Impact of Sheltered ESL Support Programming on Student Engagement and Academic Performance at OCAD University

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Higher Education
Quality Council
of Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario

Abstract

This study examines how a unique sheltered English as a Second Language (ESL) learning community at OCAD University affects student participants' academic performance and engagement. Using survey, interview and institutional data, we examine the experiences of both program participants and a comparison group at the beginning and end of their first year in a Design program. Overall, we find that the sheltered program improved participating students' engagement as well as their academic performance. We draw on interview data to articulate the nature of the challenges ESL students face and identify the program's particular benefits and liabilities.. Our findings indicate that students attributed the benefit they received from the program largely to the "safe space" they experienced in their sheltered program, as well as the mutual support made possible through participation in a learning community. At the same time, they expressed ambivalence about the relative isolation from native speakers that resulted from their participation in the program. We draw on our findings to offer recommendations for the design of sheltered ESL programs at the postsecondary level.

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Introduction

The English Language Pathway Program at OCAD University1

This study investigates the impact of OCAD University's English Language Pathway Program (referred to henceforth as "Pathway"), a first-year program for English as a Second Language (ESL) students in the four-year Design degree program Pathway, now in its fourth year, includes ESL-only versions of five required first-year courses. Students take the remainder of their courses in regular sections that include both ESL students and native English speakers. (See Table 1 below.) Student participation in the program is based on self-selection and during 2009–2010, enrollment was capped at one group of students, with 23 ESL students enrolled.

Table 1: Courses taken by 2009–2010 Pathway Students	
Fall term	**Winter term**
LBST 1B12 Essay and the Argument: ESL Pathway section [full-year course]	
LBST 1B13 Intro to Visual Studies I: History and Ideas – Pathway section tutorial	LBST 1B06 Intro to Visual Studies II: Critical Frameworks – Pathway section tutorial
GEDS 1B23 Design Process	GDES 1B26 Intro to Experience Design
Design course	Design course
Design course	Design course

*Courses with shaded background are Pathway courses/tutorials

In 2009-2010, 2022 students were enrolled in the four-year Bachelor of Design degree through the Faculty of Design at OCAD U; 600 were first-year students. Programs offered at that time included: Advertising, Graphic Design, Illustration, Environmental Design, Industrial Design and Material Art & Design. Design students at OCAD U take a mix of studio and Liberal Studies courses. They typically pursue careers in magazine and advertising firms, interior design studios, environmental, architecture or landscape firms, graphic design companies, consumer and commercial product-design companies, or as independent freelancers or entrepreneurs. The Design programs place a strong emphasis on developing original design concepts and the student's own voice. Students are also encouraged to develop critical thinking skills — thorough

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[1] Since our data was collected, our institution has undergone a change of name from OCAD to OCAD University (OCAD U). The current name is used throughout.

an understanding of historical, cultural and theoretical contexts — and apply these skills to research and innovation.

Courses at OCAD U, particularly studio courses, require a high level of active student participation in group projects, oral presentations and critiques. These activities demand oral fluency and confidence speaking in groups. Prior to the creation of this program, faculty related to academic support staff that many ESL students did not participate as actively in class as they expected. Pathway was created with the hope that offering this group of students the opportunity to develop their language skills in the "safe space" of a sheltered ESL program would enable them to participate more actively in classes that are integrated with native speakers (referred to in the report as "integrated classes") and in their second year courses. Increased engagement by non-native speakers would not only benefit the program participants, but also allow ESL students to contribute more fully to the educational experience of all students at OCAD U.

Content-based and Sheltered ESL Programming

Since the late 1980s, there has been a growing consensus among ESL educators that the development of language skills at the university level is best supported through "content-based" instruction. Content-based instruction integrates the teaching of language skills with discipline-specific course content. It can be contrasted with "skills-based" instruction, such as general courses in "ESL writing" or "ESL reading." Content-based instruction has been found to enhance the acquisition of language skills and contribute to academic success. In particular, it fosters the development of discipline-specific language and academic skills (see Song, 2001, for a review of research in this area).

One way that content-based instruction can be provided in higher education is through individual "sheltered" courses: ESL-only sections of regular credit courses. Such courses allow support for the development of language and academic skills to be fully integrated with discipline-specific course content (see Hauptman, Wesche and Ready, 1988, for an evaluation of a sheltered psychology course section at University of Ottawa).

Another way of delivering content-based ESL instruction is through an adjunct or content-linked model. In this model, students enroll in a block of shared classes along with native speakers, but take a supplemental, often non-credit, ESL course that is linked to these content courses; the ESL course draws on the content from the regular courses as a basis for language and skill building. Such programs are relatively common in U.S. community colleges. An advantage of this block-program design is that it creates a "learning community." Since students share a number of courses, they can build a sense of group cohesion and offer each other social and academic support. Extensive studies of learning communities in a variety of contexts have found a range of benefits to participants. Zhao and Kuh (2004) provide a review of research in this area and conclude that participation in a learning community contributes to a range of aspects of student engagement, including increased academic effort and participation in activities both in and out of the classroom. Their study of students from 365 U.S. four-year colleges and universities who completed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) concludes that: "experience with a learning community is associated with higher levels of academic effort,

academic integration and active and collaborative learning" (p. 124). The study found that participants interacted more with faculty and were more satisfied, overall, with their learning experience.

The staff who designed the Pathway program felt that this learning community design would be of particular benefit to ESL students, as these students often lack social and academic support.[2] Song's 2006 study of a content-linked ESL program at Kingsborough College in New York City found that participants benefited from a "nurturing and collaborative environment," and that students develop a "strong bond" with each other inside and outside of class. Because they shared a group of classes, they often formed their own informal study groups outside of class (p. 427).

The Pathway program at OCAD U was designed along the model of ESL block programs such as the one described by Song. However, instead of including just one sheltered ESL course linked to a set of regular content courses, Pathway includes a set of five fully sheltered content courses. The hope was that students would reap the benefits of content-based learning and participation in a learning community. In addition, it was hoped that the inclusion of several sheltered courses, intended to create a "safe space," would boost students' confidence in their language abilities and enable them to engage more fully in integrated courses. Finally, sheltered courses were included in a number of the content areas, rather than simply a single linked ESL class, with the aim of integrating ESL support directly into the regular disciplinary courses, giving students an enhanced opportunity to build the discipline-specific vocabulary and academic skills required in those disciplines.

Staff who designed the program, as well as others in the institution, anticipated a possible negative impact of such a highly sheltered block program: separating ESL students from the general student body for a significant portion of their program has the effect of isolating them, to some extent, from interaction with native speakers. It would seem that this posed some risk of reducing the confidence of the program participants in engaging fully in courses they share with native speakers. The current study aims to examine the impact on student engagement of participation in the Pathway program and, in particular, the relative benefits and liabilities of the sheltered program design.

