLA process, new gender identities may emerge (Hruska, 2004; Song, 2009). SLA, thus, presents an influential role in creating an evolving perception of gender and, therefore, must be acknowledged in L2 learning.

The knowledge of English acts as a tool of empowerment in many facets of society (McMahill, 2001). However, while English presents many academic and employment benefits, its history rooted in English imperialism cannot be left unaddressed (Ferguson, 2003). As Phillipson articulates, "The present distribution throughout the world of the major international languages…is evidence of conquest and occupation, followed by the adoption of the invader's language because of the benefits that accrue to speakers of the language when the dominant language has been imposed" (1992, p.31). While ESL does present many benefits, the current advantages would not be possible without colonization.   As the present study seeks to examine factors that influence the acquisition of English, the historical context rooted in language dominance and power imbalances must be considered when examining why participants in the study viewed ESL as advantageous.

Through acquiring an L2, new language experiences facilitate the formation of new gender identities and present promising opportunities for learners. Miller and Kubota (2013) examined the new gender identities of immigrant women acquiring an L2, noting that the acquisition of English presented new employment opportunities and allowed the women in multiple communities of practice (CoPs) to feel empowered. Examining the benefits of acquiring ESL, Gordon (2004) highlights in the article *"I'm Tired. You Clean and Cook": Shifting gender*

identities and second language socialization, the acquisition of English posited many

opportunities that would not have otherwise occurred for the Lao women. The ethnographic

study revealed that the relocation of the Lao women to the United States created new fruitful

contexts linked to language, culture, and relationships. Furthermore, the adult ESL classroom

acted as a context that provided liberation and opportunity. Due to SLS, traditional gender roles

were rejected, empowering the women to make choices that supported their success and

wellbeing. Shifts in gender identity created new opportunities and SLA. This contrasts the

experiences encountered by the Lao men, who experienced the "narrowing of opportunities

because they have lost access to traditional sources of power" (p.437). After observing a cultural

shift in North America, the Lao women gained the ability to leave all unsatisfactory

relationships.

Similar to Gordon's findings (2004), the present study will also examine the

transformative implications of SLS, examining the possible ways in which the knowledge of

English presents new opportunities for the participants who have recently immigrated to Canada.

In the study, developing new identities is a crucial point of interest. In the interview, questions

sought to identify any changes for learners when comparing students' identities in their first

language and their newly developed L2.

2.2.2 Linguistic Space in the Classroom

Analyzing the hegemonic forces at play in the classroom is integral in examining who

benefits most from classroom experiences and how educational practices reinforce advantages

for students while limiting the progress of others. Hegemony reinforces imbalanced power

structures and presents unequal opportunities for students to develop their language skills as they

acquire an L2. Dominance within language learning may be observed through interruption,

duration of participation, frequency of participation, or through a topic of discussion. As Hruska (2004) argues, local gender ideologies within L2 settings affect student access to fundamental interactions necessary to develop an L2. Educators must consider the influence of power relations obtained during various levels of social interaction; societal, institutional, classroom and situational levels of interaction must be considered. Therefore, rather than separating gender from social practice, we must focus on evaluating how gender construction "intertwines with that of other components of identity and difference and of language" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, p.472). By adopting a holistic perspective, researchers and teachers will gain meaningful insight into societal constructions of power and gender.

As stated by Pavlenko and Piller (2008), gender possesses the ability to shape classroom interactions posing the essential question, "what participants have the right to speak and why?" (p.61). Hegemony within language imbalances during talk time is no coincidence but rather "a result of complex social processes" (Julé, 2004, p.27). An unfortunate but true reality of L2 learning reveals that when examining 'linguistic space,' a concept coined by Mahony (1985), male learners take up a disproportionate amount of space in the classroom. This influences how female students experience the learning process in both second and first-language contexts (Mahony, 1985; Julé, 2004). As Julé explains, oral competency is an essential aspect of L2 learning, and classrooms are too frequently a context in which girls experience linguistic struggle. Julé continues the discussion on gender imbalance by elaborating on the importance of contributing to class discussions. She articulates that contributions extend beyond engaging with peers and, instead, determine social power and legitimacy. Within the study context, the frequency and duration of participant speech during moments of classroom conversation is one of the most critical examination points. The social power and legitimacy created by those who

contribute during discussions present gender imbalances that implicate all students within the ESL classroom.

In the article *Gender and the Perceived Expertness of the Speaker as Factors in ESL Listening Recall*, Markham (1988) acknowledged that a recurrent finding in sociolinguistic research was that men and women were not evaluated equally. Through a study that examined a group of university participants, four presentations were used to analyze the students' perception of gender. The conditions for the presentations were the following, a set of presentations that included no introduction featuring a woman for one presentation and a man for the other. There was another set of presentations, one from a man who was presented as an "expert" speaker and one from a woman who was presented as an "expert" speaker. Culture was also integrated into the study as the students that participated possessed a vast range of first languages and cultural backgrounds. Considering the influence of gender, while the presenters were equally qualified, the students did not perceive them to be similarly capable. To elaborate, the presenters earned the same qualifications and presented identical materials. However, the results revealed that both advanced and intermediate student participants listened more attentively to the male speaker when asked to listen to male and female speakers of similar credentials. When analyzing the participants' perspectives regarding the male speaker, it was also found that the men required fewer credentials to be listened to, as the expertness factor was not as important. Markham advocated that there was indeed an existent gender bias in ESL contexts and shared, "It is somewhat disturbing to note that the female students also recalled more idea units by listening to the male speaker" (p.504). It is evident through Markham's study that ability alone does not determine power. Moreover, gender was revealed to influence student perception in ways that are not related to qualifications or academic merit but rather personal biases.

With the goal of identifying patterns related to gender and culture, the present study examines linguistic space in the Adult ESL classroom. Conversations are considered during classroom observation sessions to analyze the contributions of the men and women participating in the study.

2.2.3 Implications of Inequalities on Classroom Participation

Within the discussion regarding the implications of imbalanced classroom participation, it is necessary to address the terms that are used. As inequalities can be observed both at the level of children and adults, the terms boys and girls and men and women will be used to identify the stage in which the inequity is being discussed. In general, the impact of gender-related imbalances in the classroom is detrimental to student progress during language courses and long-term motivation and progress. Imbalances begin during childhood education and continue to be observed in university and adult education (Hruska, 2004). The influence of gender in primary and secondary education is addressed, firstly, to articulate the subtle but prominent impact of gender that can be observed during early childhood. Secondly, as there is limited literature that addresses the influence of gender in ESL education for adults, early experiences provide valuable insight. In early education, teachers may address boys more than girls unknowingly; however, research has found that this results in boys dominating classroom discussions.

Additionally, during mixed-gender conversations, boys are more likely to assert power through interruptions and unsolicited responses (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008, p.63). As a result, girls may be silenced by classroom culture and often profit from same-gender discussions. Groups of students who do not contribute to the classroom discussions, in turn, may receive less time to practice oral competency. In effect, students who are not acknowledged may no longer want to pursue the acquisition of a new language or refuse lesson activities (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008,

p.62). Both silencing and the choice to withhold participation are also detrimental factors that can be prompted by gender-related imbalances. Julé (2004) states the importance of understanding the role gender plays in prompting patterns of participation among female students. Furthermore, she warns that while girls may choose to remain silent, if they experience too many negative experiences, they can also be "sh-shushed" into silence (p.140). Silencing is a point of observation that will be included in the present study. As literature specifically mentions the silencing of women, the study examines if the power dynamics in the ESL classroom position the women participating at a disadvantage through the act of silencing.

2.4 Gender Identity and L2 Learning

2.4.1 Defining Gender

It is essential to note that the definition of gender is constantly evolving and widely debated. Jenkins (2018) critiques standard definitions of gender as they "suffer from problematic circularity" (p.713). Literature mentioned in this section will therefore acknowledge the dynamic qualities of gender identity rather than seeking to apply specific labels or rigid explanations. Coates (2015) articulates that recent theorizing has begun to challenge binary perceptions of gender. While gender was previously viewed as two categories, masculine and feminine, recent research acknowledges a gender spectrum that strays from rigid duality. "Gender is instead conceptualized as plural, with a range of femininities and masculinities available to speakers at any point in time" (p.4).

As Shi (2006) defined, gender is dynamic, always dependent on context, and subject to change. While understanding gender constantly evolves, Van Herk (2018) emphasizes a distinction essential to note when discussing and applying the term gender. Rather than a

biological category, gender is "a socially constructed identity" (p.86). While reflection on the dynamic meaning of gender is necessary, the conversation must also include the social and linguistic implications of gender. Shi articulates it is required to analyze how the gendered use of language is "socially and discursively constructed" (p.3). How gender, language, and power are related in their commonalities to be both dynamic and transformative must be further investigated and addressed in the present study.

2.4.2 Power and Language

The use of language is a social behaviour that is learned. How one talks and listens is deeply influenced by their individual cultural experiences (Tannen, 1995). As explained by Tannen (1995), "linguistic style is a set of culturally learned signals by which we not only communicate what we mean but also interpret others' meaning and evaluate one another as people" (p.139). Examining power in language use, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) assert that dominance in language is maintained through the act of privileging a particular view on language, failing to acknowledge that its status is one among many, in turn marking the perspective as neutral. Miller and Kubota dissected the circulation of power, explaining that through resistance and appropriation, power produces identities that are "contradictory and oppositional" (2013, p.232). While a key factor of language development is the opportunity to use and practice an L2, access to participation is determined by social relations of power (Hruska, 2004).

Deborah Cameron (2008) unpacks the complexity of gender and language as she discusses the relationship between linguistics features and identity. She shares that social networks, daily activities, and one's sense of identity all contribute to ways of speaking. Cameron emphasizes that gender is relevant to all three factors. While imbalances within

language can be subtle, Cameron's work highlights their importance as she states, "Most of the linguistic features that show gender-related variation are small stylistic details whose function is symbolic: to express people's identities and mark their social allegiances" (p.1).

Continuing to examine how language continues to enforce power imbalances is essential. Within her recent research, Cameron (2020) addresses the persistence of patriarchy. She critiques the lack of "engagement with real-world sexual inequalities that was once seen as the field's *raison d'être*" (p.27). Cameron explains present imbalances of power related to gender are not at the forefront of research when considering current topics within language and gender. The ways that language contributed to male power are no longer a focus within sociolinguistics. As a result, subjects addressing sexism in language are not being acknowledged. Cameron shares that in terms of women's positioning in language, there is a significant amount of development to be done as she critiques, "Many aspects of most women's situation have changed far less since the 1970s than we might like to think" (p.29).

Influences determining who contributes to the discussion and the frequency of contributions must be considered in the discussion of gender and SLA. Examining sociolinguistic research into mixed-talk reveals that women and men do not have equal rights to the conversational floor (Coates, 2006, p.124). The unequal power relations in L2 learning contexts mediate learners', predominantly female learners', access to L2 resources (Shi, 2006, p.6). West and Zimmerman (1998) compared the language rights of women in contemporary American society to those of children. It was found that both women and children experienced speech restrictions related to interruptions that are used to indicate social submission and dominance (West and Zimmerman, 1998; Coates, 2016, p.115). Coates (2016) also shared that the patterns found were indeed asymmetrical when examining research focusing on mixed-talk in

different social contexts. Additionally, men's frequent use of specific strategies was associated with male dominance in conversation. Shehadeh (1999) discussed her findings that reveal differences in conversational roles stemming from gender. Shehadeh noted that while conversation is a fundamental aspect of learner progress and improvement, the frequently reinforced roles in mixed-gender communications are more advantageous for men. She explained, "Males in mixed-gender interaction have greater and better opportunities to communicate, promote their productive skills, and progress in the second language than females" (p.260).

In this study, power and language will be examined to identify factors that may reinforce inequities in the ESL classroom and to determine if language dominance can be attributed to the gender or culture of the participants.

2.4.3 Socialization Influences

As Norton (1995) articulated, boys and girls use language differently. Within the ethnographic study, *Constructing Gender in an English Dominant Kindergarten: Implications for Second Language Learners,* Hruska (2004) elaborated on her findings, observing the interactions of a kindergarten class at a public school in New England. The study employed qualitative research methods, including classroom observations, video recordings, and handwritten notes. The class was composed of 23 students, nine girls and 14 boys. Six students identified as bilingual Spanish English learners, and 17 were native English speakers. She found that when engaging in cross-gender interactions, the boys displayed competitive discourse that established dominance at a volume the entire class could hear. This behaviour reduced the willingness of the girls to participate, as they did not wish to partake in the topics or conversations of the boys. As a result, the girls were silenced, and their access to classroom

leadership was limited. Socialization during childhood influences how adults speak in their adult lives and places of work (Norton, 1995; Corson, 1993). During playtime as children, learners establish long-term speech and delivery patterns. One example Norton (1995) provides is examining same-gender play. Norton explains that girls often downplay ways in which they are better than others, seeking to find markers of similarity. Boys, on the other hand, strive to display ability and knowledge. They use language to negotiate group status and challenge group members. Furthermore, Coates (2016) presents a thorough argument that in both the classroom and the workplace, gender influences the way one is treated. Additionally, she unpacks the notion that young girls and women experience a disadvantage in power by presenting numerous studies in both settings. In work settings, women are "expected to adopt the more adversarial, information-focused style characteristic of all-male talk, and typical of talk in the public domain, but if they do [...], they run the risk of being perceived as aggressive and confrontational, as un-feminine" (p.201). For women working and studying, disadvantages and additional challenges will be experienced, as imbalances will be shared in both spheres.

The notion of silencing is an aspect of socialization that the study participants will analyze. During the interview portion of data collection, questions will examine the presence of silencing in both first language and ESL classrooms.

2.5 Gender and L2 Oral Participation

Oral participation is an integral facet of second language acquisition. Julé (2005) notes classroom talk is a crucial component of the learning process. For this reason, it is critical to examine the power dynamics at play, who is speaking, and for how long (Coates, 2016; Song, 2009; Hruska, 2004; Tannen, 1995). A lack of classroom conversation or participation during allotted conversation times can hinder communication outside of the classroom. Song (2009)

emphasizes that while gender expectations influence classroom participation, in cases of inactivity, engaging with others outside of academic settings can also be restrained (p. 407). In the seminal text *Language and Women's place* (1973), Robin Lakoff introduces "Women's language," a concept well-known in the sociolinguistic sphere. Through this ideology, Lakoff reveals that "[t]he marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak and how women are spoken of " (p.45). She explains women possess specific linguistic markers that are societally deemed inferior; these include but are not limited to politeness, emotional emphasis, and correct grammar and pronunciation. Examining topics of conversation, women are reported as selecting more personal topics such as their families or emotions (Julé, 2004, p.39). Conversely, men prefer more impersonal topics frequently based on factual or technical knowledge, such as sports or cars. When examining the intention of the conversation, males focus on the exchange of information as the basis for the discussion, straying from moments of intimate connection. Gender also prompts men and women to play different roles in conversation. Examining mixed-gender conversations, Shehadeh (1999) states that males produce greater comprehensible output, take more opportunities to talk, and often dominate the conversation. On the contrary, the main goal of females is to use conversation spaces to possess a more significant amount of comprehensible input. Identifying core gender-related differences in conversational areas allows teachers to facilitate conversations that engage all students.

In short, linguistic imbalances shed light on real-world inequalities and injustices. Lakoff (1973) advocates that for proper language changes to be accepted, changes in attitude and perspective on a societal level must also occur. To integrate dynamic views of gender in education, societal views will also have to change. Examining learning tools that influence power and language is an essential point of investigation in the context of the study. For

pedagogy to truly reflect a shift in gender-related perspectives at the government level, curriculum changes must be made.

Examining the implications of limited practice in oral competency is a core component of this study. While one of the goals of the research reported on in this thesis is to identify successful methods to integrate inclusive oral participation in ESL classrooms, any barriers that delay language acquisition progress must also be specified. Additionally, as the study aims to identify topics that would prompt all students in the classroom to participate, participants are questioned at length about issues that they deem interesting.

2.6 Motivation and Second Language Learning

2.6.1 Defining Motivation

Generally defined, motivation is "what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021, p.3). Similarly, academic motivation can be linked to students' beliefs, goals, and values that determine which tasks they will pursue and complete academically (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). As stated by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), in L2 learning, motivation cannot be separated from social, political or technological realities. Educators must consider the interwoven challenges that may arise in other spheres when considering second language learners' motivation. It is imperative to consider the complexities of both local and global contexts to adopt a holistic perspective on second language motivation. In other words, "Understanding L2 motivation thus entails examining it in the context of a changing and interconnected world" (p.11). Examining the connection between motivation and gender is an aspect of the study that accounts for additional factors limiting motivation. As previous studies have noted, girls have been found to

display less motivation during instances in which boys dominate conversations (Hruska, 2004; Shehadeh, 1999).

In the present study, identifying imbalances in motivation through the Likert scale survey that measures participants' attitudes and individual experiences through the interviews will provide valuable insight into influences that either support or deter the participants' motivation.

2.6.2 Motivation and Student Age

It is also essential to consider factors that motivate adult learners that vary from strategies used in early education. In a study conducted by Wolfgang and Dowling (1981), it was found that when compared to traditional-aged university students, adult education students demonstrated significantly higher values for internal knowledge and motivation and placed a lower value on social relationships and external expectations than their younger counterparts. The study included 325 students attending the Ohio State University and included the response of both younger and older students. Six motivational factors were included in the Education Participation Scale mailed to the students. The results were then examined using a two-way ANOVA. The authors note that adult students have "specific learning goals that reflect their life goals" (p.1). Opposed to early education, adult education students returned with the requirement to attain various benchmarks to progress their professional lives and daily interactions. For example, students return to the classroom as motivated learners, seeking to acquire English, often with a specific goal (Huang et al.,2011). As Huang, Tindall, and Nisbett note, the motivation of adult learners to acquire ESL can often be attributed to the need to improve comprehension and overall proficiency for employment reasons; to obtain employment or to advance to a higher position in their current job.

Motivation is an essential consideration within the present study, as motivation in adult ESL classrooms will influence effort and participation. Additionally, as the students are taking the course as individuals who have recently moved to Canada, their motivation to learn ESL is a precious factor.

2.6.3 Motivation and Culture

Motivation to learn an L2 is also linked to gender-related cultural influences. Gender expectations are often deeply ingrained in the culture and can be identified as influencing lifestyle expectations, including academics and careers. Kobayashi (2002) investigated the relationship between Japanese culture, the gender of high school students, and their attitudes toward learning English. The study revealed that Female Japanese high school students opted to study English as a subject and declared English as their major more often than male Japanese high school students. Female Japanese students also possessed more positive attitudes toward present and future English learning. While the article presented numerous reasons for the contrast in student attitudes, Kobayashi attributed the positive attitudes of female Japanese high school students to various factors. The factors mentioned include English as a women-dominant subject at Japanese schools, the view of English proficiency as a tool for female achievement and access to a better life, and fewer social limitations as women exit traditional Japanese society. Through this study, the often-inseparable nature of gender and culture can be observed. Cultural ideologies reinforce gender roles or traditions that restrict equal access to opportunities based on one's gender. In this case, English was viewed as a tool of empowerment and success among Japanese women, more so than men. Motivation levels can also be attributed to interaction in the L2 culture and the target language (Guerrero, 2015). In other words, when students experienced positive L2 contexts, they were more likely to feel motivated and participate. As the Japanese

women felt they had more to gain from acquiring English, the subject became a women-dominant subject across Japanese schools. The perceptive value of English presented more opportunities for Japanese women than men, and this understanding was reinforced on a cultural scale.

In the present study, the participants are motivated to acquire English, as they will gain new opportunities that stem from their acquisition. Advancements in education, employment, and social interactions are three of the main points of motivation that have prompted the students to register for the adult ESL course. As the students must balance their language course with their other responsibilities, their investment in their education and motivation to succeed are high. Gender and culture will be examined to analyze if their previous education experiences have influenced their willingness and motivation to participate in conversations in the ESL classroom.