Research Objectives

The primary focus of the study is to investigate whether the Pathway program, as initially designed, had an impact on the engagement of program participants in their courses, and whether any confidence gained by students within the sheltered courses resulted in increased engagement in their integrated courses. In addition, we evaluate the potential negative impact of the partial isolation created by this type of sheltered program.

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[2] This common observation of the experience of international students is corroborated by a large 2006 study by Grayson on the experiences of international and domestic students at four Canadian universities. Although Grayson's study focused on the experiences of international students, it may be presumed to apply to other ESL students who are recent arrivals.

Our benchmarks for student engagement were based on the NSSE sections: "Active and Collaborative Learning" and "Student-Faculty Interaction" (see NSSE report: Assessment for Improvement: Tracking Student Engagement Over Time, Annual Results 2009).

A secondary focus of the investigation is the impact of the program on academic performance as measured by grades and retention rates.

Research Questions

Our primary research questions were as follows:

1. What are the background characteristics of students who opt into Pathway?

2. What did Pathway students at OCAD U perceive as barriers to their engagement in OCAD U classes?

3. Did participation in Pathway have an impact on the level of engagement of the participants (positive or negative)? Did it help to mitigate any of the challenges students identified?

4. Did participation in Pathway have an impact on the academic performance of the participants (positive or negative) as defined by both grades and retention?

5. What were the Pathway students' perceptions of the benefits and/or liabilities of studying in ESL-only classes?

6. Are any benefits or liabilities of Pathway carried over into second year?

Methods

Overview of Study Design

The study investigated the experiences of two groups of students in 2009–2010: first, Pathway program participants; and second, a comparison group of first-year ESL students enrolled in a first-year ESL writing course. These groups are referred to henceforth as "Pathway students" and "non-Pathway ESL students."

We began with a pilot phase in which we conducted focus groups with first-year Pathway students and OCAD U instructors. The pilot study informed the development of our research instruments for the main study. For the main study, we gathered three sources of data: two surveys (including quantitative and open-ended questions), qualitative interviews and institutional data. The surveys and interviews were administered in the fall and the spring of the 2009–2010 academic year. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a subset of the Pathway interview participants in the second semester of their second year of studies. The quantitative data allowed for clear comparative analyses to be made between Pathway and non-Pathway ESL students, while the qualitative interviews enabled in-depth exploration of Pathway students'

perceptions and experiences. We felt that this mixed-methods approach heightened our ability to develop a holistic sense of students' experiences and outcomes. In the results section of this paper, we first break out the quantitative and qualitative findings separately, but draw the findings together in the study conclusions.

Research Participants

Pathway participants

Twenty-three students were registered in the Pathway program in the fall of 2009. Of these, twenty-two participated in at least one survey. Twelve Pathway students participated in fall and spring interviews in first year and, of these, eight participated in the follow-up second-year interviews.

Non-Pathway ESL

To help evaluate the impact of Pathway, we sought to compare the experiences of Pathway students to those of other OCAD U students who could benefit from language support. One challenge of the study design was to establish a comparison group. There is no straightforward way to identify "ESL students" from administrative records. In fact, the appropriate definition of who is a non-native speaker varies by context. For example, while students indicate on their Ontario Universities' Application Centre application form whether their first language is English, those who have learned English in childhood likely don't require specialized language support at the university level. Thus, an appropriate comparison group for our study would be students who themselves identify that they could benefit from specialized language support. We chose as a comparison group students enrolled in a first-year ESL writing class. All first year students at OCAD U are required to take a writing course entitled *The Essay and the Argument*. This course is structured around critical reading of a variety of essay styles, combined with written assignments that build students' skills in essay structure and written argumentation. Students can self-select into the ESL section and most students who are still developing their English language skills opt into this course. Thus, these students represent a good comparison group for Pathway students in terms of both self-identified need for language support and motivation necessary to seek this support.

There were a total of 72 students enrolled in the non-Pathway sections of the first-year ESL writing class at the time of the fall 2009 survey administration. Surveys were distributed in two sections of the first-year ESL writing class, with a total of 38 registered students. Of these, 19 participated in at least one survey and seven participated in at least one interview.

Both sections of the non-Pathway ESL writing course were taught by the same instructor; the Pathway section was taught by a different instructor.

Data sources

A. <u>Institutional data</u>

Institutional data were drawn from administrative records originating from students' Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) application form, as well as an OCAD U survey that all students are asked to fill out upon registering for classes for the first time. (see Appendix C for a list of data sources).

B. <u>Survey</u>

Survey administration and participant recruitment. The survey was administered for both Pathway and non-Pathway ESL groups in their respective writing classes. The researcher visited the Pathway class and two sections of the non-Pathway ESL classes, explained the purpose of the project and told students that participation in the survey was voluntary and the information collected would be confidential. Students were given a hard copy of a survey with a consent form and completed the survey in class. The surveys were administered in October 2009 and March 2010.

Survey participants*.* Some non-Pathway ESL students completed the survey but did not sign the consent form. Additionally, the groups of students who completed the survey in the fall and in the spring were not identical, as attendance on the day of the survey varied. In total, 16 Pathway students and 14 non-Pathway ESL students completed both the fall and spring surveys and consent forms. However, data for on Pathway student who left the program in the spring and one non-Pathway ESL student who completed the survey late were not analyzed. Thus, surveys for 16 Pathway students and 14 non-Pathway ESL students were included in our analysis.

Survey description*.* Survey questions were inspired by the National Survey of Student Engagement, particularly those sections focusing on the benchmarks of "Active and Collaborative Learning" and "Student-Faculty Interaction." Questions were developed based on the OCAD U curriculum, faculty expectations and themes that emerged from the pilot study.

The survey included demographic questions: age, gender, major area of study and language and educational background. A series of open-ended questions asked students to describe their most challenging course or courses and, for the Pathway students, the benefits and liabilities of the Pathway program. The remainder of the survey posed questions in Likert scale format concerning how often students engage in various course-related activities in and out of class and how comfortable they feel with these activities. Surveys for Pathway students and non-Pathway ESL students were identical except that in the fall survey, Pathway students were asked why they chose to enroll in Pathway while non-Pathway ESL students were asked why they chose not to enroll in Pathway. In the spring survey, Pathway students were asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of Pathway, while non-Pathway ESL students were asked whether they knew any students in Pathway and what the survey respondents thought were the program's advantages and disadvantages (see Appendix A for survey instrument).