2.7 Gaps in Literature and Future directions

Another repeated point made in previous literature is the need for additional research to be conducted across contexts, in diverse settings, to accumulate a particular bank of data. Previous research presents the need to investigate gender in specific, local contexts (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Hruska, 2004; Gordon, 2004; Julé, 2005; Shi, 2006: Pavlenko & Piller, 2008). Gordon (2004) shares this notion, suggesting "future studies will investigate specific, local forms of gender, offering insight into how SLS influences gender identities and ideologies" (p.454-455). Additionally, Hruska (2004) states that more research must be done to gain additional context information; however, the examination must not end there. While researchers must pay extra attention to the local contexts of their participants, the consequences of these contexts must also be further analyzed. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) emphasize,

> Significant further advances in the study of language and gender must
>
> involve unprecedented integration. Such integration can come only through
>
> the intensive collaboration of people working in a variety of fields and a
>
> variety of communities. Language and gender studies, in fact, require an
>
> interdisciplinary community of scholarly practice. (p.486)

The authors note that collaboration among researchers across fields and communities is essential to achieve these integration measures. Additionally, examining gender ideologies and relationships and their influence on learner investment or resistance must be done through the lens of specific communities. (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008, p.66)

Hruska (2004) also presented the need for future research to expand on how gender is conceptualized. She articulated that gender must be included in future ESL theory, research, and practices. While this integration is ongoing, it is essential to continue across diverse contexts. Furthermore, to prevent practices that may limit female students' potential, exploring who is talking is a critical question for ESL teachers (Julé, 2005, p.49). Julé also shared that research examining ESL classrooms is also needed across cultural groups, grade levels and contexts, and acting as the solution's first steps. Regarding learner identity, Shi (2006) discussed the future directions that L2 educators can take to best assist students as they establish new or varied identities. The author claims that L2 educators must reflect upon how classroom learning can contribute to cross-cultural transition and factors in the context that can facilitate or impede socialization.

By identifying research gaps in the literature, it can be observed that there is a lack of information regarding the influence of gender in adult ESL classrooms. Additionally, it is essential to note the lack of gender and language research focusing specifically on adults

studying ESL. Throughout this literature review, I have remarked that while numerous studies expand upon findings in elementary or high school classrooms, there are few studies in the context of Adult ESL and the influence of gender, in addition to conversation in adult SLA. This chapter has addressed the complex involvement of gender in SLA. The implications and points of research that require further investigation also seek to highlight areas that need additional study or improvement.

2.8 Conclusion

To summarize, gender and culture in the L2 classroom are two complex factors that cannot be examined without considering peripheral power imbalances and social influences. Student motivation and willingness to partake in oral participation must also be discussed in relation to gender and culture to identify factors that encourage participation. Researchers must continue to integrate gender into future SLA research while also closely examining influences in individual acquisition contexts. To do so, future research must consider the shifting identities of learners as they navigate the acquisition of an L2. Power dynamics related to gender must be reflected on frequently to create an environment that encourages balanced conversation. Additionally, acknowledging the influence of students' cultural backgrounds must also be considered when analyzing and summarizing the findings of future studies.

In the following chapter, I will present the methodology used in the present study designed to address these issues of gender and culture. The study focused on seven adult participants who are acquiring ESL. The facets of gender and culture that I investigate in the study include the influence of students' understandings and experiences, the impact of conversation topics, gender-related preferences for group work, comfort to take risks, and imbalanced participation among men and women in conversations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction and Research Questions

  The study aimed to examine the extent to which participants' gender influenced how they participated orally in their ESL class. The influence of participants' cultural backgrounds on oral participation was also considered a secondary research point. I used quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze my data. I decided upon mixed method research as I thought this to be an effective approach to thoroughly respond to the research question (Creswell, 2014). During my undergraduate degree, I became interested in the topics of sociolinguistics. During my master's degree, I then pursued research examining the influence of gender in SLA. While I wanted to integrate the participants' personal experiences, I also sought to use an objective and accurate instrument. The quantitative data method was straight forward for ESL learners while also efficiently measuring participant attitudes. Qualitative data allowed me to gain specific insight into the individual experiences encountered by the participants. A Likert scale survey, field notes and audio recordings from classroom observations, and interviews were analyzed to identify patterns that could be attributed to the influence of gender and culture on oral participation in ESL classrooms. The two research questions that guided my research were the following:

Research Question 1

  1a. To what extent does student gender influence oral participation in ESL classrooms?

1b. What are the most common reasons that students participate orally or do not participate orally in ESL classrooms?

Research Question 2

2. In what way do students' cultural backgrounds influence oral participation in ESL classrooms, and how does this differ depending on gender?

3.2 Methodology

A mixed-method research design was used in the study to provide a more effective response to the research questions than either quantitative or qualitative methods used independently might (Creswell, 2015). Creswell defines mixed-method research as,

> An approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health science in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. (p.2)

In my study, quantitative data measured participant responses quickly and objectively. Qualitative data captured the participants' voices and allowed their experiences to be understood within the SLA context. Using both methods balanced the strengths and weaknesses of each research form to present a well-rounded understanding of the data (Creswell, 2015). The study specifically employed a convergent parallel mixed methods framework. This design can be defined as,

> The simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data followed by the combination and comparisons of these multiple data sources. This approach involves the collection of different but complementary data on the same phenomena. (Creswell 2014; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2014, p.181)

In the convergent design, the quantitative and qualitative data results were merged to provide varied insights regarding the influence of gender in ESL adult education. A defining feature of the convergent design was that data collection for the quantitative and qualitative methods took place simultaneously. Both methods were given equal priority and value as meaningful data sources. Furthermore, a benefit of using both approaches was the advantage of analyzing the research questions from multiple perspectives; in this case, one drawn from "close-ended response data (quantitative) and one drawn from open-ended personal data (qualitative)" (Creswell, 2015, p.15). As suggested by Creswell, before considering both data sets together, I examined and analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data separately.

I will expand upon the research context in the sections below; however, to provide a brief justification of my selected research context, I will briefly discuss the developments that led to the present study. My final field experience in an adult ESL classroom sparked my research interest. As I observed power and conversational space negotiated across cultures and genders, I questioned how fewer opportunities for some participants to contribute to oral participation might affect their progress when acquiring an L2. During the first year of my master's degree, I then began to explore literature discussing gender in the ESL classroom formally. I noticed an apparent lack of research regarding the relationship between gender and oral participation in adult ESL education. Furthermore, there was a significant gap in the literature concerning multicultural classrooms in gender-based research studies. My review of the research literature also revealed a lack of research that included the participants' perspectives and authentic experiences, especially individuals in multicultural classrooms. After gaining insight into the current research gaps, I designed the present study to address the lacking aspects of recent literature. My research required a multicultural group of adult learners to acknowledge

discrepancies in the current literature. I then proceed to analyze if gender-related perceptions of the participants might influence oral communication, specifically in the context of the L2 classroom.

3.3 Challenges to Validity

Addressing threats to validity mentioned by Creswell (2015) that arise specifically when using the convergent design, variable sample sizes are a key concern when using qualitative and quantitative data collection. As the study included the same number of participants from the sample classroom for both data sets – observations and interviews- and the survey- this issue was avoided. All participants decided to participate in both areas of the study, assuring balance and consistency. To validate further, I referred to my detailed field observation notes taken during the data collection step. The notes gave me a clear understanding of classroom dynamics and general student attitudes during conversations. I also used the descriptive data analysis approach to reinforce my study's validity when using qualitative methods (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The process I followed can be described as "description, recognizing that some interpretation is necessarily involved in the data analysis process and in selecting the research outcomes that eventually will be reported" (p.113).

3.4 Data Triangulation

I used multiple methods or data sources to "develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (Patton, 1999, as cited in Carter et al., 2014, p.545). As far as possible, these perspectives were viewed and applied equally (Uwe, 2019). Data triangulation was a significant step in the data analysis process that supported the present study's validity. The triangulation process allowed me to test the validity of the information gathered through the convergence of information collected from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). As stated by Patten (1999, as

cited in Carter et al., 2014), triangulation "refers to the combination of several types of data on the background of the theoretical perspectives, which are applied to the data" (p.545). In the present study, the triangulation process sought to collect and integrate different data types while responding to the same research questions. Additionally, triangulation was applied to formalize the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research. To elaborate, I triangulated all data points: the quantitative survey results and the qualitative results from the classroom observations and the individual semi-structured interviews.

3.5 Research Context

3.5.1 Participants and Recruitment

Reflecting on the first research question, I specifically selected adults for the study, as adult ESL classes tend not to be homogeneous. I also sought a research context that included a multicultural group of participants. A multicultural group of participants was imperative to my research because I wanted to examine the influence of gender and culture from the perspective of participants who had not encountered the same education or primary culture. Secondly, a multicultural group of students was included, as I hoped my study would contribute to the research gap in current literature, in which multicultural groups of adult learners are rarely mentioned. This was important as the cultural background was one of the focal points of the study that I considered when designing the study. Adult learners differ in gender, age, culture, personality and attitude, beliefs, learning styles, background, and education (Malone, 2014, p.13). Additionally, adults "have far more complex backgrounds in terms of accumulated life experience and responsibilities" (p.11). A microcosm of diverse cultures and language acquisition experiences was essential to respond to both research questions. The participants were able to share cultural differences and expectations in education.

All participants were recruited from the same "Living English" ESL course. The course took place in an Adult Education center located in a suburban area of a large city in Quebec. The class focused on practical English language instruction for a group of adult participants who had recently immigrated to Canada. Finding the ideal classroom to conduct the study was not too challenging, as I asked one of the teachers I had been a student teacher during my undergraduate degree if I could return to conduct research. I was accepted into the classroom and later attained the school board's approval. The school board required researchers to receive a teacher's approval before the general council, as the documents signed by the teacher would then be brought to the monthly governing board meeting.

All participants were intermediate-level ESL learners; however, the proficiency of the individuals varied significantly. While some participants could read and write at an intermediate level due to their previous English education in their home countries, they could not express themselves orally. Other participants could use their vocabulary to communicate orally but struggled to express themselves when performing writing tasks and could not fully comprehend written texts. Overall, the participants could express themselves using simple vocabulary and short sentences and possessed a general understanding of speaking, reading, and writing activities. When I created my research questions, I was previously aware of the range of student abilities as I had witnessed another group of participants attending the same course. The participants who chose to participate in this study were all adults eighteen or older. Initially, eight participants volunteered to be part of the study: six men and two women. Unfortunately, one of the male participants had to leave the study in the early steps of data collection due to an unplanned surgery; therefore, the study will not include his data. Although only two women decided to participate in the research, and while I was hoping to receive an equal balance of

participants, I was nonetheless able to observe how different genders negotiated meaning and power in the classroom.

In terms of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the participants, except for one, all study members had recently immigrated to Canada in the past few years and sought to improve their conversational English to improve their daily interactions, further their education, or for job-related opportunities. All of the participants were successful professionals that had both employment-related and personal commitments to balance alongside the demands of their ESL course. One of the participants was from Quebec, born to Chinese immigrant parents. This participant took the class to fulfill the English competencies required to graduate from secondary school. His first language was Mandarin, and his second was French. Two participants were from Iran, one man and one woman, and both spoke Persian as their first language. Both participants had learned some English during their education in Iran and sought to improve to facilitate their daily interactions in Canada. Three men were from China and spoke Mandarin as their first language. One of the men also took French courses alongside his English courses, learning both languages simultaneously. Lastly, one woman from Vietnam spoke Vietnamese as her first language and French as her L2. All participants from China and Vietnam sought to improve their English to continue their studies in Canada or for employment opportunities. One of the Chinese participants also mentioned that he was motivated to help his daughter, who had just begun kindergarten with her English education courses. These student profiles are presented in Table 1 below.

The study examined the experiences of participants in a particular Canadian ESL classroom. It is important to consider that out of the seven participants, four were from China, and two were from Iran. Considering the background of the participants and the context they

were accustomed to before moving to Canada, non-binary identification is uncommon. Presenting other pronouns has only recently become tolerated on a societal scale. Public acceptance is also not a reality in many local contexts. A survey conducted by Wei and Liu (2019) of 732 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students (LGBTQ) in Mainland China revealed that most schools were not inclusive for LGBTQ students. Wei and Liu emphasize the need for immediate policy changes and continued research "to improve the lives of Chinese LGBTQ youth" (p.192). It is possible that a lack of visibility and inclusivity to diverse sexualities and individuals situated on the gender spectrum contributed to a lack of understanding from the participants. The cultural regulations the students were previously accustomed to must be considered as a possible influence on their own gender identities, as well as the way they view others. It is possible that previous restrictions the students had encountered reinforced rigid gender binaries and contributed to the lack of both awareness and understanding of the gender spectrum. In Canada, the participants encountered an environment that did not instill the same attitudes or perspectives. It is for this reason that it would be of great value to continue exploring gender within diverse contexts in order to research the implications of previous understandings of gender on new cultural contexts for L2 learners who have recently immigrated to Canada.

Table 1

Student Profiles

Participant Name	Gender Identification	Languages Spoken	Country of Birth
M1	Man	Mandarin, English	China
M2	Man	Mandarin, English	China
M3	Man	Mandarin, English	China
M4	Man	Mandarin, French, English	Canada
M5	Man	Persian, English	Iran
W1	Woman	Persian, English	Iran
W2	Woman	Vietnamese, French, English	Vietnam

3.6 Classroom Context

The overarching goal of the "Living English" class was to prepare the participants to succeed in authentic contexts outside the classroom. Daily classroom functions, therefore, focused on using practical tools to support comprehension. Posters on the walls included words and images of vocabulary words, lists of most used verbs and tenses, and useful phrases that could be used in the classroom. The participants used their phones and dictionaries to take notes during class discussions. The teacher did not reinforce rules regarding technology during the lessons, with the understanding that using any electronic devices during class time was for comprehension. Lastly, the teacher frequently used the Smart Board to show definitions of expressions or idioms, videos, or sound recordings.

In terms of classroom dynamics, conversations were facilitated by the teacher, as the participants required prompting at their intermediate language level. The participants were seated in pairs to ask questions and complete work with the assistance of a partner when necessary. The

focus of the lessons was often the front of the classroom to observe the teacher or the Smart Board. Usually, the media displayed would then be the topic of conversation.

The participants attended the language course five times a week for three hours every morning. The first forty-five minutes of the course focused on oral comprehension. Oral participation was integrated into all tasks. When reading or writing, the participants would be prompted to share their ideas, ask questions, or share personal anecdotes. Idioms were discussed daily, as they were highly contextual and could not be easily interpreted in conversations. Regardless of the lesson's topic, the teacher integrated a meaningful discussion of idioms that connected the media used daily. While formative assessments in the three competencies, reading, writing, and speaking, were evaluated, the participants also completed government examinations near the end of the session. The exams included reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The purpose of the government exams was to summatively assess if participants met all of the evaluation criteria that allowed them to progress to a higher-level course. When the participants had completed all of the "Living English" levels, they received a certificate of completion to confirm their proficiency level. Attendance was also a small portion of the grading scheme.

3.7 Ethics Approval and Participant Recruitment

Following McGill University's research protocols, before conducting research, I presented the details of my study and received ethical approval to conduct my research from the Research Ethics Board. As the classroom research took place during the global Covid-19 pandemic, I also received approval to conduct research, once in-person research resumed. To recruit participants, I prepared a script describing the main details of my study that I read aloud to the adult ESL classroom. I also presented a short script to the class describing my research study and the role of study participants (See Appendix A). I included concise descriptions and images on each slide to support the participants' comprehension. After my presentation, I allowed students to ask questions. I then left the consent forms with the teacher and gave the students one week to decide if they would like to participate. When I returned to the classroom, eight participants signed the consent forms, agreeing to participate in the study (See Appendix B).

3.8 Methods and Procedures

3.8.1 Research Instruments

My goal when selecting research instruments was to gain authentic insight from the participants and to examine their first-hand encounters with the influence of gender and culture on classroom interactions. Instruments used to collect data included a five-point Likert scale survey, semi-structured interviews, and the observation of daily classroom practices captured with field notes and recordings. I also used qualitative research instruments to gain a holistic understanding of participant perspectives. I observed classroom conversations and captured these using audio recordings and handwritten notes. Over four weeks of observing four lessons, I recorded roughly six hours of data and approximately three and a half hours of casual whole-

class conversation. As I only recorded consenting participants, excerpts of the conversation were also purposely excluded from data collection. I also took detailed notes on classroom routines.

I conducted semi-structured interviews during the fourth and final week of data collection, specifically the last week of April 2022, ranging from eight to thirty minutes. I decided to use semi-structured interviews to allow for new ideas or participant contributions to open-ended questions. The interview lengths differed drastically based on student proficiency. Some participants could only respond using brief explanations and short sentences; however, their perspectives remained clear throughout the research process. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. During the fourth week, I also conducted a quantitative survey to gather data, asking participants to respond to the questions using a five-point Likert scale. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on participant attitudes regarding their comfort level in speaking tasks in the ESL classroom.

In terms of the mixed methods that I used in the study, a Likert scale survey was selected as the quantitative instrument for participant responses, as it is a tool that effectively collects rich data (Humble, 2020). As Nemoto and Beglar (2014) articulate, "In the field of SLA (second language acquisition), Likert-scale questionnaires have most frequently been used in investigations of individual difference variables, such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence" (p.2). Some advantages of Likert-scale questionnaires include their ability,

> [to] provide highly reliable person ability estimates, the validity of the interpretations made from the data they provide can be established through a variety of means, the data they provide can be profitably compared, contrasted, and combined with qualitative data-gathering techniques, such as open-ended questions, participant observation, and interviews. (p.2)

To collect data using the surveys, the participants used their electronic devices, either their laptops or cell phones, to respond to the survey questions on the LimeSurvey platform. The surveys were conducted during the final week of data collection, the last week of April 2022.

Semi-structured interviews were used as one of the two qualitative instruments. Anderson and Arsenault (1998) define interviews as "a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter" (p.202). A benefit of integrating interviews in the study included the ability to observe visual cues, tone of voice, and the facial expressions of the participants who were still acquiring English (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Occasionally, when the participants struggled to communicate their thoughts, gestures and body language would convey what they intended to share. Classroom observations were the second qualitative method of data collection that was used. My classroom observations enabled me to identify "patterns of thought and behaviour" that provided additional support to the data collected in the interviews (DeWalt, 2011, p.111).

3.8.2 Data Collection Procedures

All data collection took place in April 2022 after receiving ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) and the school board (See Appendix C). After the participants who were interested in the study submitted their consent forms, I spoke to them in person to schedule a time to complete their surveys and interviews. After receiving consent from the participants, the classroom observations occurred four times during April, whereas the survey and the interviews took place during the final week of April.

Table 2

Overview of Data Collection

Participant	Semi-Structured Interviews		Survey	
	Date	Time	Date	Time
M1	04/26/22	9:00am-9:20am	04/26/22	9:20am-9:50am
M2	04/26/22	8:15am-8:35am	04/26/22	1:00pm-1:30pm
M3	04/28/22	1:30pm-1:50pm	04/27/22	8:30am-8:50am
M4	04/26/22	12:15pm-12:35pm	04/28/22	9:00am-9:20am
M5	04/27/22	10:05am-10:25am	04/26/22	1:30pm-2:00pm
W1	04/26/22	12:40pm-1:00pm	04/28/22	9:00am-9:20am
W2	04/26/22	10:45am-11:05am	04/28/22	1:00pm-1:30pm

3.8.2.1 Classroom Observations. Each class began with a full group discussion. I asked the classroom teacher for permission to observe and record the conversations of only the seven individuals who consented to participate in the study. As the conversation began, I silently took a seat at the back of the classroom and quietly noted detailed observations. I observed group discussions and oral participation after viewing or reading a media text. Following the steps of the descriptive approach, I took detailed notes of the classroom conversations. I then interpreted the data, sorting sections of the discussions into categories. Lastly, I selected the most relevant outcomes within the data to report my findings. The teacher planned the class with a daily conversation at the start of the lesson. While oral participation and meaningful discussion accompanied various topics throughout the task, the beginning of class included what the teacher called "Chit-Chat Time." The first forty-five minutes were allotted to the conversation on issues, including morning warm-up questions, questions asked by the participants, and follow-up from the previous class. I endeavored to ensure that my time observing in the class did not disrupt the general routines the participants followed daily. All aspects of classroom observation data

collection only included consenting participants. During the daily classroom discussions, I took general notes and recorded portions of group work on my cell phone. As my interest was in the general dynamics of classroom conversations rather than an observation that followed a specific checklist, my field notes consisted of discussion topics, rates of interruption, student attitudes, and participation. My notes also included the time and date of each observation session and any text or media sources that were integrated into the lesson that prompted discussion.

For data security, I uploaded all recordings to OneDrive after each session, a secure platform used by McGill equipped with two-factor authentication. After the recordings were uploaded, they were deleted from my cell phone. It is also important to reiterate that only consenting participants were recorded. Students who did not participate in the study were left out of audio recordings during classroom observations. While all study participants consented to be observed, some requested no recordings or handwritten notes. Three participants did not wish to be audio recorded. I would pause any digital recording tools during the participation of any of these participants. My handwritten notes were stored in a locked safe. The observations included the conversation topics of the day, the pseudonym names of the participants who volunteered answers, and a point form description of their responses that I would later transcribe by referring to the handwritten notes and audio recordings. The table below illustrates the classroom observation schedule I followed when collecting research.