C. **Qualitative Interviews**

Interview method and participant recruitment. When the fall survey was administered, students were invited to participate in an interview. Students indicated their interest in volunteering for the interview by providing their contact information on a paper attached to the survey. All those who volunteered were contacted by the researcher. The fall interviews were conducted from late October to early November 2009; the spring interviews were conducted from the end of March to the end of April 2010. Participants were given a $20 gift certificate as an honorarium.

Interviews took place in a quiet, private room on campus and were audio-recorded. Each interview was conducted by the same interviewer who was a graduate of OCAD U and whose first language was not English. The interviewer was a tutor at the Writing & Learning Centre at OCAD U and thus, in addition to being familiar with the challenges faced by non-native English speakers at this institution, was accustomed to working with students individually. She strove to establish a comfortable environment for discussion and demonstrated interest in, and empathy for, the students' experiences. While limitations in the English fluency of the interview participants inevitably posed some barrier to communication, the interviewer strove to address this by establishing a relaxed pace to the interviews, by rephrasing her questions as needed, by asking follow up questions for clarification and by repeating back her understanding of their comments for confirmation. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

Interview participants. Twelve Pathway students and seven non-Pathway students were interviewed in the fall; all were invited to participate in the second spring interview. All the Pathway volunteers returned for the spring interview, but two of the non-Pathway volunteers chose not to be interviewed in the spring. Due to the very small number of non-Pathway ESL interview participants, we ultimately determined that it would not be possible to establish a comparison for the interview data and decided to analyze only Pathway interviews.

Interview guide. Interviews were semi-structured; a list of questions was prepared and the interviewer attempted to cover all of them at some point during the interview (see Appendix A for the full interview guide). However, the interviewer used her discretion to add unplanned prompts in order to encourage students to elaborate and/or to further explore points raised by the interviewees themselves. The researcher reviewed the survey responses in advance of the interview and referred to the student's responses during the interview to elicit elaboration. Immediately following each interview, the interviewer took notes on her initial reflections, focusing on the student's manner, the overall tone of the interview, issues the student emphasized, and any apparent contradictions in the comments he or she made. All interviews were then transcribed by the interviewer; following transcription, the interviewer made additional notes about emerging themes, patterns, and questions to follow up in the spring interviews.

The fall interviews were designed to elicit from students more nuanced details regarding the questions asked in the survey, including students' background in studying English, the barriers they experienced to classroom participation, their understanding of professors' expectations and how they felt about various aspects of academic engagement at OCAD U. Prior to the spring interviews, the research team met to identify emerging themes and revised the interview

questions to further pursue these. The spring interviews repeated some of the same questions asked in the fall, but with an added focus on the students' perceptions of change in their engagement and language skills.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data, including both institutional and survey data, were analyzed using the statistical methods detailed here.

Group Comparisons

Separate group comparisons were performed at the cohort level and at the respondent level. Cohort-level analyses compared all ESL students who chose to enroll in Pathway (PC group N = 23) to all remaining students registered in the first-year ESL writing course (non-Pathway ESL students) (NPC group N = 72). Cohort-level data were available for the background and academic variables and were used to determine what pre-existing characteristics differentiated students who self-selected into Pathway from those who did not, as well as whether the two groups differed in how well they subsequently did at OCAD U.

Respondent-level analyses included only those subgroups of the Pathway and non-Pathway cohorts that completed the survey at the beginning (fall; PR group N = 17; NPR group N = 15) and at the end (spring; PR group N = 16; NPR group N = 14) of the academic year. Respondent-level data were used to evaluate the efficacy of Pathway in enhancing students' engagement and the impact such change in engagement had on their academic performance, while controlling for any pre-existing background differences.

Sampling Confounds

Although OCAD U offers degree programs in both Art and Design, Pathway was offered only for students enrolled in the Design program. As a result, the Pathway group was artificially limited to Design students only, whereas 23.6 per cent of the non-Pathway ESL cohort were enrolled in the Art program. To account for potential differences in course-related experiences due to this sampling bias, all planned analyses were re-run with the more appropriate comparison group of NPC students in the Design stream only (NPC-D group N = 55). The results of these latter analyses are presented as primary findings in the report, with the original full-cohort comparisons enclosed in the Appendix C (Table A).

Because survey completion was voluntary, respondent-level data might suffer from further sampling biases. To verify that survey responses were representative of the cohort as a whole, all cohort-level analyses were repeated for PR vs. NPR groups prior to comparing their engagement scores and academic grades (see Appendix C, Table B). Any substantial discrepancies between cohort- and respondent-level results were attributed to idiosyncrasies of the survey respondents and were statistically controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Significance Criteria

Due to the small sample size and non-random sampling procedures, interpretation of group differences was based on estimates of effect sizes (*ES*) rather than null-hypothesis significance testing. Unlike significance tests, *ES* estimates are independent of sample size and also provide practical information about the magnitude of observed differences or strength of associations (Ferguson, 2009, p. 532).

ES of mean difference tests was measured with the Eta statistic (η), *ES* of cross-tab frequency analyses was measured with Cramer's *V*, and *ES* of correlations was measured with Pearson's coefficient (*r*). Following standard practices in social science research (Ferguson, 2009, p. 533), *ES* estimates of ≥ .20 (i.e., at least 4 per cent shared variance) were interpreted as significant non-trivial effects (highlighted in bold throughout the quantitative part of the report). Analyses involving very small cell sizes (*n* < 5) were considered unreliable and their *ES* estimates were not computed.

Qualitative Data Analysis

When most of the spring interviews were completed, the research team met to establish a hierarchical coding scheme (primary codes, sub-codes and sub-sub codes). These codes were based primarily on the original research questions, but in reviewing the interview transcripts, the team adjusted and added to existing codes to capture emerging themes. NVIVO qualitative analysis software was used to apply codes to each interview by a single researcher (the interviewer), who consulted with the research team as needed on coding decisions.

The pre-established primary code categories were useful for providing an initial sense of the interview results. However, much of the data revealed themes that crossed over these categories. These will be reported on in the results section. We have used interview excerpts to highlight the complexity of our participants' experiences and the relationships between the various factors as expressed in their own words.

In analyzing the results, the number of students who mentioned a particular theme was counted, not the number of total mentions. In other words, even if a student made more than one comment on the same topic, this was counted only once in analyzing the results.