I observed the classroom four times for one month. I followed this schedule for consistency. I observed twice in the first week and twice in the third week of the month. During the fourth week, I conducted individual interviews. I decided to complete the individual interviews in the fourth week for two reasons. The first reason was that the participants were focused on their exams throughout my time conducting research, and I wanted them to feel at

ease when responding to the interview questions. The second reason was that I wanted the

participants to feel comfortable with my presence in their classroom before answering my

interview questions one-on-one. Please see Table 3 below for the observation schedule.

Table 3
Observation Schedule.

Observations	Date	Time Spent Collecting Observation Data
Observation #1	04/01/22	9:00am-12:00pm break from 10:45am-11:15am
Observation #2	04/04/22	9:00am-12:00pm break from 10:45am-11:15am
Observation #3	04/21/22	9:00am-12:00pm break from 10:45am-11:15am
Observation #4	04/22/22	9:00am-11:00am break from 10:45am-11:15am

3.8.2.2 Survey. The students completed the survey in the final week of data collection, the last week of April. This was done in my presence in an empty classroom in the same school building. The survey was conducted through the LimeSurvey platform, a tool frequently used to collect data at McGill University. The platform facilitated survey creation and online completion. LimeSurvey also provided a descriptive statistics breakdown of participant responses. The survey contained statements that participants were asked to respond to by choosing one of the five options: Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. A "Prefer not to respond" option was also included for each question. The survey questions were presented one by one, prompting the participants to submit each response individually before the completed survey submission. This format was used to encourage the participants to take their time to read each word, asking for clarification if they chose to complete the survey at school on their break or to look up a word in the dictionary without feeling overwhelmed. Two participants asked for an explanation of vocabulary words and used their dictionaries throughout the completion of the survey. The first pre-survey question requested that participants identify their gender from the following list: man, woman, transgender, other, prefer not to say, or other, which enabled

participants to write their answers. Additionally, for cultural reasons and linguistic comprehension, when asked their gender, the participants required an explanation that the question was asking for their gender identification. It is essential to acknowledge that while the gender spectrum was considered when using gender markers of identification, no participants selected a choice that differed from "Man" or "Woman." I acknowledge this occurrence, as the results appear to adhere to the binary categorization of gender. However, the data presented the responses of this specific research context and the responses of seven participants.

3.8.2.3 Interviews. The present study used interviews to acquire information about participants' experiences. The interviews were conducted one-on-one in an empty classroom in the same school building. The interviews also occurred at the convenience of the participants and were scheduled via email. All the interviews took place during class breaks, which was the most convenient time for the participants. Although the participants were provided with the option to complete the interview online using Zoom, all seven preferred the interview to take place in person. The questions asked during the interview focused on the current ESL learning experiences of the participants, as well as past education experiences (See Appendix D). The interviews were conducted on April 26th and April 28th, 2022. While some participants were hesitant to share as they felt their English was not of sufficient calibre, I encouraged everyone who wanted to try to join and contribute. The participants were free to speak as much as they liked; some answered the question without elaborating, while others were redirected or reminded of the question if they veered off the subject matter. Similar to the classroom observations, the interviews were transcribed using audio recordings or hand-written notes.

During the interviews, I allowed the participants to elaborate and respond with limited prompting from me; however, I did repeat or rephrase questions for participants who struggled

with comprehension or provided very brief responses. Follow-up questions were also used when necessary. While the proficiency of some participants was relatively low, they were also allowed to look up words they were unsure of in a dictionary before responding. Rather than just explaining myself, I gave participants this option because they preferred translating the words, they did not comprehend into their first language.

In this chapter, I have presented the mixed methodology of the study. I included a Likert scale survey, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews to collect information regarding student attitudes and perspectives regarding the influence of gender within the ESL classroom. The quantitative results of the survey will be presented first, which will then be followed by the qualitative results. In the following chapter, I will describe my analysis procedures for quantitative and qualitative methods. I will also present the findings of the present study that examined adult ESL learners' perspectives on the influence of gender.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

In this chapter, I will discuss the analysis and results of the quantitative and qualitative data from the present study that investigates the influence of gender and culture in oral participation. In terms of quantitative methods used, a Likert scale survey titled *Examining Oral Interaction in an ESL Classroom* was included to gain insight into the participants' attitudes. In terms of qualitative methods, individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used. The ten survey questions that examined participant comfort and participation, as well as relevant interview and classroom observation excerpts, will be presented through five themes. Additionally, I used data triangulation for all research methods to support the results. The collective use of the information gathered from the research methods, therefore, provided the most effective response to the research questions.

4.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis was a multi-step process that required attention to detail and multiple phases of revision. After examining the data that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative methods, I sorted the information into five various themes based on frequency. The themes were determined by assigning codes, reading through and highlighting the interview transcripts, and coding the classroom observation notes and transcripts that were later grouped to create the themes. This process will be described in detail below. The responses from the survey were then sorted into the appropriate themes. The data analysis process was lengthy, as I reviewed the transcripts and notes eight times to ensure that the coding and themes captured the quantitative and qualitative results.

4.1.1 Survey

I used descriptive statistics to describe and analyze the survey results, using the Lime Survey statistical outputs to examine participant responses. I am well aware that, given the small number of participants in my study, these results cannot be interpreted as having statistical significance. Rather, the surveys were a way to capture and present the participants' attitudes. It is also essential to consider that a different group of participants or a larger number of individuals participating in the study could have yielded different results. Therefore, the survey is presented as quantitative data that supports the interviews and classroom observations, as the results cannot be interpreted independently. The full set of graphs presenting the survey results is represented below (See Appendix E). In the following chapter presenting the results, only the survey question responses that meet the five themes will be discussed. Certain survey questions presented different results when comparing the responses of the men and women participating in the study. As mentioned, the survey responses that did not respond to the research questions are included in appendices and are not discussed in the results chapter.

4.1.2 Classroom Observations and Interviews

Observations and interviews were thematically analyzed. The results from each instrument were first examined separately. After this initial individual review, the classroom observations were used to provide additional support to the findings that emerged from the interviews. To provide more detail, when I conducted the classroom observations, I took detailed field notes and audio-recorded instances in which the participants contributed to group conversations. The transcripts from the four classroom observation sessions were later transcribed. I observed that the participants' responses to the interview questions often corresponded to the ways that they participated in the classroom. I, therefore, integrated excerpts

from the observations to support the data collected during the interviews. Both the classroom

observations and interviews were coded. The codes were sorted into larger overarching themes

that were created following two forms of coding, Initial Coding and then Focused Coding

(Saldaña, 2013). The coding procedures are discussed in more detail below.

4.1.3 Coding

4.1.3.1 General Procedures. The coding process required an in-depth review of both the

classroom observation field notes and recordings transcripts and the individual semi-structured

interview transcripts. I began by reviewing both sets of texts and assigned initial codes based on

my research questions. I placed the codes into corresponding themes and subthemes by my sixth

review. Themes can be defined as outcomes or categories that emerge from the process of coding

(Saldaña, 2013). The themes acted as overarching categories that grouped the codes into a more

cohesive unit. These themes were then further examined using a second coding technique. I

followed the characteristics of initial coding, also referred to as open coding. This process can be

described as "[...] breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and

comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in, Saldaña,

2013, p.103). This process required attention to detail and a significant amount of time to revisit

and modify codes with the qualitative data. The codes used were a single word or short phrase

that symbolically summarized a portion of text from either the observations or the interviews

(Saldaña, 2013). Please see Table 4 for a summary of each coding type's key features.

Table 4

The Coding Process

Coding Type	Main Features of Coding Type	Time
Initial Coding	General codes for each line of speech were created to develop categories Excerpts were grouped using keywords	First three reviews of the transcripts
Focused Coding	Most frequent codes developed the themes Grouped excerpts were grouped into themes	Fourth to eighth reviews of the transcripts

After following the steps of Initial Coding, I then used Focused Coding as a second-cycle coding method to solidify my themes. Focused Coding sorted the coded data based on similar concepts and was particularly useful when creating themes from the data and for merging reoccurring themes into new groups to limit the number of final themes (Saldaña, 2013). The goal of this method was "to develop categories without distracted attention at this time to their properties and dimensions" (p.213). This method of second-cycle coding searches for the most frequent codes to develop themes or categories and is often included as a second step after the use of Initial Coding.

4.1.3.2 Themes. When creating the themes, the interviews were the primary source of data that contributed to identifying the final five themes that were used in the study. As previously mentioned, the classroom observations also acted as a form of support for these findings. The themes that emerged from my data analysis, first with initial coding and then with focused coding, included: Gender in the ESL classroom, Stereotypes and interactions, Risk Taking, Influence of Previous Education, and Expected Cultural Roles.

4.1.3.3 Combined Analysis. For the interviews, in the early review of the transcripts, the goal was first to identify codes. Examples of codes that emerged included inequality, gender differences, participation, cultural taboos, freedom of choice, and preference. By the eighth

review, I examined the codes and themes one last time, making any final changes before thoroughly reviewing the data to summarize the findings.

For the classroom observations, handwritten notes and audio recordings were transcribed, then coded based on topics discussed, participant attitudes, tone, and rate of participation, all in response to the interview questions. While the observations provided meaningful insight, they were used to support the interview results. This decision was made as the topics shifted frequently, and the initial codes that emerged from the observation of classroom conversations and observations were more abstract than the interviews. Some of the codes that emerged from the classroom observations included: equality, cultural differences, gender stereotypes, education, globalism, and adaptation. While the codes created for the observation notes and transcriptions of audio recordings presented a more significant challenge, following the steps of Focused Coding ultimately allowed me to solidify the final five themes mentioned above.

4.1.3.4 Emergent Themes. In the following sections of the chapter, I discuss the results in response to the two research questions that guided the thesis. The five themes featured in the present chapter are the five main concepts that were most frequently mentioned within the data that was gathered using quantitative and qualitative methods. The five themes were ideas expressed in the data that were repeated often, whereas the codes that were mentioned were sub-themes that were less frequent and more specific. Within each theme mentioned below, excerpts from the qualitative and quantitative data are included to illustrate the multitude of results that address both research questions. The excerpts that were selected reveal instances that support the overarching theme.

The first theme, *Gender in the ESL Classroom,* explores power dynamics and participants' perspectives in their L2 class. The second theme, *Stereotypes and Interactions,*

examines the presence of stereotypical expectations of gender and the influence of participants'

understandings and experiences with gender. The third theme, *Risk Taking*, considers freedom of

speech and participant participation across learning environments and cultures. The fourth

theme, *Influence of Previous Education,* compares the previous language acquisition experiences

of the participants to their acquisition experience acquiring English. The fifth theme and final

theme, *Expected Cultural Roles*, addresses and compares cultural expectations and the resulting

impacts of cultural influence on education, employment, and participants' lifestyles. I present

and discuss the themes using key findings from the survey results, in addition to excerpts from

the individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. This was done to

strengthen the analysis and validate the results. The following section of the chapter will present

general findings from the analysis.

In my classroom observations, I noticed that there was an emphasis on active oral

participation on the part of the teacher. With this value stemmed the importance of speaking in

the ESL classroom to improve. These two points were reiterated throughout the course. The

topics integrated into the ESL classroom were selected with the intention of equipping the

participants with the tools required to succeed in their daily lives. Conversations played a

significant role in the overall development of the participants while facilitating daily interactions

through discussion topics. I recorded the main topics discussed during each session that I

observed. The full class conversations addressed current news, student questions, retellings of

situations outside the classroom, and teacher-prompted topics. This portion of the class was

structured to discuss up-to-date information while also incorporating time for students to

contribute their own topics freely if they had a question or comment. While conversations took

place at other points during the session, they often arose spontaneously, whereas the first forty-

five minutes were specifically allotted to casual discussion. For instance, the participants would

typically orally correct worksheets focused on idioms or discussed themes that would be present

in texts or media. To expand, idioms were used daily within lessons and adjusted to present

vocabulary that was related to the topic. This was the main part of the casual conversation that

took place, during which the students participated in oral interactions. For participants to gain an

understanding of the meaning of the idioms, each term was practiced in the appropriate context.

Using idioms correctly was a task that required practice, as the participants often misunderstood

the meanings and required prompting to create examples that were correct.

The first observation session discussed money, restaurants, historical buildings,

gentrification, landmarks, food, and the contrast between old and new. The second observation

session discussed the movie titled *The Founder*, fast food, slogans, money, and franchises. The

third classroom observation focused on asthma and idioms. The fourth and final observation

session discussed analogies, money, and fines.

4.2 Gender in the ESL Classroom

This theme further confirms how the participants' gender identity and perception of

gender contributed to their participation and responses to their peers during class discussions in

their ESL classroom. While some of the questions highlight responses specific to only men or

only women, other questions demonstrate a general sense of agreement that most of the

participants shared, regardless of their gender. The results, therefore, present areas that should be

addressed in further research through the responses that present the most significant gender

differences. Survey question 3: *I feel more comfortable speaking with certain classmates than*

others; asked if the participants felt more comfortable engaging in speaking activities with

specific peers more than others. There were no striking gender discrepancies when looking at the

responses. The results indicated that both men and women felt more comfortable speaking with certain classmates. One woman and two men selected "agree," and one woman and two men selected "neutral." Question 4: *When I am speaking, I am often interrupted by another classmate* asked about participants' experiences being disrupted by a classmate when speaking in the ESL classroom. Again, gender did not influence the findings for this question. The findings illustrated that both the men and women participating in the study disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were frequently interrupted by their peers. This information provided insight into the participants' perspectives when examining the factors that contributed to active or limited oral participation in the classroom. The results also eliminated interruption as a possible deterrent to interaction. Question 5: *I enjoy speaking in small groups more than I enjoy speaking to the entire class,* looked at participants' preferences when participating in oral interactions. The responses suggested that the men preferred working in small groups more than the women participants. Three men articulated their preference to speak in small groups; one of the women selected "neutral," and one woman and two of the men selected "disagree." This survey result reinforced the qualitative data collected in classroom observations and the responses recorded during the semi-structured interviews. In the interviews, the majority of the men shared that they preferred to work in small groups with other classmates that were men, as they felt like they could speak freely without worrying that they would say something that would offend the women in the class or their teacher. Furthermore, the men that expressed that they were comfortable participating in oral tasks in their survey responses were the same men that contributed most out of all participants in the classroom discussions.

Drawing from the classroom observation data, the same two men, participants M1 and M2, also contributed much more than the women participants during specific moments of oral

participation, for example, during the forty-five-minute conversations at the start of class and during spontaneous bouts of discussion that arose throughout various learning tasks. This occurred on all four occasions that I collected data during the classroom observations. For the most part, the men also felt comfortable asking questions or for additional clarity from their educator during instances that were unclear or confusing. This is demonstrated within the classroom observation scripts, which include numerous occasions during which men ask questions to support their understanding.

When examining gender in the ESL classroom using the information in semi-structured interviews, the participants also provided meaningful insight into their perspectives regarding the influence of gender in their educational experiences acquiring English. When reflecting upon gender equality during their time learning English, the participants expressed their thoughts in the following interview excerpts. The participants emphasized that their education experience in Canada, specifically in the adult ESL classroom, has presented an overall sense of equality in the learning environment. When considering the participant responses from the interviews, most participants remarked that they felt they had experienced gender equality. Participant M1 articulated his agreement stating, "Yes, I think here in Canada there has been gender equality during my time learning English." (Participant M1, interview, April 21, 2022) This was like participant M3's response, as he replied, "Yes, I think so." (Participant M3, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant M5 shared that while he has experienced gender equality in Canada, he could not say the same when reflecting on his education in Iran. "I think it is very fair; it is very different from back home. They say it's the same, but it is not fair (in Iran)." (Participant M5, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant W2 highlighted the equal treatment of all students stating, "Yes, I think they [students] are treated equally in the Canadian ESL class. When the teacher

asks question, she asks the same question to everyone." (Participant W2, interview, April 21, 2022) It is also necessary to consider that the participants also addressed elements of oral participation that were noted to foster imbalances. Participant W1 shared that the men in the study spoke more frequently during times of oral participation. She also articulated that the women participants rarely contributed and mentioned that perhaps the reason could be attributed to comfort or confidence. "I feel it is equally [Correction: equal] in our class. Actually, most men talk, not women. Maybe they are more comfortable or confident." (Participant W1, interview, April 21, 2022)

Teachers were also found to greatly contribute to one's sense of ease or anxiety to participate in speaking tasks. While the participants were asked about their preferences when speaking with their classmates, it was also important to question if they also felt more comfortable with a teacher of a certain gender. Both men and women participating in the study stated that they felt more comfortable with a teacher of their same gender identification. It was also found that the men in the study possessed greater preferences regarding the gender of their teacher than the women. This finding illustrates that the men may have been even more likely to contribute more if their teacher was a man. The participants who did articulate their preference for the gender of their teacher justified their choice through the rationale that having a teacher of their same gender provided a sense of ease, the ability to speak more freely about certain topics that may be inappropriate, and clarity of speech. Participant M1 shared that his general sense of comfort when contributing to a conversation could be affected by the gender of his teacher as he stated, "Maybe if I had a teacher that was a man there would be freedom to talk about any topic. Sure, absolutely, it is more comfortable. We can talk about more topics; we are not worried about taboos or upsetting classmates. But I also speak to ladies." (Participant M1, interview,

April 21, 2022) Participant M3 also shared that he preferred teachers of a certain gender as he replied, "To be frank, if my teacher is a woman, her English is very clear. If I have a man teacher, their voice is slightly too deep and unclear. Their voice is not too easy to listen to; it's my feeling." (Participant M3, interview, April 21, 2022) For participant W1, who had a woman teacher throughout all of her previous educational experiences, the idea of having a teacher that was a man felt less comfortable, as it was an experience she had not encountered before. When asked if she had a preference, she replied, "Yes, because of my past, I feel more comfortable with women. Growing up, I always had women teachers." (Participant W1, interview, April 22, 2022) Participant M4 shared his sentiments about engaging in academic tasks with women, stating that occasionally he felt insecure or incompetent in his English abilities when engaging in conversation. He shared, "Yes, the same gender. Sometimes I speak something with women…I feel incompetent." (Participant M4, interview, April 22, 2022)

Other participants indicated that gender did not matter. Participant M5 supported this viewpoint stating that he has had men and women teachers, and he did not feel that their gender altered his education experience. Participant W2 also shared that while she has only had teachers that were women in the past, she feels that the gender of her teacher does not matter, "It really doesn't matter to me, but I only have experience with women teachers. I really am familiar with teachers that are women" (Participant W2, interview, April 21, 2022). Participant M2 also shared that while he has preferences regarding a teacher's level of experience, their gender makes no difference, "Um, for me, there is not difference. For experience, yes, for gender not at all" (Participant M2, April 21, 2022).

In my classroom observations, I also noted participants' willingness to participate to be quite interesting. The women in the study would rarely raise their hands to contribute. However,

if the teacher called on one of the two women to share, they would enthusiastically respond. In contrast, the men had no reservations about participating. The men would either raise their hands or call out an answer, but they did not need prompting to respond, as they were already providing a signal that they were ready to answer. For the most part, the same four participants contributed to classroom conversations, participants M1, M2, W1 and W2. Occasionally M3 and M4 would also share; however, participant M5 did not contribute to any of the four conversations I observed at the beginning of class, nor did he contribute to any conversations that arose during worksheets or activities that integrated media. This participant was quite timid and was in a different academic situation than the other participants, as he was a resident of a large city in Canada who was seeking to get his high school English credits. Whether this participant was simply reserved or did not possess the language proficiency that was required to respond to the questions was never confirmed. It was also found that the men in the study interrupted, but the women did not. On three occasions during the four observation dates, the teacher was interrupted by either participant M1 or M2 for men to contribute their opinion or ask for clarity. These instances did not appear to be disrespectful; however, it is important to note that each of the three interruptions changed the subtopic of the conversation, as the teacher responded to the questions and did not return to the previous focus on the conversation.

During the interviews, participants were also asked if they thought their gender had in any way shaped their experiences learning English. Some students participating in the study shared that they felt that gender did not influence their acquisition experiences, while others were uncertain. Interestingly, during the interview, when participant M2 was asked any question related to gender, he associated the questions with an issue or problem. Repeatedly he told me not to worry about gender in any way because there were no problems in their ESL classroom as

he stated, **"**Actually, I don't feel any gender problem. There is no gender problem" (Participant

M2, interview, April 21, 2022).