Possible Selection Biases

As interviews were voluntary, the students who volunteered to participate may not be typical of the Pathway group as a whole in a number of ways. This is a common problem in qualitative research. To investigate the magnitude of this potential bias, we used the institutional data to compare the demographic characteristics of our sample of Pathway interview participants to all Pathway students. We found that our interviewees were marginally older (22 years vs. 20 years on average), disproportionately female (72 per cent female vs. 50 per cent female), and had spent somewhat less time studying in Canada prior to enrolling at OCAD U (1.7 years vs. 2.6 years, on average) compared to the rest of the Pathway students. More importantly, however, the initial engagement levels measured for our interviewees (see survey instrument) were the

same as for the group as a whole; thus our interviews were not biased towards the more engaged students. Though we kept the demographic differences in mind as we analyzed our data and developed our conclusions, we feel that our interview participants represented a sufficiently wide range of experiences that these statistical differences do not discount the value of our data.

Quantitative Results

Background Characteristics

Demographics

Students who chose to enroll in Pathway were comparable to the rest of the ESL Design students in terms of their age [$F(1, 76) = 0.08$, $\eta = .03$] and gender [$\chi^2(1) = 1.07$, Cramer's $V = .12$]. They were on average 21 (± 4) years old, ranged in age from 17 to 35 years, with the majority (87 per cent) being under the age of 25, and with an approximate female to male ratio of 2:1 (see Table 1).

In terms of their immigration status, students enrolled in Pathway were relatively new to Canada, as they were significantly more likely to hold a temporary student visa or have permanent resident status rather than full Canadian citizenship (see Table 2), whereas the reverse was true for the rest of the Design cohort (non-Pathway ESL students) [$\chi^2(2) = 8.35$, Cramer's $V = $ **.33**].

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of First-year ESL Design Students

	Pathway	Non-Pathway
Mature Students 25+ (%)	13.0	12.7
Age (years):		
Mean	21.22	20.96
SD	3.72	3.62
Range	(17-32)	(17-35)
Gender (%):		
Female	60.9	72.7
Male	39.1	27.3
Immigration Status (%):		
Temporary Visa	39.1	21.8
Permanent Resident	52.2	36.4
Canadian Citizen	8.7	41.8

Cultural Background

Two sources of information were used to determine the overall cultural composition of the Pathway and non-Pathway ESL groups. In the cohort-level data, non-Canadian citizens were asked to indicate their country of citizenship. In the survey respondent data, both Canadian and non-Canadian citizens were asked about their mother tongue and in which country they completed their elementary education.[3]

The two dominant countries of origin in both groups were Republic of South Korea and People's Republic of China (including Taiwan Province).[4] Together, these two countries represented 38.1 per cent of students in the Pathway group and 65.6 per cent of students in the non-Pathway ESL group. The difference in the prevalence rates of these two countries relative to other cultures was significant [$\chi^2(1) = 3.88$, Cramer's V = **.27**], suggesting that the Pathway group was more culturally diverse than the rest of the Design cohort.[5] This conclusion was also supported by the larger ratio of the number of countries relative to the number of students represented in the Pathway (2:3) vs. non-Pathway ESL (1:3) groups.

Because the diversity present in the Pathway group might affect engagement (in particular, comfort studying with students from other countries), we took students' country of origin (China/South Korea vs. Other) into account when comparing groups on their engagement levels and academic outcomes.

Family Background

Students were asked on their OCAD U registration survey to indicate their parents' highest level of educational attainment. About 15 per cent of students across both groups did not know or did not supply this information; data for the remaining students were grouped into four categories:

    (1)   Secondary: partial or completed high school
    (2)   College: partial or completed college diploma
    (3)   University: partial or completed Bachelor's degree
    (4)   Graduate: completed Master's or PhD degree

Students who enrolled in Pathway came from families where both mother [$\chi^2(3) = 7.76$, Cramer's V = **.34**] and father [$\chi^2(3) = 4.25$, Cramer's V = **.25**] had significantly higher overall levels of education, compared to the rest of the Design cohort (the non-Pathway ESL students) (see Figure 1).

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[3] All survey respondents confirmed that English was their second language, and that their mother tongue matched the country in which they received their elementary education. For non-Canadian citizens who also indicated the place of their elementary education, their citizenship country matched their elementary school country.
[4] Further breakdown by countries of origin was not possible due to small cell sizes and concerns over student anonymity.
[5] The same pattern of results was found for the elementary school data among survey respondents (Appendix, Table C).

Because this background characteristic could influence engagement (e.g., in particular, sharing one's academic experiences with friends and family), we took parents' level of education into account when comparing groups on their engagement levels and academic outcomes.

Figure 1. Parents' Highest Level of Education (per cent of each group)

Mother

Secondary	College	University	Graduate
Pathway 5%	9%	77%	9%
Non-Pathway 26%	22%	45%	7%

☐ Pathway ■ Non-Pathway

Father

Secondary	College	University	Graduate
Pathway 5%	5%	57%	33%
Non-Pathway 16%	18%	42%	24%

☐ Pathway ■ Non-Pathway
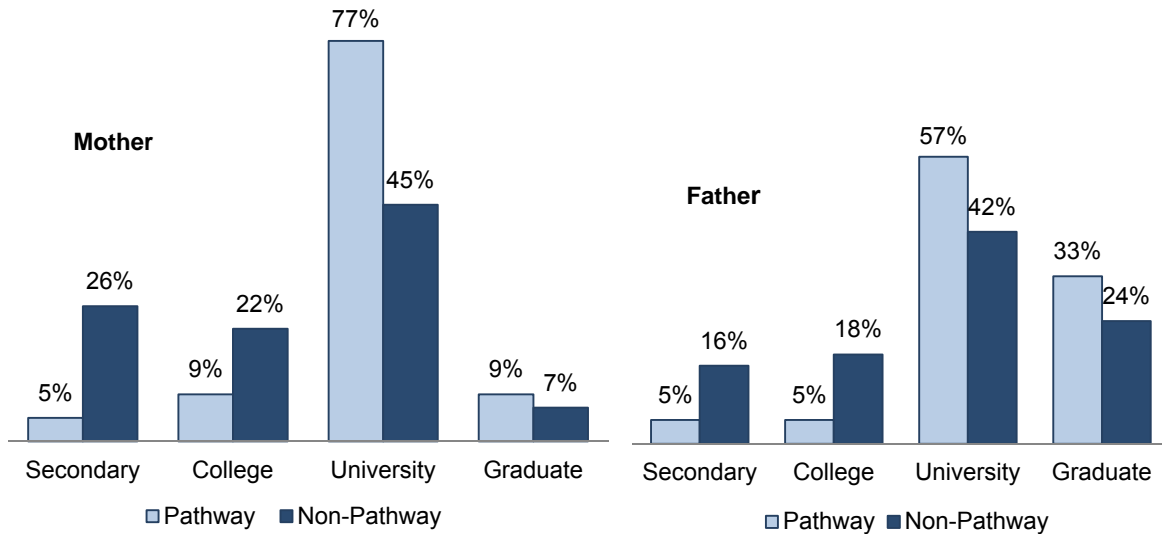
English Language Proficiency

English language proficiency data were available for 80 per cent of students in the database and came from one of two sources: official English proficiency test scores (available for 61 per cent and 24 per cent of the Pathway and non-Pathway ESL students, respectively) and prior educational experience in Canada. Table 3 outlines OCAD U's minimum requirements for spoken and written English language proficiency. (students are required to either meet a minimum requirement of four years of study in Canada or achieve minimum scores on standard language proficiency tests). For the purposes of the present study, students were classified as either meeting these criteria or not.[6] (some OCAD U ESL students are admitted with lower than the minimum cut-off scores on condition that they complete a summer transition program).