Participant M1 acknowledged the influence of gender when reflecting on his personal

preferences, as he stated,

> Yes, maybe. For example, I avoid discussing some questions with the teacher [English
>
> teacher that is a Woman]. I think gender has in some way shaped my experience, not just
>
> for the topic. I want to listen to a man teacher sometimes to speak like him.
>
> (Participant M1, interview, April 22, 2022)

Participant M3 considered the ratio of men to women both at the adult education school and in

his ESL classroom, as he referred to the total number of women at the school being higher than

the number of men. Throughout the interview, participant M3 also articulated that he felt that his

English was inadequate. He also shared that the women were more proficient and acquired the

information faster, which affected his confidence. For example, he stated:

> Maybe because in class, it's the same, in the school the percentage is different. I think
>
> women are a little bit smarter than men because I, I feel more women classmates…their
>
> English is better than me. (Participant M3, interview, April 22, 2022)

While M4 did not agree that gender influenced his ESL experience, he did mention that he was

not given any advantages, an implication that was not implied in the wording of the question. He

responded, **"**No, I don't think I have been given an advantage." (Participant M4, interview, April

22, 2022). Additionally, the two women participants simply did not agree that they had ever felt

that gender contributed to their learning experience. Participant W1 replied, "In our class, I

didn't feel that." (Participant W1 interview, April 22, 2022) Participant W2 responded, **"**No, the

gender does not have affect any experience learning English." (Participant W2, interview, April

22, 2022) The participants rejected the notion that specific advantages could be observed in the

ESL classroom, as both the men and women participants responded to the question expressing that they did not feel that gender influenced their experience learning English.

The interviews also examined if the participants felt more comfortable speaking to classmates of the same gender. Two of the men stated that they possessed no preference and gender did not matter in this case. Participant 2 responded, "It doesn't matter. Anyone is ok." (Participant M2, interview, April 22, 2022) Participant M4 shared the same thoughts as he replied, "There is no difference." (Participant M4, interview, April 22, 2022) Participant M5 also shared that gender did not influence his choice; however he emphasized that his preferred classmates were dependent on individual relationships with his peers. He stated,

> I think I'm comfortable speaking to everyone. Some classmates I am closer to it is about relationships. Gender and background it doesn't make a difference. The human connection is more important than political or geographic. (Participant M5, interview, April 22, 2022)

This illustrated the finding that gender was not the only factor that influenced who the students preferred working with. Other participants stated that they preferred to work with partners of the same gender. Participant W1 shared that her Iranian education had contributed to her preferences when selecting a partner. She replied, "Yes, because of my education background, but because of my background, I'm ok with any topic." (Participant W1, interview, April 21, 2022) While participant W2 articulated that her choice was often related to the topic of conversation, her overall preference was also to be paired with other women. She articulated this preference as she shared, "Sometimes yes, it really depends. I feel open. It depends on the topic." (Participant W2, interview, April 21, 2022)

This theme confirms that gender does influence ESL classrooms and can be observed through participants' preferences regarding the gender of their teacher and their classmates during work in small groups. While the influence of gender was not interpreted as negative, it was indeed present. The findings also illustrate that neither the men nor the women participating in the study remarked on any significant inequalities present in their classroom when asked about equality in their ESL context.

4.2.1 Stereotypes and Interactions

This theme explores the connection between gender and behaviour in a variety of ways. Codes that emerged in this theme included: gender, stereotypes, gender roles, cultural perspectives, power, and tasks. Firstly, the theme considers the participants' experiences and personal understandings of gender and how both factors influenced how they interacted in the ESL classroom. Secondly, this theme examines the presence of gender roles and gender-related stereotypes, in this case, how participants associated certain behaviours or ideas with a specific gender. Addressing how the participants' personal experiences have influenced gender, the data reveals that the participants' personal views of gender impact their interactions in the classroom.

Examining the participants' behaviour, it was important to consider the interests of each individual to examine if certain topics of conversation contributed to their participation and revealed any possible gender-related patterns. During the interviews, the participants shared topics and themes that they enjoyed speaking about in English. When participants shared their preferences, they also confirmed that they would be more likely to contribute during class conversations if the topics met their interests. The seven members of the study also mentioned topics that deterred participation. For example, Participant M1 shared that he did not enjoy speaking about topics that required a vocabulary that he did not know, as the process of

explaining the word that he was referring to was often too difficult. He shared below that when trying to discuss a specific food; he struggled to explain the details to his classmates and teacher. He stated,

> For me, I think I don't like to talk about music. Food I think it's because of the maybe.. because of the culture, the vocabulary… because, too many foods, too many materials for the food, I cannot name it, it is difficult for me. In the classroom, I always raise my hand about business, politics, and family. (Participant M1, interview, April 22, 2022)

Participant M2 shared that he was open to a variety of topics as he replied, "I am interested in everything. Maybe something I am familiar with, life experience, business, food, music." (Participant M2, interview, April 22, 2022) While participant M3 discussed his enjoyment of sports and Chinese politics, sharing that he believed everyone also enjoyed discussing political topics, participant W2 specifically mentioned politics as a topic she did not enjoy.

> I like to talk about sports, I don't like to watch movies. To be frank, if I talk with my familiar friends, we always talk about politics, Chinese politics. I think maybe every student here likes to talk about Chinese politics too. (Participant M3, interview, April 22, 2022)

Participant W2 also mentioned that she would not contribute to certain topics, specifically the topics discussed by her classmates that were men, as she did not feel like she had any information to add to the conversation. She acknowledged that she was more likely to raise her hand for topics including family and travel. The excerpt below, therefore, illustrates the importance of including a variety of topics that cater to the various interests of the participants in the class, to encourage all members of the study to participate. It is also important to note that all the participants mentioned that their class covered various topics and that their teacher did a

wonderful job incorporating dynamic and interesting topics. This finding eliminates the possibility that the students did not withhold participation because they were frequently bored or disinterested.

> I like all topics because I like to learn more about culture and other peoples' experiences. If I had to choose, I don't enjoy politics and food. I will raise my hand more for family, vacation, and trips; I love trips! I do feel the topic matters…most of the men like to talk about cars, houses, and politics, so I feel like I have nothing to share because I don't know about those topics. (Participant W2, interview, April 22, 2022)

Participant M4 shared that he enjoyed lighthearted topics stating, "I like talking about family and food best." (Participant M4, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant W1 emphasized her interest in learning about North American culture as she shared,

> I like to learn more about western culture. It's funny because I find that some cultures depend on the area. For example, our teacher said in the suburbs, women usually do not shovel snow; their husbands do. There are certain activities men will do more than women and the opposite. (Participant W1, interview, April 21, 2022)

Participant M5 emphasized the inclusion of topics that are transferable to daily life outside the classroom. Topics that are practical to new residents of Canada best support his needs as a learner. He responded,

> I think there are many things like… I think in the class, we must use topics that everyone likes and needs. All topics are useful. Practical topics are tangible and sensible for someone living here as a newcomer. Not formal topics are useful. I think students like to talk about finance; it is useful. Driving and getting a ticket, there are different protocols in Canada. For example, our teacher told us you are supposed to stay in your car. In Iran,

you get out. Learning as an adult is different than learning as a child; sensible topics are

much better. (Participant M5, interview, April 21, 2022)

Certain topics of conversation engendered more discussion. Additionally, examining the classroom observation scripts and audio recordings, the men took much more linguistic space; they participated more frequently for longer amounts of time. This finding also revealed that certain topics were more likely to create power imbalances that were influenced by gender, as the men would speak for most of the conversation. To illustrate this finding, I will compare the frequency of participation for two topics that were discussed during the first hour of the course. The topics were discussed on different days that I collected research. The first conversation topic that the teacher asked the class focused on what each participant ate for breakfast. The men in the study contributed six times, and the women contributed two times. While this conversation displayed that the men contributed more than the women, the ratio of participation when comparing men to women was drastically imbalanced, especially when the number of male participants was considered. The second conversation focused on the topic of franchises. The teacher asked the class if they could first name a franchise and, secondly, discuss the key features of each brand that they mentioned. The men in the study contributed twenty-eight times, and the women contributed twice. Once again, the men participated more than the women participants; however, this time, they spoke for the majority of the conversation. This example highlights the importance of examining who is speaking and for how long. This finding also illustrates the importance of conversation topics to create conversations that encourage balanced participation across genders. It is valuable to note the readiness of men to contribute to the discussion when the topic is centred on business or finances. Financial literacy is a topic that is important for all participants. From this finding, critical reflection must be practiced examining why there is such a significant gender-

related discrepancy within this subject, in addition to identifying strategies that can be implemented to create a conversation with more balanced contributions that result in more frequent participation from the women participants. It is also important to note that while more men took part in the study, the same three men tended to contribute most in general. During the interviews, the participants were also asked if they thought stereotypes were present in the classroom. Three of the men shared that they had not encountered either topics or classroom situations that enforced gender-related stereotypes. Participant M3 demonstrated thorough self-reflection as he noted, "No, I don't think others have used stereotypes; maybe I have not noticed." *(*Participant M3, interview, April 21, 2022) Both women also agreed that they had never felt categorized in a stereotypical nature. Participant W1 shared, "In our class, I didn't feel that." (Participant W1, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant W2 replied, "Until now, I have not noticed that happened in the class." (Participant W2, interview, April 21, 2022)

Participant M1 shared that stereotypical interests and contributions could be observed in terms of topics discussed in the classroom. Providing the example of politics, M1 articulated that men invest more attention to the conversation topic than women. He shared, "Yes, I think that gender stereotypes are present. For example, sometimes when we talk about politics, I think men pay more attention than women." (Participant M1 interview, April 21, 2022) Furthermore, participant M5 reflected on potential stereotypes that differentiated participants by gender that he may have observed in the classroom but ultimately decided that he felt that no one in the classroom was treated differently. Participant M5 replied, "In my mind, maybe. In actual [sic], I think it is not different. I do feel woman is more emotional." (Participant M5, interview, April 21, 2022)

Examining other experiences and behaviours that occurred during my time collecting data, during a discussion about academic paths, one of the participants, M2, shared his personal experience in which his parents chose his career path. Participant M2 also discussed the common challenges encountered by men who simply do not know what route they want to take in terms of their future. In doing so, he included the statement that boys do not know what they want. M2 shared that he never thought about the academic path he wanted because his parents decided for him. When the teacher inquired if there was any discussion regarding the program or choice, M2 replied that no discussion had taken place. The teacher asked M2 if he liked his choice, to which he replied, "Mmmmm, no. But it is normal. Most boys, before they go to university, don't know what they want. Boys don't know what they want" (Participant M2, interview, April 4, 2022). Participant M2 clearly only focused on men's experiences, specifically during their university years.

Another instance in which the participants connected behaviour to only men occurred after the teacher shared a personal anecdote. During one of the lessons, the teacher explained the concept of being financially savvy; she provided a personal example that addressed her son's previous spending habits. She shared that her son had charged five thousand dollars to his credit card. She explained that her son had to work full-time during the summer to pay back his debt. The following summer, he ended up in debt again, demonstrating that he had not learned his lesson about financial literacy. When Participant M1 inquired about the teacher's daughter, she shared that it was not in her character to spending money in the same ways as her son. Throughout the story, participant M1 shared his thoughts and personal reflections regarding the differences between men and women, stating, "I think boys and girls are different." (Participant M1, interview, April 4, 2022) The teacher agreed and stated that her son made the same mistake

twice in order to learn his lesson. When participant M1 asked if her daughter had even done the same, she explained that she was not like that. M1 responded to this statement by replying, "It's because he's a boy." (Participant M1, interview, April 4, 2022). In this excerpt, participant M1 repeatedly justified the teacher's son's behaviour through a gender-rooted rationale. He repeatedly stated: "It's because he is a boy," to justify the spending habits mentioned. Referring to my classroom observations, it is interesting to note that on numerous occasions, M1 had attributed impulsivity and difficulties making decisions with men.

While it is not only men who experience academic restrictions or impulsive spending, the two observations mentioned above highlight two instances in which the participants use gender to rationalize their choices. The results suggest that the participants justify their rationale based on experiences that they have personally lived or seen, therefore also suggesting that their behaviours in the ESL classroom can be traced back to their understandings of gender based on personal experiences, biases, and stereotypes that the participants have collected over time.

Examining another participant's perspective, when he was asked about his experiences with gender, specifically gender equality, during his interview, participant M5 shared his experience in Iran, highlighting the societal inequalities he encountered prior to immigrating to Canada. Participant M5 explained that power is not equal for men and women in Iran. He shared that while this imbalance is slowly shifting, the societal expectations for men and women do not promote the same goals. Men are viewed as providers, and women are often expected to take care of the house and children. While this view does not represent every Iranian household, participant M5 shared that he felt that this perspective did reinforce current societal views and expectations that ultimately contribute to gender-based stereotypes, "In Iran, man is the community, man is big. Women is small" (Participant M5, interview, April 4, 2022).

To conclude, this theme sought to analyze the ways in which the participants' personal understandings of gender in terms of their personal identification and gender roles have been shaped by their individual experiences. This was important to include in the study as each participant has experienced gender differently, based on societal expectations in their home cultures and their own gender identities. The findings of this theme support the notion that participants' personal understanding and experiences with gender present the possibility to contribute to biases, stereotypes, misrepresentations, or simply expectations specific to individuals of a certain gender as they are unconsciously accustomed to this system.

4.2.2 Risk Taking

This theme examined participant readiness to take risks in their L2. Participant initiative and oral participation were analyzed through questions that focused on the participants actively contributing to the ESL lessons without prompting. When reflecting on their ability to speak freely during previous education experiences in comparison to their ESL classroom, the participants indicated that their Canadian education presented the opportunity to engage in conversations that would not be appropriate in previous education contexts.

As risk-taking and student comfort to participate overlapped in the findings, this theme includes the results of multiple survey questions. Question 1: *I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and ideas with the class* measured participants' willingness to share thoughts or ideas with their peers. The responses illustrated that most men participating strongly agreed that they felt comfortable contributing to classroom discussions or general classroom engagement. The responses illustrated that four of the five men participating in the study strongly agreed that they felt comfortable contributing to classroom discussions or general classroom engagement. One of the two women participants also strongly agreed, while the other was neutral. Question 6: *I feel*

nervous that I will make a mistake when speaking examined the concern of making an error in the ESL classroom. This question revealed a gender difference; the women were more concerned about making mistakes than the men.

Both women agreed that they felt apprehensive about making mistakes during oral interaction, while three of the men answered that they did not feel nervous about making mistakes. The contrast in responses is important to note, as the participants discussed freedom of speech and general comfort in their ESL classroom in their interviews. Question 7 of the survey: *If one of my classmates makes a mistake, I will correct them;* measured how comfortable participants would feel correcting a peer that had made an error. No gender differences were observable in this question. The responses illustrate that there was observable variation across comfort levels. However, the majority of participants, both men and women, were neutral. In response to Question 8: *If I do not understand the material, I will ask the teacher for more information;* both the men and women participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would ask the teacher for more information if they did not understand the material. This mutual agreement across genders indicated that all participants felt comfortable asking for clarification which, in turn, indicated that the participants were not restricting their participation in instances where they had difficulties understanding the material. Question 9: *I feel confident using my English skills outside of the classroom;* measured participant confidence when applying their English skills in their daily lives. All participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable applying their acquired English language skills outside of their lessons. Question 10: *When learning English, making mistakes makes me feel upset, sad, or discouraged,* provided valuable insight into the comfort of participants to share ideas with the class. While one of the men strongly agreed that he felt discouraged to make a mistake, all six other participants selected "disagree,"

indicating that they felt at ease to potentially make an error. Overall, the survey responses reveal that gender discrepancies across participants' responses were infrequent, and all participants were willing to take risks in the ESL classroom. The most striking gender-related differences that emerged were that the men felt more comfortable sharing their ideas. Additionally, the women felt more concerned that they would make a mistake than the men in the study.

When discussing the topic of 'second chances' in a classroom discussion, the participants revealed that immigrating to Canada had brought freedoms in education and employment that they had not previously experienced. The men from China were vocal about their previous education. Participant M1 shared,

> For me, my parents were living in the country, in the village… so they don't have this kind of knowledge about what type to choose. So for me, I chose computer science, but my score was not high enough, So the school decided for me, another major. I cannot decide for myself. I cannot choose. You have to obey the choice of the school. The power to choose is very important. This is why I brought my daughter here, so she will not suffer. I cannot let her repeat what I suffered. (Participant M1, interview, April 22, 2022)

Participant M2 reiterated this reality as he stated, "You get no second chance in China." (Participant M2, interview, April 22, 2022) In my classroom observations, I also noted that M1 and M2 repeatedly articulated that Canada has brought them opportunities they did not have in China. They also stated that they felt comfortable participating and eagerly took every chance to share their thoughts and opinions in the ESL classroom.

In short, both the survey responses and the classroom observations revealed that participants shared their thoughts, questions, and comments without being prompted to

contribute by the teacher. The findings confirm that, in general, the men felt more comfortable taking risks.

4.2.3 Previous Education

This theme explores the influence of previous education in relation to oral participation in the ESL classroom. The values and previous academic experiences of the participants were examined. The excerpts from the interviews below revealed classroom participation during previous educational experiences compared to experiences in the Canadian adult ESL class. While this theme included valuable analytic insights into the pedagogical experiences that have shaped education for the participants, previous education emerged as a theme that presented possible influences on participant behaviour in the L2 classroom. While most of the men in the study felt like their previous education experiences facilitated gender equality, the women did not encounter the same reality. The women shared that volunteering responses and equity in terms of treatment in the classroom did not occur. Participant W1 also shared that for most of her education, her academics took place in settings with only women; therefore, she felt that her experiences limited her ability to respond fully to this question. This theme also examined the ways in which the rules and routines of the classroom that the participants were previously used to influence their behaviour in their L2 classroom. This included but was not limited to how participants indicated that they would like to respond, how their previous teacher acknowledged participants of different genders, learner autonomy, differences between first and SLA, and equality in the classroom. All of these details were integrated into the study with the goal of identifying nuanced ways in which gender and culture in previous learning contexts have, firstly, SLA and, secondly, responding to the research questions that seek to identify factors that impact oral participation.

When asked about their feelings towards classroom participation in the interview, the participants shared that they felt free to share their answers or thoughts by raising their hands both during their previous education experiences and in their ESL class in Canada. I also asked the participants if it was common either in the previous or current education to share answers, volunteer ideas and thoughts or correct classmates. Participant W1 shared, "No, in Vietnam, we do not have the freedom to speak freely; we only ask questions most but rarely share our own thoughts, but I feel in Canada, the class is so free and friendly, it feels good. Yes, [In Canada] I would raise my hand; it is common. It depends on the relationship with the teacher." (Participant W1, interview, April 21, 2022) Other participants shared that sharing answers was quite common within previous education settings. Participant M1 stated, "In China, to volunteer answers is very common. Correcting depends on the relationship and characteristics of students." (Participant M1, interview, April 21, 2022) This was similar to the response of participant M2 who explained, "[In China] It's not so common to share or volunteer. Teacher is always making speech, and the teacher is the one who asks students questions. Nowadays, maybe this is different?" (Participant M2, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant M4 also articulated a similar experience as he responded, "When I was younger in China, yes to answer. I would not correct others, but maybe others would correct classmate mistakes." (Participant M4, interview, April 21, 2022)

The participants were also asked about their experiences with gender equality when learning their first language. In the Iranian education system, both elementary and high school education were divided by gender. This division also included educators. While participant W1 shared that she did not observe any education-rooted inequalities, she also acknowledged that her positive experience could have been attributed to gender-separated education institutions. In

contrast, participant M5 shared that while more women are typically present with education courses at the university level, he emphasized that inequalities remain in the employment sector, most notably governmental or municipal jobs. He shared,

Back home, it is different. I am Persian from Iran. In elementary and high school, it is separated by gender. In university, it is mixed but separated seating. I studied industrial manager; it was not mixed. When I did my MBA [Master of Business Administration], it was mixed. Now in education, I think woman is more successful. You will see more than 60% woman in classes [In Iran]; in work, it's not the same. For jobs, it is still not fair, especially for government and public jobs. *(*Participant M5, interview, April 21, 2022)

The three men from China agreed that gender equality was present within their first language education. Participant M1 simply replied, "In China, yes." (Participant M1, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant M2 supported the same experience as he shared, "Yes, I do think…Yes, I do think, so gender was a big part." (Participant M2, interview, April 21, 2022) Participant M4 also explained, "Yes, they [all students in the ESL class] had a chance to do equally well."(Participant M4, interview, April 21, 2022)

When asked about equality when acquiring their first languages, the responses from the interview were divided. Most of the men participating in the study expressed that they felt that all students had an equitable chance to learn and succeed. Two participants, M3 and W2, shared differing opinions as they acknowledged differences that stemmed from how participants of different genders were treated. Interestingly, participant M3 mentioned that while he initially thought his early education was equal, reflecting back, he did notice small differences. When I inquired for specifics, he simply shared that he felt that the girls in the class were able to develop their language skills more quickly.

When I asked if he thought that the girls were treated differently, he nodded but did not elaborate.

> When I was student, I think it was equal, but when I grow up, I realized a little difference. I think are girls are more quick to study language. When I look at my daughter in kindergarten and our neighbor who is the same age and a boy, she learns faster. (Participant M3, interview, April 21, 2022)

Participant W2 also shared that during her previous education experiences in Thailand, the teachers were gentle and gave more attention to the girls while approaching the boys in more rugged or firm ways.

> No, I didn't think it was equal in Thailand. The teacher was more gentle and paid more attention with the girls, and was more tough with the boys. (Participant W2, interview, April 21, 2022)

The interview excerpts below highlight the participants' varied experiences that examine if there are any differences in the ways that they learned their first language and L2s. The responses reveal first language experiences that have influenced their comfort in taking risks in the ESL classroom. The responses also reveal gender differences that reiterate the influence of gender in L2 learning. The men articulated the struggle of their first language feeling innate compared to SLA, whereas the women focused on gaining autonomy in their academic experience. The findings of this interview question support gender-related differences when asking participants to identify elements of their first and second languages.

Additionally, the responses to this question demonstrate the ways in which the men and women in the study experience the acquisition of English differently when they are asked to

identify language differences between English and their first language. While the men highlight the innate nature of their first language and their difficulties navigating the language rules as they acquire English, the women in the study focused on the new opportunities that acquiring English has provided. Participant M1 shares, **"Yes, absolutely there are many differences. For example, In Chinese, I just read, no thinking about grammar, and in English, I need to know the rules. I always think in my first language first"** (Participant M1, interview, April 21, 2022). Similarly, Participant M2 articulates, **"Yes, of course, there are lots of differences. First language, you learning language just by listening. Second language, everything is follow the steps. The way you memorize is completely different."** Participant M3 also touches upon the duration of time required to translate, **"Yes, so many differences. Because my first language is a mother tongue, it was innate, but when I speak English, I always translate to Mandarin and back. This is the difference."** (Participant M3, interview, April 2022) Participant M4 compares the difficulty of both languages, "Writing in French there are fewer easier words. There is more grammar in French classes, that is harder than the grammar in English Class. Speaking is equal in both. There is more writing in French." (Participant M4, interview, April 2022*)* Participant M5 highlights the differences between first and second language acquisition as he states, **"Some things are different. Secondary school in English [In Iran] topics are vague, and some subjects are integrated in. There are some subjects where you must learn English. For example, if you study accounting or sciences, you must learn English. The vocabulary is the same, some courses are translated, but the major resources are English."** (Participant M5, interview, April 2022) Both women discuss a sense of freedom that has accompanied their second language experience in Canada. Participant W1 shares, "People are comfortable to talk about a variety of topics. People are very open-minded in Canada." (Participant W1, interview, April 2022) Similarly, Participant

W2 responds, "Yes, because when I learned my first language, I was little, there is a different way to learn English. Now we learn from the class, but homework depends on us. There is more freedom but more responsibilities." (Participant W2, interview, April 2022)

Examining my classroom observation notes, participants also expressed feelings of unhappiness or regret when discussing previous education experiences. In a full class conversation that took place in a lesson, the teacher discussed freedom of choice in Canada and selected students in the ESL class to share personal anecdotes of their education before arriving in Canada. When explaining the outcome of his situation, participant M1 expressed his response in a frustrated tone with a solemn facial expression. The teacher has some background on M1's education background and selected him specifically to share his experience due to the outcome she vaguely remembered. The two Chinese men, participants M1 and M2, who are included in the transcript excerpt, revealed their dissatisfaction with their educational experiences that stemmed from a lack of freedom to choose their path of study. This notion will be expanded upon in the other themes as students are presented with new academic freedoms in their ESL class that they had not previously experienced. When the teacher asked the students if it worked out and they were happy, they replied that they were not, and this was why they did not pursue a master's or doctorate degree. Participant M1 also shared that the lack of choice in academics is very common in China; however he also mentioned that he was unsure if any changes had been made in recent years. The teacher agreed with the students' sentiment and inquired into how the two men motivated themselves to study something they were not passionate about. Again, participant M1 shared that he felt that the lack of academic autonomy was often a very big waste of talent. Participant M2 also shared that previously many regions in China did not have enough education resources that parallel those in North America. He also shared that while he believes

everyone deserves a second chance, he feels unable to describe the situation he has experienced in China. He shared that he thinks the issues are related to human rights, as he needed to do what the Chinese party indicated. He stated, "That's why there's no innovation in China. In business, in every career, there's no innovation. We just copy. That's a big problem with our education" (Participant M2, interview, April 22, 2022). This finding highlighted both the influence of gender and culture that stem from previous educational experiences. Only the men articulated this lack of freedom to choose their academic path. Specifically, only the men from China participating in the study directly expressed the implications of their inability to make their own academic choices. The results illustrate the findings that only men articulated feelings of being limited by their inability to make their own academic choices. This finding provides a possible insight into the rationale behind why the men in the study contributed so frequently to the ESL conversations. Cultural restrictions experienced by these two participants contribute to the idea that specific limitations may be experienced by learners from certain cultural backgrounds or genders. Restrictions related to cultural practices in education settings, for example, in China, present the possibility of limiting contributions in oral interactions. As this is what the participants were used to, they will feel obliged to continue repressing their thoughts or go out of their way to contribute frequently.

In summary, the results illustrated that regardless of the country of previous education, the influence of educational values and methods that the participants have previously encountered continued to shape the ways the participants navigated their gender identities in relation to others, ultimately shaping their overall participation and engagement while acquiring English. The goal of this section was to highlight the possible contrast in experiences when comparing previous academic settings that the participants encountered and the ways in which

both education equalities and inequalities have contributed to their oral participation in SLA. This theme demonstrates that the influence of culture was observed to shape acceptable behaviour in the classroom. The participants displayed that the practices they were taught in their first language classrooms accompanied them as they began their ESL class. The findings also demonstrate that the gender identity of the participants did shape their academic experiences in terms of equality within learning, the ways in which they engaged in oral tasks, and the ways in which they navigated acquiring English.

4.2.4 Expected Cultural Roles

This theme examines the identity of the participants concerning their previous cultural understandings, as well as the evolutions of their cultural perspectives that have shifted through their new experiences in Canada. Codes that contributed to the identification of this theme included: Cultural differences, cultural similarities, emerging understandings, contextual questions, adaptation, globalism, and transferable skills. In the interviews, in particular, the participants shared cultural concepts that initially surprised them. Both conversation practices and types of conversation were recurring topics that emerged when analyzing the data.

Firstly, both women, W1 and W2, remarked culture-related surprises when they arrived in Canada, reflecting on how their culture has influenced how they learn English.

Very different culture. People are very open-minded in "a large city in Canada" and talk about taboos: partnership, money, sex. People are comfortable to talk about a variety of topics. In my culture people hesitate to talk about anything; they are more reserved. I like to learn more about western culture. It's funny because I find that some cultures depends on the area. (Participant W1, interview, April 22, 2022)

In my culture, learning is really strict, so it helps me do good, be attentive and do the best

I can do; that makes me feel motivating? No, motivated! (Participant W2, interview,

April 22, 2022)

In my classroom observations, I also noticed that both women used a tone of shock and a hand gesture in which their hands were in front of their bodies with their fingers spread apart, appearing to add distance in a sort of stopping motion. Their eyes were wide, and they laughed when sharing particular examples of situations they initially thought were strange or surprising. Interestingly, as the women talked about positive differences they encountered, they both rested their hands on their laps and described these instances with a smile at a comfortable pace.

All of the other approached the question from a sense of linguistic difference, with the exception to participant M5, who shared that his mother had instilled not only an appreciation of his culture but of all cultures. Additionally, he articulated the value of learning other languages and repeatedly spoke of the value of English. M5 also emphasized the value of appreciating other cultures through examples of activities that he experienced in the Adult ESL class. He shared,

The first person I learned English from… My mother an immigrant. She said, "You should learn English; English is the future." Fifty years ago, she told me. She is very open-minded, she influenced my attitude. Learning about culture in the class is very important. We must adapt and introduce your culture to others; this is the backbone. Tradition can hold you back. The human connection is more important than political or geographic.

Appreciate the good parts of other cultures. In our ESL class, we share holidays and take time to share cultural celebrations. (Participant M5, interview, April 21, 2022)

My observations also included that participant M5 was smiling, nodding, and using hand

gestures to share his experiences when discussing culture. He frequently paused to collect his thoughts before continuing his response to the question.

Participants M1 and M2 addressed linguistic differences; participant M2 shared that the previous academic culture he had experienced in China had prepared him to constantly reflect on learning strategies in terms of evaluation.

Yes, like I just said you always follow the teacher's opinion-writing, reading, little listening. I used to be a teacher; they just teach reading and writing because it's good for tests. Lack of listening and speaking, focus on grammar. We always think for the test. (Participant M2, interview, April 21, 2022)

Participant M1 addressed a vocabulary difference he encountered that was related to a contrast in work culture, as the concept of a shift was uncommon in most jobs that he had previously seen.

I think my culture influences very much the learning of English.

One day I called TD insurance for my friend. I represented my friend.

I asked the worker, "when do you get off of work?" and the person told me their shift would be done at 7pm. In China, all companies finish work at 5 pm; I did not know what a work "shift" was. (Participant M1, interview, April 21, 2022)

M1 and M2 also discussed contrasting cultural expectations; however my field notes include that both men spoke about cultural contrast and the value of accepting new cultures using a distanced perspective. While M1 discussed the cultural values possessed by people in China, participant M2 discussed the importance of appreciating new cultures as a form of connection. Interestingly, both men never specifically connected themselves to cultural experiences. While they remarked on their observations, their tone of voice was calm, and their speed was quick. Their observations were objective, including general descriptions of what they had observed.

The class observations also included personal anecdotes that discussed the cultural values possessed by different cultural groups. During a discussion regarding money, the teacher presented the class with a question: *Would you lend a friend 10,000$?* In his response explaining that he would lend a friend the money, participant M1 justified his answer by explaining that it was linked to Chinese culture and the culturally related intention to take care of others. He shared that "It's very common in China for people to do things out of their ability." The teacher replied, "Yeah? Out of the goodness of their heart?" and M1 clarified, "I mean, if someone doesn't have enough ability, they still want to do a big job." (Participant M1, personal observation April 21, 2022) This is one instance in which a participant justified their response during an oral interaction, integrating their personal cultural values and beliefs. To summarize the final theme, there are multiple ways in which cultural factors can influence oral participation in the ESL classroom. The participants featured in this study have shed light on numerous cultural differences they have encountered when comparing their home cultures to new cultural experiences in Canada. Surprising or uncomfortable topics of discussion, previously strict learning environments, linguistic differences and academic values are all possible justifications that result in varied contributions from participants.

In summary, this chapter has presented the results from the qualitative and quantitative data collected, presenting the perspectives of the seven participants regarding the influence of gender and culture in the adult ESL classroom. The five themes that emerged from the data reveal the key findings of the present study. The following chapter will discuss how the findings from the study responded to the two research questions that guided this thesis.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study intended to examine the influence of gender and culture in the ESL classroom and the possible impacts on oral participation. Chapter 3 presented how the data was collected and introduced emerging themes. Chapter 4 presented the results according to the themes. The present chapter will discuss and interpret the data in response to the two research questions. The findings will also be discussed through the framework of current literature. The first research question sought to examine the influence of gender in the adult ESL classroom during oral participation tasks. The second research question examined the influence of participants' cultural backgrounds on oral participation. I discuss and interpret the findings for each section and consider the implications of the results. While some methods integrated into the lessons supported equity in the classroom, there were also strategies that may result in more balanced interactions if they were revised. In the final chapter that follows, I examine the study's limitations and the recommended future directions for ESL adult education research. Unless otherwise specified, all discussions will focus solely on the men and women that participated in the study.

My interview and survey questions were designed to focus on willingness to speak and the participants' individual experiences, specifically examining gender and culture. I identified themes that emerged based on my quantitative and qualitative data and focused specifically on the influences of gender and culture on SLA through the framework of oral participation. This was the focus of my thesis as I had noticed discrepancies in participation during my time as a student teacher in an adult ESL classroom and wondered if they were due to gender. The number of men included in the study must be considered when examining the results, as the findings

represent the participants that were men more frequently. I took this into account when discussing the findings and the implications of the results.

I entered the study hoping to gain rich insights into factors related to gender and culture that contribute to oral participation in the ESL classroom. However, I did not anticipate the comprehension difficulties that accompanied the discussion on gender. This may be attributed to the participants' language level, as they were intermediate learners. Additionally, the vocabulary used to discuss gender and the ability to discuss the social implications of various genders was difficult for some of the participants. This can be explained through the justification that the vocabulary used to navigate a discussion on gender required vocabulary words that some of the participants had never encountered, either in English or at all. Meaningful discussions occurred, but all seven participants were quite unfamiliar with the gender spectrum and terms that strayed from the binaries of "men" and "women." While all the participants understood the explanation, I provided in terms of responding to the research questions; they did not fully comprehend broad categories of gender. For this reason, while I could delve into inequalities that emerged when analyzing the perspectives of the men and women participants, I could not delve into a deeper discussion regarding the academic realities of non-binary students during this research study.

5.2 Discussion Examining Research Question 1

The overarching research question of the study examined the extent to which the influence of gender predicted oral participation in ESL classrooms, while the second question also investigated the most common reasons why individuals in the study might participate or withhold their participation. The primary research question required insight into participants' experiences, specifically their previous education and present education in the ESL classroom. Through both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study explored if participants felt that

gender influenced the ESL classroom. Ultimately, the results suggest that gender did contribute to learning differences in the classroom. The various facets that contributed to these differences are mentioned below.

The study approached gender as a personal identification that is socially constructed rather than biological (Van Herk, 2018). The participants were unfamiliar with this idea and struggled to understand that I was asking them their preferred pronouns, not their biological sex. Additionally, it was important to acknowledge the ways in which gender interacted with social identity, social status and ethnicity (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). In order to examine the interactions of the participants, it was necessary to examine social and cultural factors that had contributed to their perspectives. Through the five themes, Gender in the ESL classroom, Stereotypes and Interactions, Risk Taking, Influence of Previous Education, and Expected Cultural Roles, key factors that contributed to each participant's learner identity were examined. Pavlenko and Piller (2008) emphasized the need for research examining gender ideologies to be conducted with a focus on a specific community. I decided to research adult learners who had recently immigrated to Canada. I selected this participant group as both communities of students, adult and immigrant learners seeking to learn English, were lacking from current literature. Responding to this research question, it was also essential to analyze social power in the L2 learning space and observe how gender and power were connected. Gender plays an integral role in one's social power (Hruska, 2004, Julé, 2005). Examining how power was demonstrated in the classroom was, therefore, a key component used to identify imbalanced dynamics in a conversation.

5.2.1 Results Implications.

The quantitative and qualitative results respond to research question 1, parts a and b, as the significance of gender in oral participation was reiterated in the responses of the participants. The theme Risk Taking, discussed in the results chapter, is a recurring factor that will be used to discuss the results. Based on the responses, both the men and women agreed that they were more comfortable speaking with certain participants more than others. Both men and women also shared that they do feel more comfortable conversing with classmates of their own gender. This finding suggests that when the participants are grouped with students in the class that they feel most comfortable with, they are more likely to contribute to conversations. This finding also highlights the importance of groupings in ESL classes. The responses also reveal that the women felt more nervous about making a mistake than the men. Additionally, the results suggest that the men participating in the study felt more confident about taking risks during the acquisition of their L2. Unfortunately, a potential repercussion of this finding is that women may hold back their responses due to the fear of making an error in front of the class. This may also reveal a possible internal or external pressure that was only experienced by the women, as discrepancies are observable when comparing the willingness to take risks from the men to the women participating in the study. Interestingly, the results revealed that the women felt more confident than the men in applying their English skills outside of the classroom. This may suggest that the women feel more comfortable communicating in English in a setting in which they are not being evaluated. Another possible implication for this finding is that women feel more comfortable practicing their English skills when they are immersed in authentic contexts.

Further analyzing the ways in which the classroom observations and the interview data complemented each other, the results were consistent across collection instruments. The students

who shared that they did not feel comfortable participating during their interviews were also observed to withhold their participation during the class observations, and vice versa. Considering topics of conversation, the students shared that they participated more often when the topics adhered to their interests mentioned in the interviews. This was confirmed as the observations also revealed that students were more likely to contribute to specific topics.

5.2.2 Power Dynamics

Examining the theme, Gender in the ESL Classroom, power dynamics in SLA contexts can create discrepancies in access to academic resources, which is particularly detrimental to female learners (Shi, 2006). The results did reveal a power imbalance that placed the women in the study at a disadvantage. One way that power dynamics were demonstrated in the present study was through the rate and frequency of participation. Pavlenko and Piller (2008) mentioned that in mixed-gender conversations, men are more likely to assert forms of power either through interruptions or unsolicited responses. While the reasoning behind the lack of women participants in the present study cannot be examined without the insight of the participants who chose not to participate, Mahony's (1985) notion of linguistic space and the findings that male learners take up more space in the classroom were supported by the results of the present study. To provide an example of this discrepancy, the men contributed six times in a conversation about breakfast food, while the women participants contributed twice. Considering the ratio of men to women participating in the study, the frequency that was noted does not appear to be overtly problematic. However, when finances and the discussion of franchises took place, the men contributed twenty-eight times, while the female participants only contributed twice. The results, therefore, suggest that the topic of discussion did, at times, contribute to the dominance of men when examining participant contributions. Interestingly, the men who contributed most

frequently articulated that they felt gender did not in any way shape their acquisition experience during their time learning English. Previous studies have found that men take more opportunities to talk and often dominate mixed-gender conversations (Shehadeh, 1999). The men in the study interrupted, whereas the women did not. On three occasions, the teacher was interrupted by one of the men in the study to share their opinion or additional details regarding the topic of discussion. While the women participants either raised their hands or were prompted by their teacher to share a response, the men, most frequently M1 and M2, called out in order to share their opinion. The study's results suggest that women participants may sometimes feel silenced and could profit from same-gender discussions (Shehadeh, 1999). While W2 shared that she was more comfortable speaking with women classmates, she emphasized that the topic of discussion also greatly contributed to her preference. She shared that there were certain topics she did not feel she could contribute to, for example, politics. In a previous study, Julé (2005) emphasized the need to eliminate any education practices that would limit the contributions of women. While finances and the discussion of money are practical discussion topics that are valuable to all participants, the results suggest that strategies to encourage participation among women would be a valuable addition to the ESL classroom.

5.2.3 Impact of Past Education

Examining the theme, *Influence of Previous Education,* the present study explored whether the previous academic experiences of the participants contributed to their patterns of oral participation in the adult ESL classroom. The results suggest that the previous education of the participants played a significant role in how they interacted in classroom conversations during their time acquiring English. To expand, the results indicate that the values and practices the participants possessed before their ESL course continued to influence their decisions in the

ESL classroom. The gender identities, as well as participants' perceptions of gender, were also key contributing factors that affected SLA. The participants from Iran, W1 and M5, both touched upon the adjustment of transitioning from classrooms that only included participants of their same gender to co-ed learning spaces. For these participants, the experience of moving to a new country and enrolling in a language classroom welcoming all genders was initially slightly shocking. This finding suggests that the participants withheld oral participation during the adjustment period they experienced when they began their Canadian ESL course.

SLA allows for the possibility for one's understanding of gender to shift over time due to new perspectives; however, these changes may initially feel overwhelming for participants (Hruska, 2004). While participant M5 attended primary and secondary education settings that were "all boys" institutions, but his university classes included both male and female classmates. This was different from the experience of participant W1, who had not previously experienced classes with classmates that were men. She shared that initially, she felt shy to share her thoughts in a mixed-gender classroom, but with time, she began to feel more comfortable. The most prominent difference she shared was the discussion of topics that would be considered off-limits or taboo in conversations in Iran, including partnership, sex, and personal finances. While initially she felt reserved during discussions of the previously mentioned natures, participant W1 also described the feeling of freedom after a few months of adjustment in the ESL classroom. Other participants, for example, W2, shared that her previous teachers' expectations towards classroom participation varied from her Canadian ESL classroom, noting that during her education in Thailand, where students would not raise their hands to contribute to classroom discussions. She exclaimed, "In Canada, I feel free!" (W1, interview, April 4, 2022) Additionally, it was interesting to note that the women were more descriptive, in comparison to

the men, about their feelings of culture shock when comparing their previous education experiences to those of their Canadian ESL classroom. Specifically, both women described a feeling of shock, a transition period, and a period of adaptation.