Table 3. Minimum Requirements for English Language Proficiency

	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
IELTS score	6	6	6	6
TOEFL IBT score	14	19	22	20
Years studied in Canada	4	4	4	4

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[6] Further gradation into strong/borderline/weak levels of proficiency was not feasible due to very small cell sizes.

Students who chose to enroll in Pathway had significantly lower proficiency in Speaking than the rest of the Design cohort (non-Pathway ESL students) [χ^2(1) = 7.91, Cramer's V = **.35**]. However, the two groups were comparable on their Listening [χ^2(1) = 0.00, Cramer's V = .00], Reading [χ^2(1) = .004, Cramer's V = .01], and Writing [χ^2(1) = 0.66, Cramer's V = .10] Proficiency Skills (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Below Minimum English Language Proficiency (per cent of each group)
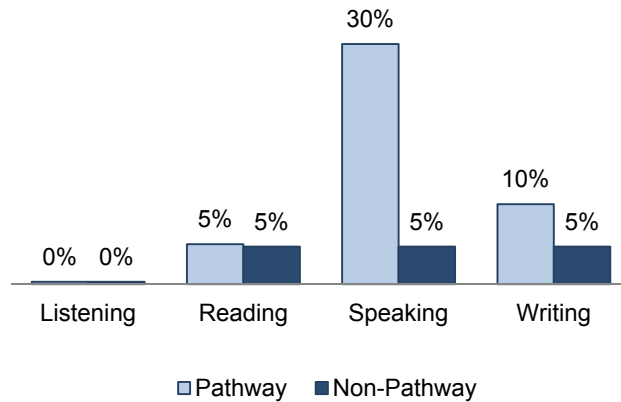
Unfortunately, the small sample size did not permit us to take students' English language proficiency into account when comparing groups on their engagement levels and academic outcomes. This limitation poses an inherent challenge when trying to evaluate the efficacy of the program, as no differences in engagement or academic outcomes (compared to the non-Pathway ESL students) could still mean program success. Therefore, any findings of positive effects should essentially be interpreted as success *despite* Pathway students' lower initial levels of spoken English proficiency.

Prior Educational Experience in Canada

Although the majority (over 90 per cent) of students in both groups were born outside Canada, close to 80 per cent in each group indicated that they had studied in Canada for at least one year prior to coming to OCAD U. Nevertheless, there were significant differences in the extent of their Canadian experience (see Table 4).

Table 4. Years of Study in Canada Prior to OCAD U

	Pathway	Non-Pathway ESL
Study Duration (years):		
Mean	2.17	4.79
SD	1.95	3.45
Range	(0-7)	(0-16)
Study Experience (%):		
0 years	21.7	12.8
1-3 years	52.2	17.0
4+ years	26.1	70.2

Design students who did not enroll in Pathway had spent, on average, twice as many years studying in Canada as the Pathway group [$F(1, 68) = 11.39$, $\eta = .38$]. In fact, over two-thirds of the non-Pathway ESL cohort had been in Canada long enough (at least four years) to have their English proficiency requirement waived on the assumption of adequate language mastery. By comparison, only a quarter of the Pathway group had the equivalent experience [$\chi^2(2) = 12.87$, Cramer's $V = .43$].

Because the extent of prior educational experience in Canada could influence student engagement in OCAD U classes, we took the number of years of prior study in Canada into account when comparing engagement levels and academic outcomes of the groups.

Survey Participation

The same general pattern of group differences found at the cohort level was also replicated for the subgroup that completed the Engagement Survey (see Appendix, Table C). The only notable exception was with regard to respondents' age; non-Pathway ESL respondents were disproportionately younger than their sampling cohort. To account for pre-existing group differences in the background characteristics, effects of the following covariates were statistically controlled for in all subsequent analyses: age, cultural background, parents' level of education and years of prior study in Canada.[7] Due to very small cell sizes, differences in English language proficiency could not be reliably controlled for.

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[7] Immigration status was not included as it was strongly related to years of prior study in Canada [$F(1, 27) = 6.79$, $\eta = .58$].

Engagement Levels

Survey respondents were presented with a list of 12 different activities (see Table 5) and asked to indicate *how often* they engaged in each activity, as well as *how comfortable* they felt doing so, using a 5-point rating scale: "almost never/very uncomfortable" (1), "not often/uncomfortable" (2), "sometimes/somewhat comfortable" (3), "often/comfortable" (4), "very often/very comfortable" (5).

Table 5. Engagement Survey Questions

How often do you... (How comfortable do you feel...)
1. Ask(ing) questions in class?
2. Answer(ing) a question the professor has asked the class (without calling on you specifically)?
3. Give(ing) your opinion in a class discussion?
4. Talk(ing) about your art or design studio work in class?
5. Comment(ing) on a classmate's art or studio work in class?
6. Discuss(ing) ideas or questions about the course with your professor after or outside of class?
7. Study(ing) with other students?
8. Study(ing) with students from a different home country?
9. Work(ing) on an assigned group project with other students?
10. Work(ing) on an assigned group project with students from a different home country?
11. Work(ing) on an assigned group project with native speakers of English?
12. Discuss(ing) ideas from your courses with friends or family outside of class?

Responses to these questions were averaged to derive an overall total engagement score (all 12 questions), as well as scores in two broad sub-domains of engagement: Formal, involving course-related activities carried out in the presence of the professor (Q1-6); and Informal, involving course-related activities carried out with peers, friends, and family outside of class (Q7-12).[8] Within each sub-domain, several specific areas of engagement were identified based on the conceptual meaning of the items and on the empirical item groupings derived via exploratory factor analyses of item responses:

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[8] Separate scores were also derived for the Frequency and Comfort aspects of each sub-domain. However, because Frequency and Comfort scores were very highly inter-correlated (r = **.74** in the Fall, r = **.85** in the Spring), they were combined together to enhance the reliability of the engagement variables.