Hruska (2004) states second language acquisition facilitates the possibility for ideas and understandings of gender and gender norms to evolve as students encounter new ideas and perspectives. This can be illustrated through the gained understanding of both women participants, W1 and W2. It can also be observed through participant M5 who gained insight into gender norms in North America that contrasted with previous understandings he held in Iran. The new perspectives encountered by the participants truly did seem to represent a shift in the understanding of gender.

5.3 Gender in the ESL Classroom

5.3.1 Gender Preferences Among Participants

Gender preferences for group work, as well as the preferred gender of teachers, were observed as a possible influence on oral participation. Overall, the results suggest that the participants preferred group discussions that included only students of the same gender. The participants explained that working with peers of the same gender felt more comfortable when contributing to conversations, as they could speak freely without thinking about taboo subject matter or the worry that they would offend their classmates. The results suggest that the men possessed a greater desire to be paired with other men than the women's preferences. One of the participants, M3, justified his preference to work with other participants who were men because he felt incompetent and intimidated when paired with women classmates. Additionally, both women in the study did share that they preferred working with other women. Participant W1 justified this choice, explaining that she was used to working with only other women due to her

previous education. Participant W2 shared that while she generally felt more comfortable working with other women, the conversation topic also contributed to her choice.

The participants were also asked if they preferred a teacher of a certain gender. While some participants explained that they had only had learning experiences with teachers of the same gender, others explained their rationale based on personal experiences. Both men and women participants had only had women teachers in the past and indicated that while they were open to teachers of any gender, they were used to women. Participant M1 shared that his preference was based on his concern that he might offend a woman teacher with an inappropriate topic or question. When I inquired about the topics he was referring to, he refrained from providing an example. M1 also shared that he would be interested in having a man as his ESL teacher in the future to imitate a model English speaker that was a man. Participant M4 presented a contrasting opinion, as he stated, "[If] my teacher is a woman, her English is very clear. If I have a man teacher, their voice is a little bit too deep and unclear. Their voice is not too easy to listen to, it's my feeling." (Participant M4, interview, April 22, 2022) The results, therefore, acknowledged a variety of preferences rooted in previous academic experiences, comfort in discussing certain topics, and simply the individual preferences of the study participants.

5.3.2. Effect of Topic of Conversation

Julé (2004) expands upon topic preferences based on gender, stating that men tend to prefer impersonal topics rooted in facts or technical knowledge. The goal of these topics strays from the potential to create a personal connection with those taking part in the conversation. Rather, the goal is simply to exchange information based on the requirements of the conversation. Topics can include but are not limited to sports or cars. When reflecting on the impact of conversation topics, both men and women stated that they tended to participate in

conversations more frequently when a topic they enjoyed was discussed. This suggests that to

engage both the men and the women participants in a group discussion, the topic would have to

appeal to everyone. During the individual interviews, all the participants revealed the specific

topics that prompted them to share their thoughts or withhold their answers. The women shared

that they preferred personal topics such as travel and relationships, whereas the men enjoyed

topics such as politics and finances. The only topic that was mutually agreed upon across genders

and acted as an exception to the non-personal topic preferences of the men was family. From the

research, the theme, Gender in the ESL Classroom can be found at the root of many of the

findings. While the influence of gender is not always overt, an underlying presence can be

noted.

Overall, participant responses indicated that the topics of discussion greatly contributed

to their amount of oral participation in the adult ESL classroom. While topic preferences

reiterated patterns identified in previous research, there was also a general agreement that topics

that the participants could apply in their daily lives outside the class were always appreciated

(Shehadeh, 1999). In summary, conversation topics are important factors contributing to the

frequency of participation and learner motivation when participating in speaking tasks.

5.3.3 Gender Stereotypes

Discussing the theme, *Stereotypes and Interactions,* the results support previous research

that found that men contribute more and assert dominance within the process (Shehadeh, 1999).

The present study also observed stereotypes that emerged in previous research. Examples of

gender stereotypes were evident throughout the results. In the classroom observations, in

particular, the inclusion of gender stereotypes could be observed. When asked in the interview if

gender stereotypes were ever present in the ESL classroom, participant M1 agreed and shared

that when discussing politics, he felt that men paid more attention than women. When asked why he viewed politics as a topic that the men dominated, he explained that it could be linked to interest or the frequency in which the men participate. The frequency of participation was the root of the conversation imbalances that occurred in the ESL classroom. The men in the study spoke often, and they also spoke for the majority of all conversations that I observed. While the present study did not examine the length of time spoken, it is clear from my detailed field notes regarding the frequency that the men said much more than the women. This finding suggests that it is possible that the men received more opportunities to improve their oral proficiency in the ESL classroom, as they received more chances to speak.

Discussing Stereotypes and Behaviors through another finding, participant M5 shared that he was unsure if gender stereotypes were present. Still, he felt that his female classmates were more emotional than his male peers. This particular excerpt presents the possibility that a lack of awareness regarding stereotypes unknowingly reinforces gendered behaviour. Furthermore, the findings related to gender stereotypes demonstrate the need for teachers to further examine statements that are linked to ideas about a certain gender. In order to further discuss behaviour explained through gender, two utterances said by men must be considered: "It's because he's a boy" and "Boys don't know what they want ". While these statements were subtle, they were present. This finding suggests that the men in the study possess certain gendered behaviours and practices. The results also indicate that to unpack behaviours that have been associated with gender, the practice of critical thinking and the examination of innate biases could be two possible strategies that may be useful to teachers.

In summary of the discussion of the first question, as mentioned by Gordon (2004), there is an imminent need for future studies to examine local forms of gender to acquire insight into

how SLA influences one's gender identity. The results demonstrate that while the influence of gender in ESL education is subtle, it is also deeply ingrained in various factors, including power dynamics, the impact of past education, and multiple facets of gender in the L2 classroom.

5.4 Discussion Responding to Research Question 2

The second research question examines the influence of culture on oral participation in adult ESL classrooms. The findings that emerged from data analysis revealed a prominent influence of participants' cultural backgrounds in terms of student preferences for group work and the gender of their teacher, cultural attitudes, and reasoning through culture. Participants' cultural backgrounds also seemed to contribute to the frequency of their participation, as the seven individuals were noted to be accustomed to various cultural protocols. The cultural protocols followed by the participants were used to indicate respect for their teachers in previous experiences. However, in some cases, these practices also restricted oral participation in the Canadian ESL classroom. To provide an example, while waiting to be called on to share an idea was a marker of politeness in Thailand, this gesture also limited participant W2 as she began her ESL classes. Additionally, participants were noted to rationalize their explanations and responses through their cultural identities, which developed over time. This finding suggests that the students would refer back to values they acquired during their first language acquisition to navigate the ESL context. As time progressed, students began to integrate values from their previous experiences, with new understandings gained throughout their SLA experience.

5.4.1 The Influence of Culture in the ESL Classroom

In the present study, I also actively examined cultural factors that would either support or impede L2 interactions (Shi, 2006). It is important to note that the adult learners entered the

language classroom motivated to learn and driven to succeed in the class to progress within their education, work, or daily interactions in Canada. Participants' cultural backgrounds seem to have an influence on patterns of oral interaction in the L2 classroom. The results suggested that the participants felt a greater sense of freedom to contribute to conversations in Canada, more than in their previous academic contexts. Participants M5 and W1 highlighted their primary, secondary, and university experiences in Iran. They explained that their interactions could be rooted in their previous education experiences in which the participants were separated by gender. The cultural implications of gender-separated education seemed to contribute to shaping the cultural identities of these participants. The present study also considered cultural differences by examining the first cultures of the participants, compared to cultural differences the participants had encountered in Canada. During their interviews, the participants shared that freedom of choice and the ability to complete assignments autonomously in academics was an unfamiliar concept. Participants M1 and M2, from China, shared that choosing an academic program was not an option when they entered university. Programs in China were selected based on the academic standing of each student. When participants did not have the required grades to join their desired program, the university would then choose on behalf of the student, placing them in a program that met their academic standing. The participants articulated that for this reason, they appreciated their ESL education; it was the first time they could choose a program they wanted to take and make various decisions throughout their acquisition experience. As a result, all seven individuals shared that they felt more likely to participate in conversations. Participant W2 also mentioned the cultural differences she encountered when entering her Canadian ESL class. Regarding volunteering ideas, participant W2 shared that during her education in Thailand, it was an uncommon practice to raise one's hand to volunteer an answer. Instead, teachers would

call upon students they would like to respond. When the participants were asked to reflect on their feelings when they first entered the adult ESL classroom, they discussed a sense of restriction that they had to remind themselves were no longer present actively. The participants mentioned multiple times in the interview and classroom observations that the ESL classroom prompted them to take accountability for their education in ways they had never experienced. Wolfgang and Dowling (1981) note that when comparing adult learners to university learners, adult learners possess academic goals that reflect their life goals. In this case, the students were required to learn English for employment reasons, academic advancement, or to improve the quality of their interactions; their goals were specific (Huang et al., 2011). As a result, the participants invested effort into the course and eagerly sought to improve their language skills.

Ultimately, there was a mutual agreement among the participants that the Canadian ESL classroom was a comfortable environment for oral participation. The results suggest that the most common reason for participants to withhold engagement in classroom discussions was the transition period they experienced when they first entered the ESL classroom. Current ESL teachers can pay close attention to the impact of acquiring a new language on their participants' self-perception and identity. Additionally, Tong (2002) suggests incorporating tasks that contribute to the development of participants' cross-cultural identities would also support learners as they find aspects of their first and new culture that they value.

5.4.2 Cultural Attitudes Towards Acquiring English

The results reveal that participants from the study seemed to possess a positive attitude toward learning English. This can be attributed to the perceived advantages in education and employment that accompany the ability to speak English and a positive outlook on the Canadian education system that was articulated to the participants by their parents and teachers before they

immigrated to Canada. In many social spheres, the ability to speak English is viewed as advantageous and a tool of empowerment (McMahill, 2001). Participant M1 discussed in his interview that learning English presented opportunities he would not otherwise possess, in terms of employment growth and advantages for his family, especially for his young children, who will learn English at school. Participants M1 and M4 also discussed the freedom of choice that accompanied education in Canada in terms of the ability to select programs and less rigid expectations. Moving to Canada presented an opportunity to make academic decisions freely. While the participants had not previously been given the freedom to take control of their academics during their education in China, they are doing so now for themselves and their families. Furthermore, to discuss the observed contrast between restriction and freedom, participants M2 and W2 shared that during their previous education in Asia, they both felt a sense of pressure to succeed that was placed upon the participants from both the teachers and their school. In Canada, the participants shared that while teachers presented clear expectations, it was up to them to assume responsibility and invest effort into the lessons to succeed. M2 and W2 also mentioned a new sense of initiative within their learning that was experienced when completing homework or assignments. The repercussion for failing to meet course requirements would be a failing grade and language regression. This finding suggests that the influence of culture in the Canadian ESL classroom prompted students, regardless of their gender, to take responsibility for their acquisition experience.

The participants also displayed cultural acceptance and appreciation for their peers' cultures, which seemed to contribute to a supportive environment that fostered conversation. In terms of positive attitudes inspired by the viewpoints of others, participant M5 touched upon his perspective on acquiring English that could be attributed to his mother. Participant M5's mother

instilled an appreciation for English, and the accompanying opportunities speaking English could bring. Participant M5 also shared his thoughts on being open to other participants' cultures and integrating others' perspectives into classroom discussions whenever possible. He articulated that tradition may hold the participants back, and participants should be open-minded to adapt while also introducing their culture to others.

5.4.3 Reasoning Through Culture

Values that stemmed from cultural influences were deeply embedded into how students navigated their interactions in the ESL classroom. The results suggest that on multiple occasions, the participants were noted to reason through culture. This included justifying choices in conversations based on their cultural values and beliefs. During a teacher-led discussion that asked participants the question: *Would you lend your friend 10,000$?* Participant M1 explained that people in China seek to give beyond their means and that their culture reinforces being generous and giving to family and friends, even when it is challenging to do so. The primary culture of M1 instilled values that he continued to use to justify his choices in the ESL classroom; they were part of his ethics and character. While participants often experience shifts in their cultural identities that stem from experiences and observations from a new culture, their identities are not stark separations of cultural values but rather an amalgamation of old and new values they have taken. To respond to the call to action prompting L2 education to examine how classroom learning can contribute to cross-cultural transitions, I sought to consider the challenges faced by the participants. The participants were temporarily situated in a position where they were negotiating a space between their previous and new understandings. The results also emphasized the value of integrating "Cross-cultural identity" into teaching practices. Cross-cultural identity is the process in which participants continue to implement

values from their first cultures while "introducing new values and behaviours" that were acquired during their experience developing ESL (Tong, 2002; 1996, p.19). The participants repeatedly mentioned this aspect of feeling situated in a transition period. As the participants began to develop new values, they also implemented core beliefs that evolved throughout their primary culture. When values, languages and behaviours were combined using both their previous culture and the culture of the language they were acquiring, their cross-cultural identity began to develop. This sense of self prompted learners to develop a new perspective that ultimately eased adjustments and fostered learner confidence (Tong, 2002). This finding was supported by the individual growth and developed confidence mentioned by both women in the study. Both participants, W1 and W2, shared that while they initially experienced culture shock, integrating their previous values and new perspectives into the ESL classroom supported the development of a new identity that combines the new and the old.

The most significant finding in relation to the second research question is that while there is not one specific method to encourage oral participation in the ESL classroom, there are multiple factors within the scope of gender and culture that greatly influence the motivation and willingness of the participants within the present study to participate orally in class. The findings suggest that there is not one sole activity that encourages or deters from oral participation in the ESL classroom. Still, multiple effective and ineffective methods are integrated into the lessons that support or limit verbal participation. The study's results present valuable information that can be applied to adult ESL classrooms to facilitate conversations and avoid imbalances. The final chapter will discuss the limitations of the present study, make recommendations, and present future research directions when examining gender in L2 classrooms at the adult level.

The present study presents the possibility of a significant relationship between oral participation and the influence of gender and culture. While the group of participants was relatively small, I collected valuable insight regarding the suggested impact of gender and culture through the seven participants. The results identify facets of gender and culture that can be examined in ESL adult classrooms. Findings can be applied to foster oral participation and avoid strategies supporting men's dominance in conversation. The conclusions of the present study imply that without addressing these two factors in the ESL classroom, it will be difficult to create opportunities during conversations that are balanced and equitable. It is also possible that without directly examining gender and culture, subtle inequities may be present in lessons but go unnoticed by teachers. This could present a cycle that unknowingly favours men and places women at a disadvantage in SLA and, therefore, must be carefully examined.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study integrates a mixed-methods design using a quantitative Likert scale survey, qualitative classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews to investigate the influence of gender and culture on oral participation in the adult ESL classroom. As presented in the previous two chapters, results and discussion, this study reveals the nuanced ways in which gender and culture influenced oral participation. The final chapter of the thesis will discuss the summary and conclusions, recommendations for teachers, research limitations, contributions that emerged from this study, and suggested directions for future research.

6.1 Summary and Conclusions

This study supports that gender and culture influence oral participation in the ESL classroom. The findings that emerged from the study provide valuable insight into local contexts that examine the influence of gender and culture within adult education (Julé 2004). The present study also examines gender in the field of ESL, which aids in filling a gap in the literature that researchers must continue to explore (Gordon, 2004). Five themes emerged from the data that identified specific aspects of gender and culture that appeared most frequently and influenced patterns of oral participation and interaction: Gender in the ESL classroom, Stereotypes and Interactions, Risk Taking, Influence of Previous Education, and Expected Cultural Roles. First, examining the influence of gender, the results indicate that male and female participants did not participate to the same degree, as the men in the study tended to contribute more frequently to classroom discussions. This finding found similarities to previous studies that revealed that mixed talk in different social contexts creates asymmetrical patterns (Coates, 2016). The present study demonstrates that oral participation examining men and women in adult ESL education remains imbalanced.

Moreover, gender and culture influenced oral participation in the study. This finding acts as a steppingstone as researchers can refer to the patterns in the present study that have contributed to verbal interactions and examine their presence in future research contexts. The five men were also found to take more risks, interrupt more often, and contribute by calling out rather than raising their hands. This finding supports Mahony's (1985) concept of taking up more "linguistic space," as the males displayed dominance and power in conversations (Shehadeh, 1999). The findings also suggest that the topic of discussion may be a significant factor contributing to the frequency of oral participation. It was found that specific topics prompted more participation in classroom conversation than others. Both men and women participating in the study shared that they were more likely to contribute to discussions that included topics they deemed interesting. Overall, one topic that both genders agreed they enjoyed was family. The students also shared that they were willing to participate in conversations that focused on practical topics they could apply in their daily lives. Additionally, the findings reveal that the participants preferred certain conditions related to their educational experiences, such as the gender of their teacher and the gender of their peers when working in small groups. This finding provides valuable awareness regarding the value of groupings in the L2 classroom. The participants agreed that they preferred working with students of their gender. This preference was justified by the fear of offending a participant of the opposite gender with a taboo topic or an offensive question.

Imbalanced power dynamics that were observed during the study must also be addressed. While it is difficult to generalize the findings due to the ratio of men and women who participated in the study, men were found to respond more frequently during oral participation tasks. As Pavlenko and Piller (2008) articulate, men often assert power through interruptions and

unsolicited conversation responses. Reflecting on the present study's findings, the men were noted to interrupt the teacher on three occasions. At the same time, the women were not found to interrupt any of the conversations I observed. While the study sought to unpack the complexities that stem from gender-related inequalities, the participants struggled to analyze the topic of gender critically. While they could understand and navigate conversations related to binary understandings of "men" and "women," their ability to discuss gender as a social construction or details regarding the gender spectrum was not yet developed. This finding reminds educators to integrate gender literacy into their lessons, using strategies that prompt critical thinking and conversations that reflect up-to-date perspectives.

When examining culture, I found that the primary culture of the participants significantly influenced their behaviour and beliefs when acquiring ESL. The seven individuals that participated in the study referred to their cultural roots to rationalize their decisions and explain their preferences, for example, when explaining their perspectives or opinion. Most participants entered the classroom understanding that English presented new opportunities to benefit them in Canada's employment and education sectors (McMahill, 2001). The students were eager to learn and excited to be in class acquiring information that would support their goals and interactions in English. This finding supports previous studies that explore L2 and motivation. When students have a positive L2 experience, they are motivated and, in turn, more likely to participate (Guerrero, 2015). Alongside examining primary and secondary cultures, the participants noted differences in pedagogical cultures and educational philosophies that resulted in goals and values for learners that contrasted previous expectations. The participants shared that within their primary culture, they were previously taught to succeed in summative evaluation tasks and, as a result, felt pressure from their teachers to perform well at all times. In their current ESL class,

participants noted that they felt responsible for their academic decisions, and learner autonomy was an empowering aspect of their SLA that was integrated into their classroom. The participants also shared that they felt more inclined to participate in their ESL classroom, as they felt a new sense of freedom and less pressure to make mistakes. This finding reveals that the learners felt at ease to contribute in their ESL classroom, and feelings of pressure to succeed were not impeding their participation.

The findings reveal that the participants' cultural identities contributed to their experiences acquiring English, presenting a unique set of challenges or advantages for each learner. Both the men and the women participating in the study reiterated that the autonomy they were given in the Canadian ESL classroom gave them a sense of freedom and responsibility in their academics, which in turn motivated them to participate in oral tasks. The participants also demonstrated reasoning through culture. To expand, the seven individuals made choices linked to values that were embedded within their primary culture. It is, therefore, integral to consider cultural values as a meaningful influence when examining factors that influence oral participation.

The previous conditions encountered by the women prompted initial challenges that required adjustment and practice. Participant W1 encountered the obstacle of shifting from an education that was divided by gender, to a co-education learning space. Participant W2 encountered the challenge of shifting from classroom expectations focused on teacher centered learning with limited opportunities to contribute in lessons, to a Canadian ESL classroom that encouraged oral participation and active contribution. The influence of the participants' previous education was also found to contribute to academic values and general willingness to participate in verbal tasks.

6.2 Recommendations for Teachers

The emergent themes are helpful for ESL teachers that are seeking to examine areas within their teaching practices that unknowingly reinforce inequalities that are taking place in their classroom conversations. The five themes are also beneficial, as they present possible areas that can be explored in greater depth in ESL pedagogy. The results raise the possibility of further examining the impact of conversation topics while presenting two influences that fostered conversations that engaged both male and female participants. ESL teachers can implement the study's findings to create equitable and balanced conversations that thoroughly consider the influences of gender and culture. Assessing the impact of culture, I found that the primary culture of the participants significantly influenced their behaviour and beliefs when acquiring ESL. The seven individuals that participated in the study referred to their cultural roots to rationalize their decisions and explain their preferences, for example, when explaining their perspectives or opinion. This finding is valuable to ESL educators, considering the link between culture and student comfort ultimately supports participation. A transition in attitudes may occur when acquiring an L2. It would be interesting to track the impact of shifting participants' viewpoints and how oral participation is affected. ESL teachers can implement the study's findings to create equitable and balanced conversations that thoroughly consider the influences of gender and culture and the possible power inequalities they may bring.

6.3 Challenges and Limitations

Below, I have highlighted the main aspects of the study that presented challenges or limitations. While I was deeply thankful for the number of participants I received in the study as I recruited participants during a pandemic, the number of participants was nonetheless a limitation. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study with either multiple ESL classes or a

classroom with more consenting participants to apply the results more broadly. This would allow me to make more significant generalizations while also examining if similar patterns would emerge when examining a larger group of participants. Furthermore, a more even balance of men and women would have been better for comparison. While I was very appreciative of including two female participants in the study, I was hoping to have more females participate to gain additional perspectives. The imbalanced ratio of men to women that participated in the study made the results more difficult to generalize. In future studies, I hope to find an ESL classroom with greater gender diversity and representation, as the binary representation of men and women was a limitation when examining gender. A classroom that included transgender and nonbinary students would have allowed me to address gender in ways that extended beyond the scope of the discussion that took place in the study. A final consideration to note is that the viewpoints of the seven participants in the study may not represent the entire class. The perspectives of the gender groups included in the study may not represent the gender groups present in the classroom.

Cynthia Nelson (2009) highlights language teaching is continuously changing to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities and communities. As a general note, it is important also to acknowledge the more recently updated term, Two-Sprit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual, and others, more often abbreviated as 2SLGBTQQIA+ (Brown & Knowles, 2022). Nelson shares, "In recent years, the worldwide proliferation of queer discourses is clearly beginning to infuse the fields of second and foreign-language education, with a growing number of educators working to update and transform monosexual pedagogies and research agendas" (p.26). To create an inclusive learning environment, Nelson also suggests selecting resources that include the context or perspectives representing a diverse range of gender and sexual identities, "in ways that students are likely to

consider authoritative and legitimate" (p.216). In order for members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community to feel included within educational practices, they must first be made visible.

6.4 Future Research

I theorize that the implications of considering gender and culture in future research will result in oral participation that fosters student identity development in these two spheres while supporting the development of new viewpoints. The study's findings reinforce the recommendations of other researchers conducting gender-focused studies. Future research must continue exploring local contexts and the specific needs of learners in those ESL learning spaces (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Research must continue exploring ESL contexts that include adults and learners who have recently immigrated and seek to learn English to support this study's goal to expand research focused on gender in L2 education. Future research must also continue to specifically examine imbalances related to gender and culture that cause inequalities within conversation, as observed in the present study.

In terms of culture, in future studies, it would be beneficial to examine the application of cross-cultural strategies and their impact on student willingness to participate in oral tasks (Tong, 2002; Shi, 2006). Specifically, identifying how students invest their values and understandings of their primary culture when navigating the challenges of acquiring a new language is currently lacking in current literature but would present valuable insight for ESL teachers. It would also be beneficial for future research to explore the experiences of students from different cultures learning ESL on a larger scale. More participants with a wider variety of cultural backgrounds would further advance our understanding of the influence of culture on oral participation in ESL settings.

Examining the long-term implications of gender and culture in the ESL classroom would provide valuable insight into the shifting identities of the participants. However, future research is needed to gain further insight into adult learners situated at various positions on the gender spectrum and those with diverse cultural contexts. While future researchers must pay additional attention to the local contexts of their participants, the consequences of these contexts must also be further analyzed (Hruska, 2004). While many studies examine children's second language acquisition experiences, the adult sphere of ESL requires more attention. Future research must continue to investigate the sphere of ESL education concerning oral participation. Specifically, there is a need to continue research examining the social aspects of ESL, focusing on verbal participation and the dynamics in classroom conversations (Julé, 2005).

The findings reveal that the gender and cultural identities of the participants did contribute to their oral participation in the ESL classroom, presenting a unique set of challenges or advantages for each learner. The study's findings continue to articulate the repeated needs in future literature shown in other recent studies, urging researchers to continue exploring local contexts and the specific needs of the learners situated in those ESL learning spaces (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Research can also examine the experiences of participants from different cultures learning ESL on a larger scale. I theorize that the implications of considering gender and culture will result in oral participation that fosters the development of participants' identities in these two spheres while supporting the development of new viewpoints.

In short, the present study provides insight into educational realities for recent immigrant learners navigating an ESL education in Canada (Julé, 2005). While the number of participants limits the generalization of the results, the findings present valuable insight into gender and culture-related imbalances in the classroom. The findings contribute to the call to action for

researchers to conduct ESL research examining various cultural groups, ages, and contexts.

Specifically, analysis regarding the social dynamics of adult immigrant learners is a topic that

must continue to be addressed in future research. Researchers can also refer to the directions for

future research to continue addressing imbalances in the ESL classroom.

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Appendix A

Script

Greeting: Hello everyone!

Self-introduction and basic study information: My name is Victoria. I am a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at McGill University. I am researching gender and culture among adult students learning English as a Second Language. My research goal is to identify speaking activities that encourage gender equality and promote ESL learning.

Recruitment: I am looking for volunteers to be part of the study. Participation is optional and will not affect your success in the class. For most of the study, I will be observing the class, while taking notes. You will have the choice of:

1)Participating in an online survey

2) Participating in a one-on-one interview

3)Participating in the classroom observation sessions

You are welcome to do one, two or all three parts of the research study. Depending on participant consent, I also hope to video record classroom discissions for study participants only as well as the interviews.

You will also be asked if you give permission to be video recorded. If you do not wish to video recorded audio recording or written notes may also be used. On the consent form you will be asked to confirm your selection.

Confidentiality and protection of information: During the study all physical copies of notes will be locked in a safe. All digital data will be protected online on McGill's institutionally protected OneDrive server. In my submitted thesis or any reports of this research, your name will be changed to a pseudonym, and no personal information will be shared. You will have the option to leave the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw during or right after the study, all information obtained up until that point will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise at the time of withdrawal. Once data have been combined for publication, it may not be possible to withdraw your data in its entirety. We can only remove your dataset from further analysis and from use in future publications. Identifiable data will be kept for 7 years.

Overall, the research will take about 7 hours, however most of the time will be observation of your usual class. You will not be interrupted or distracted, I will simply be either video recording or taking notes.

Covid-19 Safety Measures: Following Covid-19 protocols, I will be wearing a mask during my time in the classroom. Any interviews or data collection, in which I am in close proximity to record or take notes will be done at a 2-meter distance. If any updates to government safely regulations are introduced, the research will follow accordingly.

Questions: If you have any questions or would like additional details, please do not hesitate to ask!

Appendix B

Certificate of Ethics Approval

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office   Tel: (514) 398-6831
James Administration Bldg.
845 Sherbrooke Street West. Rm 325   Website: www.mcgill.ca/research/research/compliance/human/
Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Research Ethics Board 2
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 22-01-019

Project Title: Examining Adult Oral Interaction Within an ESL Classroom

Principal Investigator: Victoria Goodhand

Department: Integrated Studies in Education

Status: Master's Student

Supervisor: Professor Caroline Riches

Approval Period: <u>January 5, 2022 – January 4, 2023</u>

The REB 2 reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Georgia Kalavritinos
Ethics Review Administrator

Appendix C

Student Consent Form

Department of Integrated Studies (DISE)
Faculty of education
3700 McTavish Montreal, Quebec H3A 1Y2

Consent form

Researcher: Victoria Goodhand: Graduate student, McGill University, Faculty of Education, 514-823-3397, e-mail: Victoria.goodhand@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor: Caroline Riches, Faculty of Education, (514) 398-4527 loc. 00539, E-mail: caroline.riches@mcgill.ca

Title of Project: Examining Gender Within Adult ESL Oral Participation

Sponsor(s): N/A no funding will be provided.

Purpose of the Study: This is an invitation to participate in a research study aiming to research oral participation for adults learning English as a second language (ESL). Research will explore the ways in which gender contributes to one's experience learning English in an ESL classroom. The study will also examine the ways in which culture contributes to participation during speaking activities. The purpose of the study is to identify and integrate speaking activities that avoid gender rooted imbalances. After identifying successful methods, a balanced classroom dialogue can be actively practiced using information gained from the study.

Study Procedures:

Survey (10 minutes): An online survey about oral participation in the classroom will be used to collect information about how comfortable you are to speak in the classroom.

Observation (6 hours): Conversation will be silently observed and video-taped. There is no correct behavior or way to act. You will be asked to talk in groups and follow the class as usual.

Interview (10-15 minutes): You will be asked questions about your interactions and experiences while in the classroom.

Video-recording: Portions of the class will be video-taped. Only I will see the video recordings. This is necessary for data collection and analysis. Video recordings will not be shared.

Audio-recording: Any audio recordings that are used will be collected using the "Dictate" speech-to-text feature on Microsoft Word. The files will be automatically uploaded to the *OneDrive* cloud and protected using 2-factor authentication.

Location: During class time 9:00am-12:00pm (One hour) one day of the week for 6 weeks.

Approximate time commitment: The estimated time commitment is roughly 7 hours, however most of the time will be spent observing participants and taking notes.

Voluntary Participation: Participating in the research is voluntary. Only students who would like to be part of the study will be included. No class member is under any obligation to participate. You may decline any question or part of the study. If you do choose to be part of the project, you may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. Grades will not be affected by participating. Your classmates and teacher will not see any of your information. No names or personal information will be used, all information will be confidential. Names will be changed to protect your confidentiality. If you choose to withdraw during or right after the study, all information obtained up until that point will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise at the time of withdrawal. Once data have been combined for publication, it may not be possible to withdraw your data in its entirety. We can only remove your dataset from further analysis and from use in future publications. Identifiable data will be kept for 7 years.

Potential Risks: There are no anticipated risks to you participating in this research.

Potential Benefits: Participating in the study will have no direct benefit to you, however I hope to learn more about inclusive speaking strategies, potentially resulting in an increase in student confidence and overall academic success when acquiring ESL.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for the study.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed as students will be sharing while the PI records and collects group data, in order to protect the privacy of others in the group, you are asked not to discuss or share information with anyone outside the group. Participants will be videotaped; however, no personal information will be shared within the research. All participants will have and identifiable information changed, ex: names. Identifiable data will be kept secure both physically and digitally. Physical data will be stored in a locked safe for the duration of research collection. Digital files will be password protected on my personal laptop. Only I will have access to the information. Limitations of safeguards: someone could break into the safe or compromise the cyber security of the computer, however, physical and digital files will be discreet and hidden, in order to minimize any possibility of information being tampered with.
Video-recording will be used to film the one-on-one interviews and group discussions with study participants, conducted by the principal investigator. Only I will view the recordings, in order to collect and review data.

Confirmation of Consent:
Please write an 'X' beside the portions of this study you would like to participate in. You may participate in 1, 2, or all 3 parts of the study.
1. Classroom observation _____
2. Survey _____
3. Interview_____

FOR THE <u>INTERVIEW</u> I consent to:
  1. Video Recording: YES___   NO _____
  2. Audio recording: YES___   NO _____

3. I do not feel comfortable being recorded on video AND audio and prefer for notes to be handwritten : YES____ NO _____

FOR <u>SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS</u> I consent to:
4. Video Recording: YES____ NO _____
5. Audio recording: YES____ NO _____
6. I do not feel comfortable being recorded on video AND audio and prefer for notes to be handwritten : YES____ NO _____

Dissemination of Results: The results will be disseminated through my final MA thesis. After the final thesis is published, there is a possibility that I will address the findings of the research in a future academic publication-currently unknown. All participants will remain confidential in reporting unless explicit consent was provided to have their names mentioned in publications. When completed, results will be given back to any interested participants, as well as the educator that allowed the study to take place in their classroom.

Questions: If you have any questions, please contact Victoria Goodhand: victoria.goodhand@mail.mcgill.ca or Dr. Caroline Riches: caroline.riches@mcgill.ca

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number 22-01-019

For written consent
Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals, such as a member of the Research Ethics Board, may have access to your (your child's) information. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print)_____

Participant's Signature:_____

Date:_____

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. Do you believe there was gender equality in your classrooms when learning your first language?

2. Do you believe there has been gender equality during your time learning English?

3. Do you think your gender has in any way shaped your experiences learning English?

4. Do you feel more comfortable when learning with a teacher of a certain gender? Please explain.

5. Within your classes in general/previous education is it common to share answers, volunteer ideas and thoughts or correct classmates?

6. What topics/themes do you like to talk about in English. Ex: Music, food, politics, money/business, family?

7. Do you feel more comfortable speaking to classmates of your own gender?

8. Do you feel that gender stereotypes are ever present in the classroom?

9. How you think your culture has influenced the way you are learning English?

10. Are there any differences in the ways you learned your first language and your second language?

Appendix E
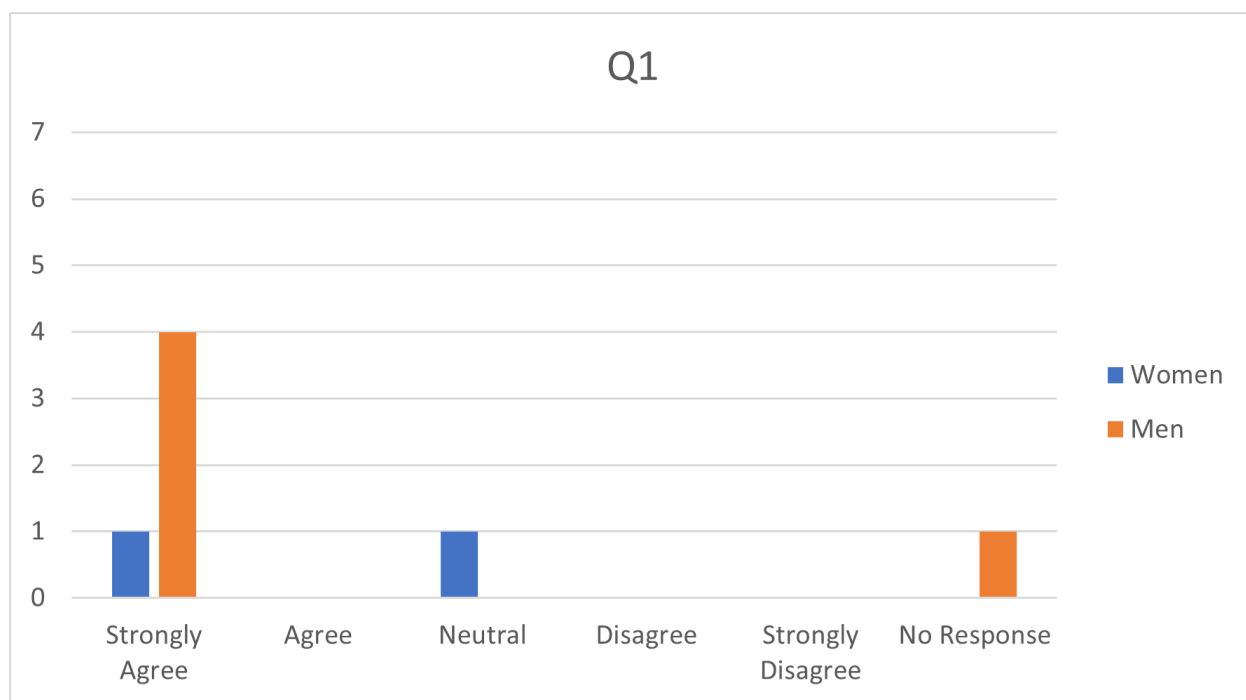
Figure E1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and ideas with the class.
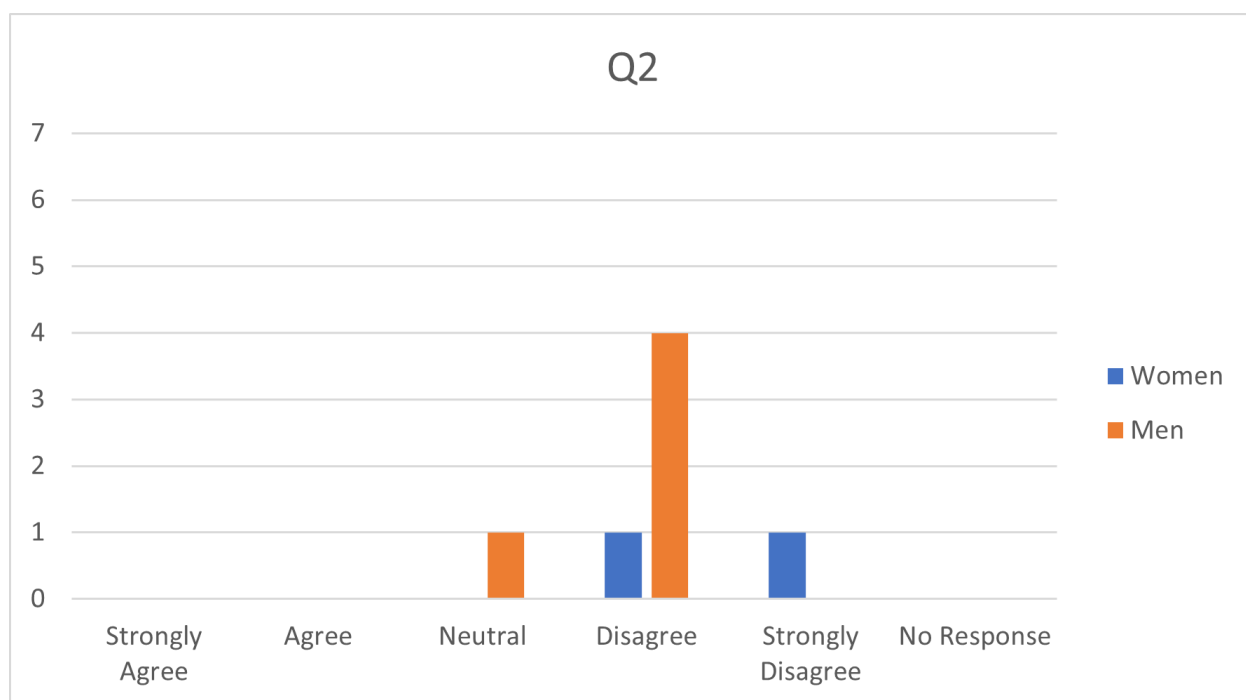
Figure E2. If the teacher does not call my name, I will not raise my hand
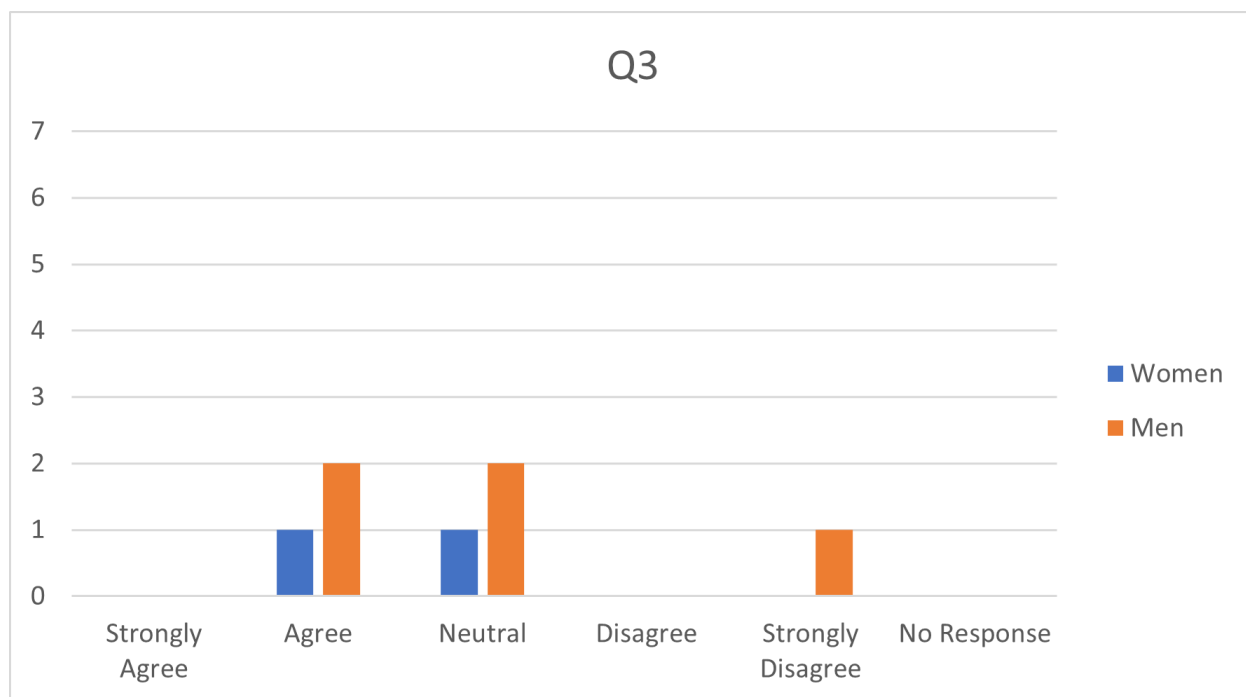
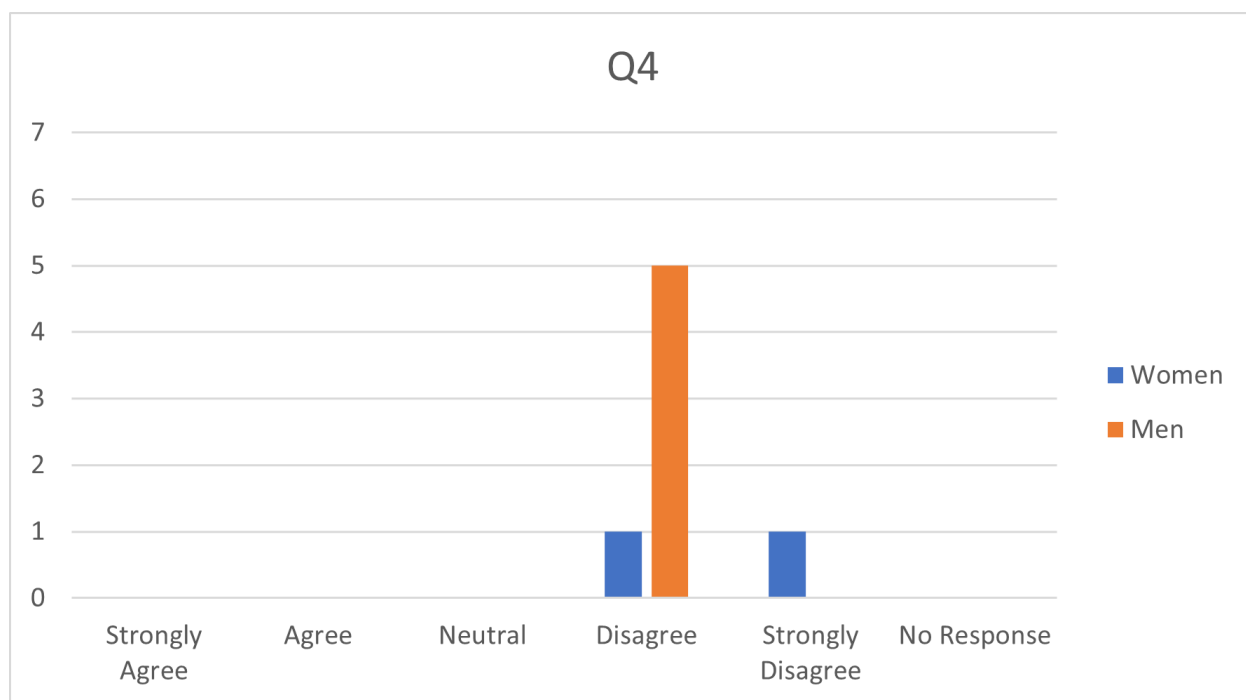*Figure E3. I feel more comfortable speaking with certain classmates than others*