Formal
- Classroom (general)—asking/answering questions, participating in discussions (Q1–3)
- Studio—commenting on one's own and other students' design work (Q4–5)
- Professor—one-on-one interactions with course instructors (Q6)

Informal
- Studying with other students in general (Q7, Q9)
- Studying with students from other countries (Q8, Q10)
- Studying with native speakers of English (Q11)
- Sharing study experiences with friends and family (Q12)

Engagement levels in each area, adjusted for the effects of covariates, are displayed in Figure 3.

Fall, $r = .85$ in the Spring), they were combined together to enhance the reliability of the engagement variables.

Figure 3. Adjusted Fall and Spring Engagement Levels (average score out of 5)
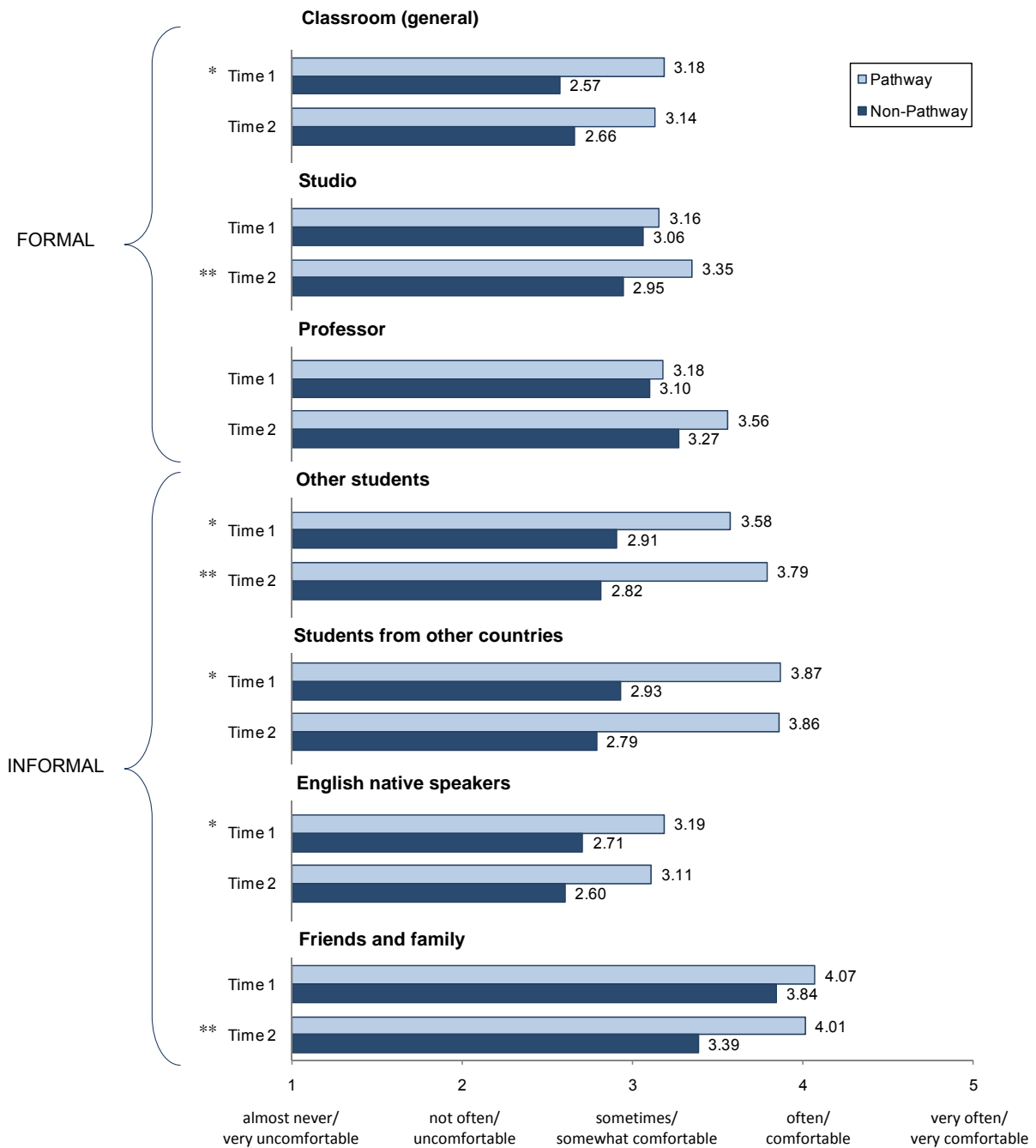
* Significant difference in initial levels of engagement
** Significant difference in change in engagement from Fall to Spring

Initial Engagement

In the fall (approximately one month into the first semester), Pathway survey respondents reported significantly higher overall [$F(1, 21) = 6.12$, $\eta = $ **.40**] Formal [$F(1, 21) = 2.55$, $\eta = $ **.25**] and Informal [$F(1, 21) = 4.35$, $\eta = $ **.39**] levels of engagement than non-Pathway respondents.

In terms of Formal engagement, Pathway and non-Pathway respondents reported comparable levels of Studio [$F(1, 21) = 0.11$, $\eta = .07$] and Professor engagement [$F(1, 21) = 0.06$, $\eta = .04$], but the level of Classroom engagement was significantly lower in the non-Pathway group [$F(1, 21) = 4.94$, $\eta = $ **.33**].

The highest level of Informal engagement in both groups was observed for friends and family, with no significant difference between Pathway and non-Pathway respondents [$F(1, 21) = 0.38$, $\eta = .11$].

As for studying with other students outside of class, Pathway respondents were significantly more engaged with other students in general [$F(1, 21) = 3.19$, $\eta = $ **.35**], as well as with students from other countries [$F(1, 21) = 5.99$, $\eta = $ **.44**] and with English native speakers [$F(1, 21) = 1.83$, $\eta = $ **.26**].

Change in Engagement

To evaluate the efficacy of Pathway in improving students' engagement over the course of the academic year, Pathway and non-Pathway respondents were compared on the extent of change in their engagement levels from fall to spring, after adjusting for the effects of covariates.

Significant group differences were found for changes in studio engagement [$F(1, 19) = 1.13$, $\eta = $ **.22**], studying with other students [$F(1, 19) = 0.74$, $\eta = $ **.20**], and involvement with friends and family [$F(1, 19) = 1.02$, $\eta = $ **.20**]. For studio engagement and studying with other students, engagement increased in the Pathway group but remained unchanged in the non-Pathway group. For friends and family, engagement remained high in the Pathway group but declined for non-Pathway students (see Figure 3).

In both groups, engagement with professors increased [$F(1, 19) = 0.16$, $\eta = .09$], whereas general classroom engagement [$F(1, 19) = 0.50$, $\eta = .14$] and engagement with students from other countries [$F(1, 19) = 0.42$, $\eta = .11$] and with English native speakers [$F(1, 19) = 0.01$, $\eta = .02$] remained unchanged from fall to spring (see Figure 3).

Engagement with Native Speakers

The finding of higher engagement with English native speakers among Pathway respondents was unexpected, as students in Pathway had fewer opportunities to interact with native speakers in their courses. To further investigate this difference, engagement levels in this area were compared separately on the Frequency and Comfort scores.

Consistent with the expectations, there was no significant difference in the frequency of engagement with native speakers between Pathway and non-Pathway respondents either in the Fall [$F(1, 21) = 0.34$, $\eta = .12$] or in the spring [$F(1, 18) = 0.02$, $\eta = .03$]. Rather, the observed difference was primarily due to the significantly higher initial comfort levels in the Pathway group [$F(1, 21) = 9.42$, $\eta = \textbf{.49}$]—a gap that remained stable from fall to spring [$F(1, 18) = 0.64$, $\eta = .17$].

Academic Performance

The Pathway and non-Pathway ESL Design cohorts were compared on their overall yearly GPA, as well as separately on their GPAs in Liberal Studies and Studio courses, after adjusting for the effects of covariates (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Adjusted Yearly Grade Point Average (GPA out of 100)
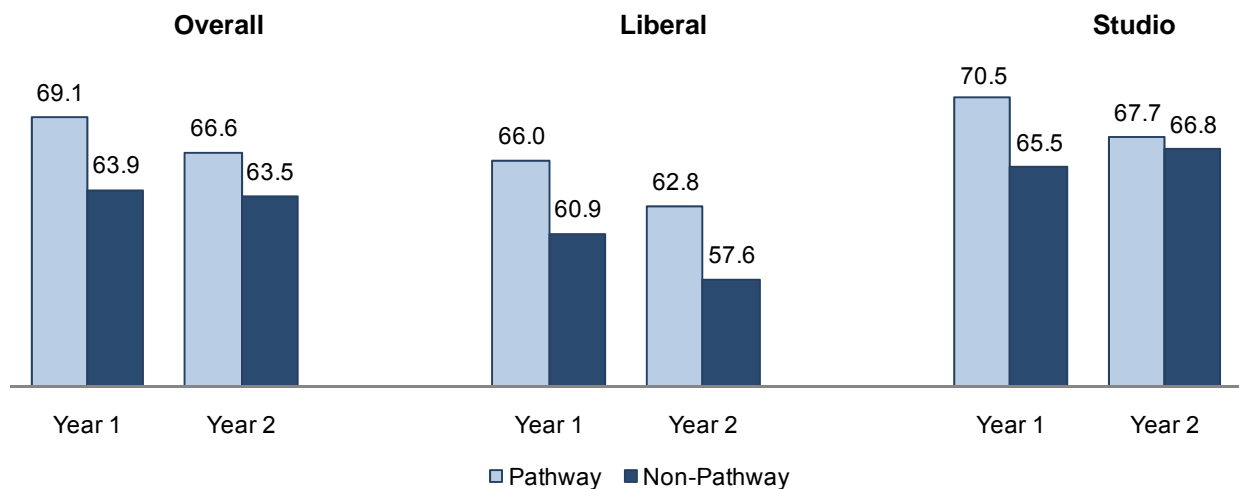
Year 1 Performance[9]

In Year 1 (i.e., the Pathway program year), students in Pathway performed significantly better overall than the non-Pathway ESL Design cohort [$F(1, 36) = 2.10$, $\eta = \textbf{.21}$]. This difference was primarily due to their significantly higher GPA in Studio courses [$F(1, 36) = 2.20$, $\eta = \textbf{.22}$], and somewhat (albeit not significantly) higher GPA in Liberal courses [$F(1, 36) = 1.42$, $\eta = .16$].

Table 6 summarizes the effects of engagement in various areas (both initial levels and changes over the year) on students' end-of-year academic performance within the subgroup of survey respondents.

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[9]The vast majority (over 93 per cent) of all Design students were enrolled at OCAD U on a full-time basis, and there was no significant difference in the average number of FTE credits completed by the Pathway ($M = 500.03$) and non-Pathway ($M = 476.68$) groups, after controlling for the effects of covariates [$F(1, 37) = 0.54$, $\eta = .11$].

Table 6. Partial Correlations between Year 1 GPA and the Engagement Variables[10]

	Overall GPA	Liberal GPA	Studio GPA
Initial Engagement:			
Classroom (general)	**.43**	**.27**	**.46**
Studio	**.44**	**.32**	**.42**
Professor	.17	.13	.17
Other Students	**.34**	**.28**	.05
Students from other countries	**.36**	**.28**	.09
English native speakers	**.28**	**.31**	.19
Friends and family	.08	.03	**.28**
Change in Engagement:			
Classroom (general)	.01	.05	.04
Studio	.17	.07	.04
Professor	.12	.02	.11
Other Students	.04	.04	**.26**
Students from other countries	.14	.15	**.24**
English native speakers	.03	.11	.18
Friends and family	.06	.13	**.24**

Based on the pattern of significant (bolded) effects in Table 5, better academic performance across both Pathway and non-Pathway ESL groups was associated with higher levels of formal engagement (general Classroom and Studio) in both Liberal and Studio courses, and additionally with higher levels of informal engagement (with other students) in Liberal Studies courses. However, only performance in Studio courses was significantly related to *changes* in engagement associated with being in Pathway (i.e., informal engagement with other students and with friends and family).

Retention

The retention rate from Year 1 to Year 2 was comparable between the Pathway (91.3 per cent) and non-Pathway ESL (85.4 per cent) design cohorts [$\chi^2(1) = 0.50$, Cramer's $V = .08$]. Due to the very small number of drop-outs ($n = 3$) within the survey respondent subgroup, analysis of engagement levels in relation to student retention was not feasible.

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[10] Adjusted for differences in age, cultural background, parents' education level, and duration of prior study in Canada.

Year 2 Performance

In Year 2, the overall GPA advantage associated with being in Pathway was no longer significant [$F(1, 33) = 0.88$, $\eta = .16$]. While the two groups experienced an identical decline in their Liberal course performance [$F(1, 33) = 0.00$, $\eta = .00$], the decrease in Studio GPA from Year 1 to Year 2 occurred in the Pathway group only [$F(1, 33) = 6.52$, $\eta = \textbf{.41}$], such that Pathway students no longer had a significant edge over their non-Pathway counterparts (see Figure 4).