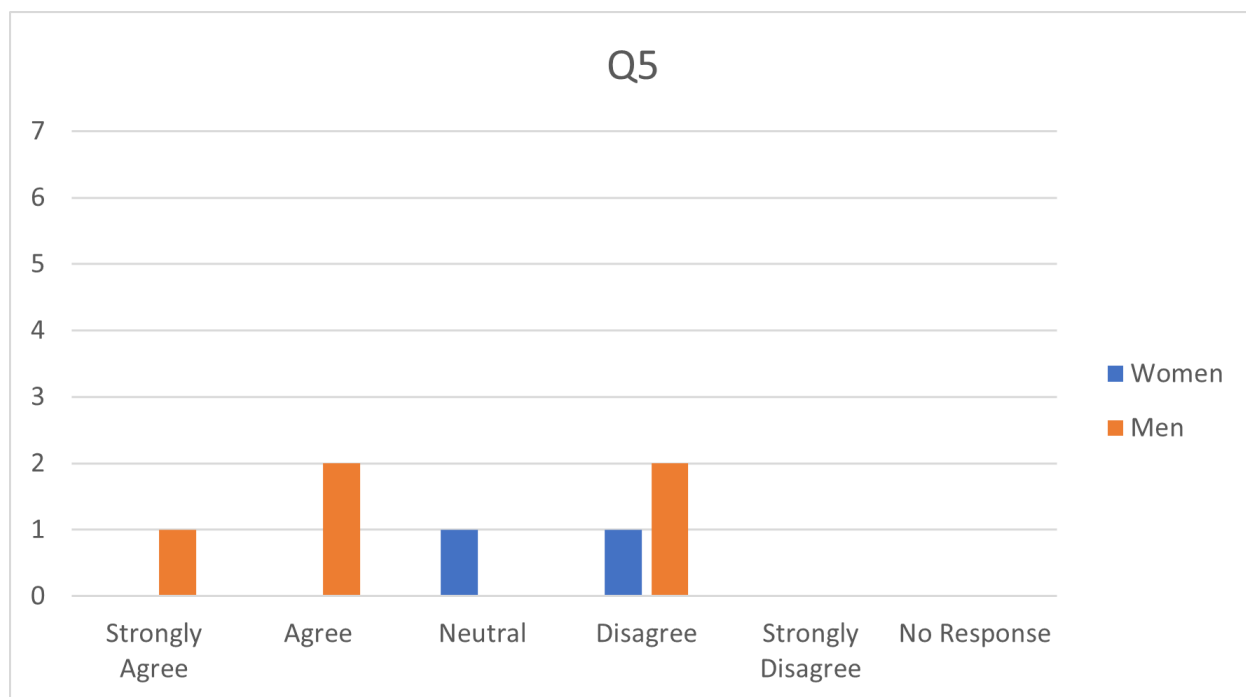*Figure E4. When I am speaking, I am often interrupted by another classmate*

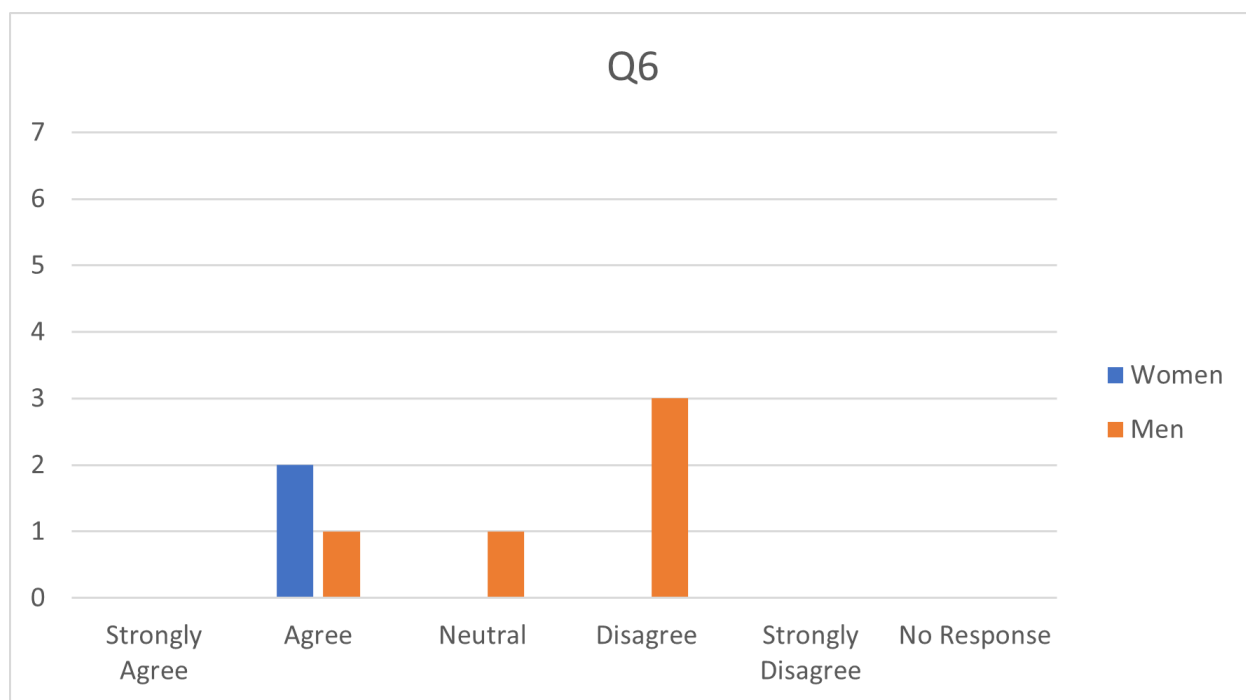*Figure E5. I enjoy speaking in small groups more than I enjoy speaking to the entire class*
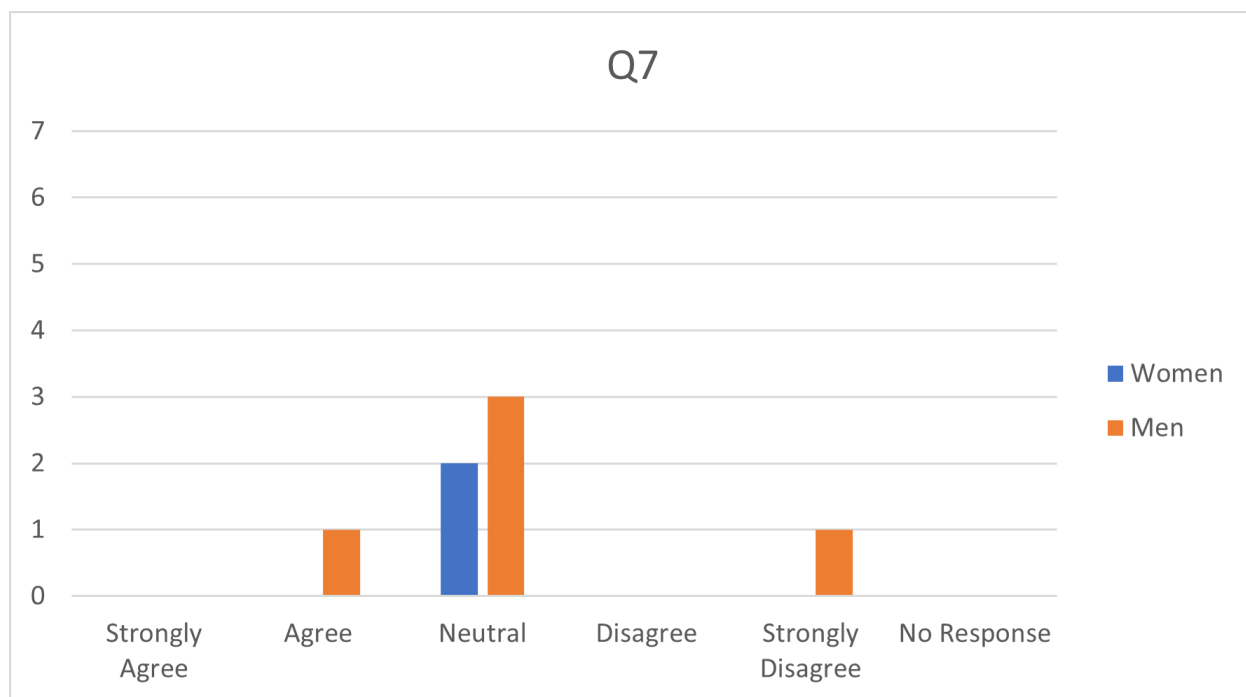

Figure E6. I feel nervous that I will make a mistake when speaking

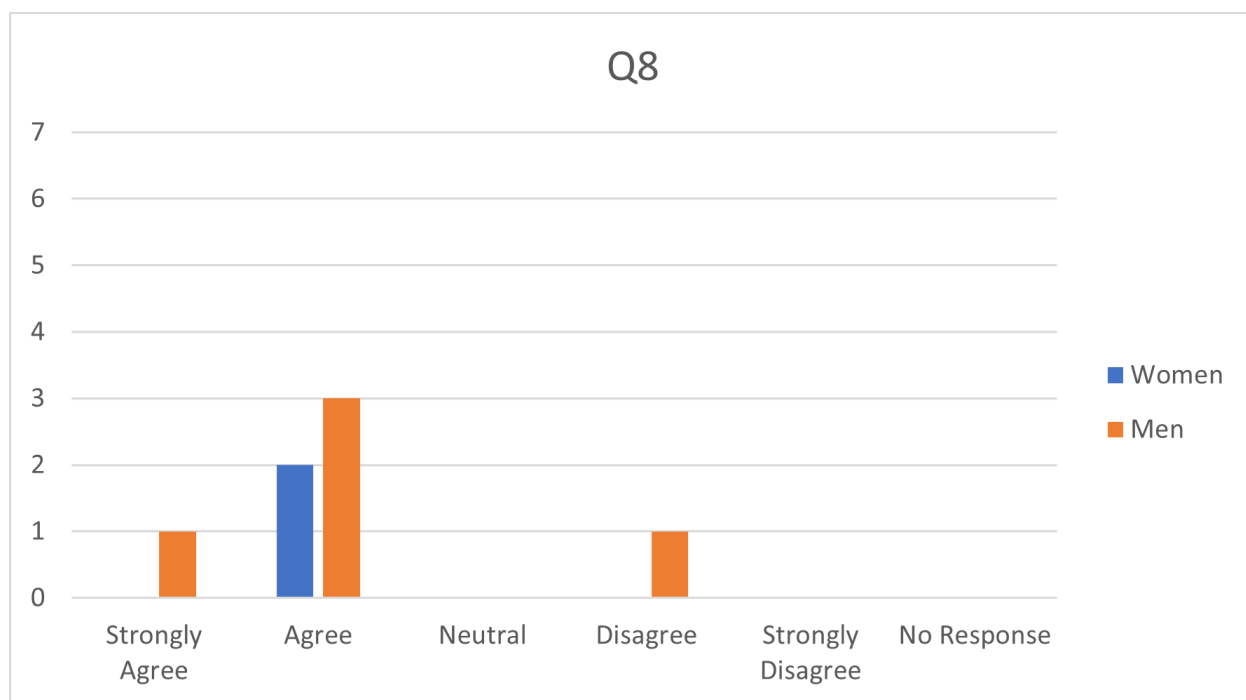*Figure E7. If one of my classmates makes a mistake, I will correct them*

Figure E8. If I do not understand the material, I will ask the teacher for more information
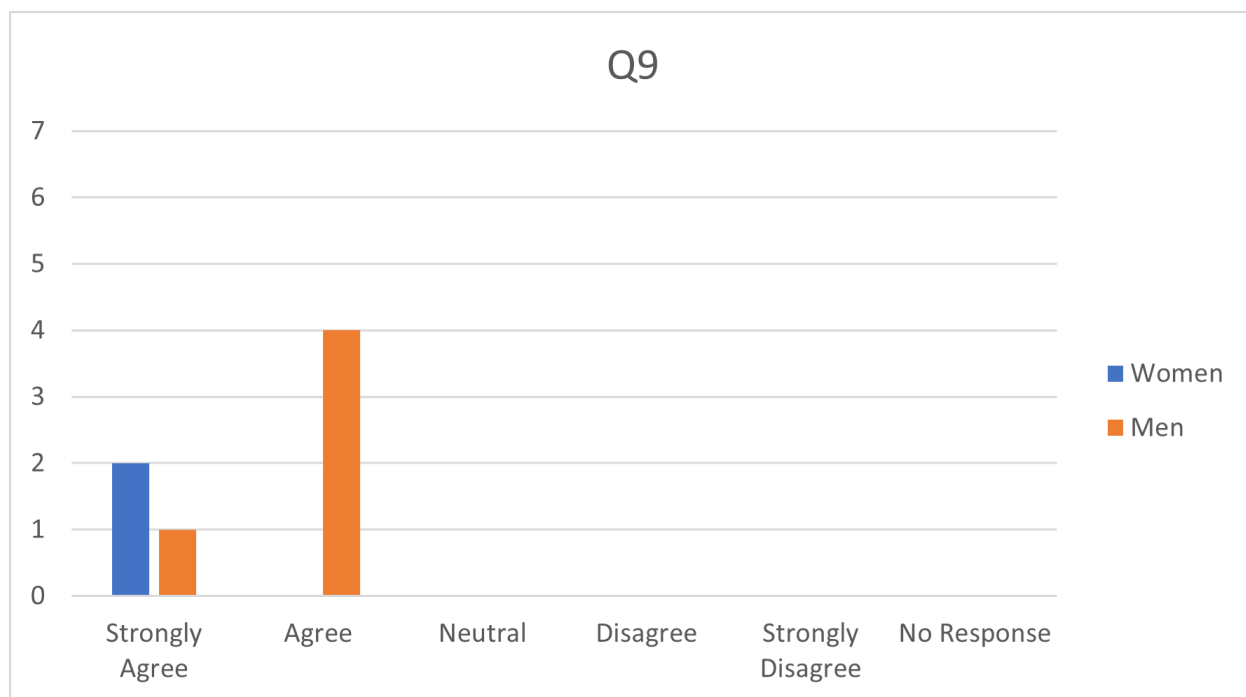
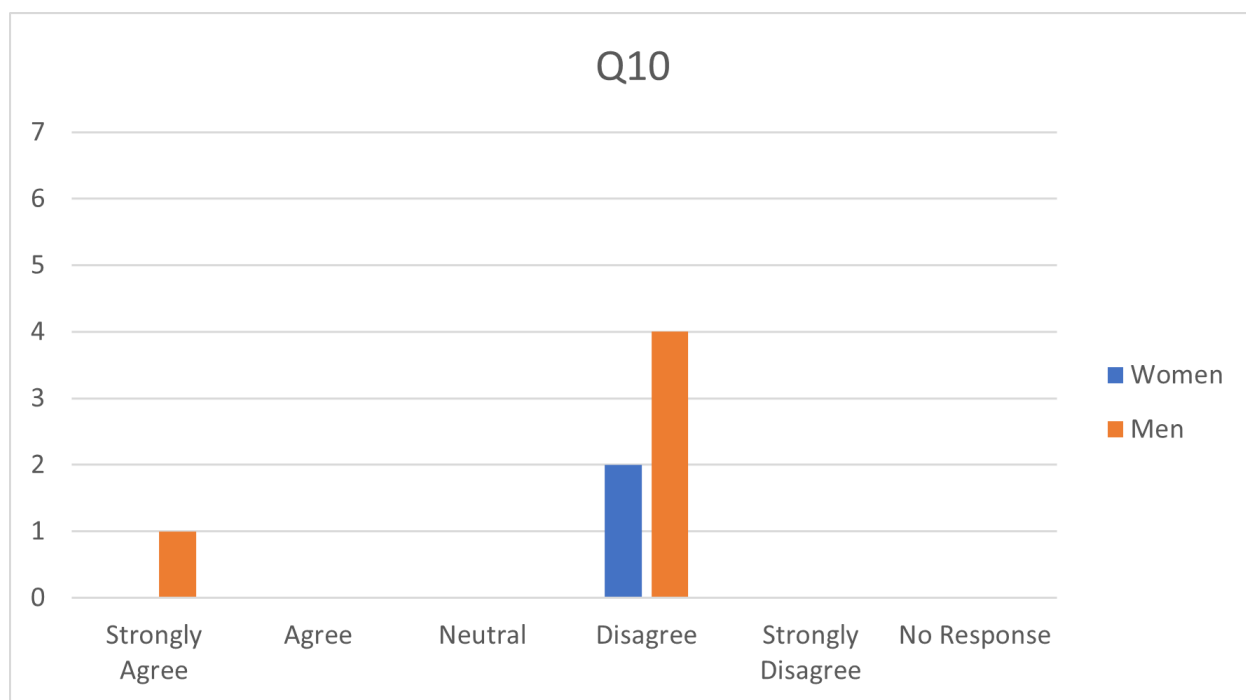*Figure E9. I feel confident using my English skills outside of the classroom*

Figure E10. When learning English, making mistakes makes me feel upset, sad, or discouraged