Qualitative Results

The qualitative component of our research investigated: (1) students' perceptions of the barriers they faced to engaging in their OCAD U classes; (2) their perceptions of the change in their engagement levels from the beginning to the end of the year; and (3) their perceptions of the benefits and liabilities of participating in an ESL-only program. Each of these areas is discussed below.

Barriers to Engagement

In our interviews, Pathway interview participants were asked to identify the main challenges they faced in their first-year courses. The five salient challenges that emerged during these discussions can be interpreted as barriers they perceived to engagement in their courses.

Not surprisingly, our interview participants identified their "Limitations in Language Skills" as a barrier to engagement. Closely linked to this barrier was a "Fear of Judgment by Native Speakers," both instructors and peers. Equally salient in the interviews, however, were comments on the discomfort, or lack of familiarity, they felt with the expectations of instructors and their pedagogical approach. Of the barriers they mentioned, three emerged as salient: "Expectation of Active Contribution in Class," "Expectation of Autonomous Learning and Originality" and "Negotiating Group Projects." In all three cases, these barriers reflect expectations that are strongly emphasized in the studio-based curriculum at OCAD U, with group projects a particularly important component of the Design curriculum.

It was not always clear in our data whether the challenges students identified arose from differences between expectations in their home country and those in Canada, or whether they arose simply from the transition from high school to university level education. In other words, some of the challenges they identified, such as lack of background knowledge and meeting their professors' expectations of critical analysis in university essay writing, would likely be shared by many Canadian-educated students making the transition to university. However, in the case of "Expectation of Active Contribution in Class" and the "Expectation of Autonomous Learning and Originality," respondents did make clear in many of their remarks that they believed the barriers posed to them by OCAD U instructors' expectations arose from cultural differences between the educational approach in their home country and in Canada. As we will see, the source of the barrier to "Negotiating Group Projects" is harder to interpret based on our data.

The barriers discussed separately below are, of course, interconnected. For example, students' fear of judgment arises in part from limitations in language skills and in part from lack of confidence performing in a class context where expectations are unfamiliar. (see Appendix B, Table 1 and 2 for codes and frequency counts for all barriers).

Limitations in Language Skills

Limitations in speaking, writing, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills in the language of instruction (English) were mentioned by a large number of Pathway interview participants as barriers to engagement. In many cases, their existing language skills did not prepare them for the demands of a university level curriculum. New discipline-specific vocabulary was a particular challenge, as was the large volume of reading. When it came to writing, in addition to overcoming limitations in vocabulary, students were challenged to adapt to culturally specific expectations of North American essay structure and writing style.

Overall, lack of confidence speaking in class emerged as the most salient linguistic barrier for our interview participants.

Students talked about the challenge of expressing their ideas in class, particularly in the fall interviews. For example, one student commented: "*You know what the answer is, but I can't say it. English is my barrier.*" As another student put it, "*Sometimes, even if I know the answer, because of vocabulary, I'm not going to volunteer. It's really hard. You know it but can't say it.*" Another specified that the nervousness she feels when she has to speak makes it challenging to "*organize [her] language very well.*"

We can safely assume that for these students, as for all non-native speakers, being able to perform in a particular context, in this case an interactive classroom, would depend not only on mastering the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures, but also on mastering the turns of phrase and conversational gambits appropriate to the social context. As we will see later in the report, students had trouble not only finding the right words, but also in phrasing their contributions in ways that were appropriately diplomatic and nuanced.

Fear of Judgment by Native Speakers

Fear of judgment by native speakers also emerged as a key theme in our interviews. While closely tied to students' lack of confidence in their language skills, this fear seemed to be experienced as a somewhat separate and additional barrier, and was mentioned particularly in the fall interviews. One student felt self-conscious about speaking in integrated classes and commented, "*They are all Canadians and they can speak better than me even though I know better than them. [laugh] It's hard to say my ideas.*"

In some cases, the fear was focused on the perception that instructors would not understand their questions and contributions. One student described a classroom experience in which a professor, who was a native speaker, could not understand a student who was a non-native speaker, while other non-native-speaking classmates understood what the student was saying, and commented, "*The professor is not as flexible as we are. That's why I'm afraid to speak to*

native speakers. . . . "

In many cases, however, it was the perceived reaction of native-speaking peers that posed the greatest barrier. One student talked about feeling nervous when she had to make a presentation in front of native speakers: *"I'm afraid that they don't understand my English. My words and vocabulary are limited, of course."* Probing by the interviewer revealed that the fear of judgment by peers rests at times on students' expectation of native speaker reactions, rather than actual experience.

The fear of judgment by both instructors and peers arose not only from lack of confidence in language skills, but also fear that their contributions weren't what was expected or valued in the course context. In the fall interview, one student described her concern related to asking questions in integrated classes as follows:

> *When [non-native-speaking students] ask questions . . . they feels like the professor probably don't want to spend that much time on their questions, 'cause they think it's probably not that important, not the question they [professors] are expecting the student to ask.*

This same student further commented, *"And the native speaker student probably [think it's] a bit stupid you ask like the question they all probably know."*

Fear of judgment by native speakers was most often mentioned as a barrier to contributing in class. However, it also arose in discussion of work on group projects with native speakers, as in this comment made by a respondent in the fall interview:

> *I'm kind of nervous [with native speakers]. I have poor English. What if I'm wrong? They kind of speak little bit fast. It's little bit hard to understand them. I usually work with people from Asian countries. That makes me more comfortable.*

While some of the fear students felt stemmed from the simple perception that they wouldn't be understood due to limited language skills, this seemed to be amplified by the awareness that there were also cultural differences in the expectations of instructors and peers that might make their contributions appear inappropriate.

Expectation of Active Contribution in Class

One frequently mentioned challenge was the expectation that students contribute actively to class discussion. In many cases respondents specified, particularly during the fall interviews, that this differed from the expectations of students in classes in their home country. One student, realizing the emphasis placed on discussions in OCAD U, talked about feeling uncomfortable and shy to express her ideas: *"I have difficulties discussing, because I never experienced it before. In [country], teachers give the knowledge, academic subjects and try to make students clever."* Another student specified that in her home country, she was never required to speak in class either in high school or college:

Rarely, student or teachers asked me how I felt about this. We were just receiving info from teachers and we had to be quiet. I feel something, but I just don't know how to say, how to express, explain.

The same student experienced the barrier particularly acutely when asked to make a formal presentation in class, something she was not accustomed to doing in her home country. Even in the spring semester, the same student was still experiencing challenges, and commented:

I found speaking in front of class is really challenging. Even if I practice, it's going to be hard for me to do it. We don't present anything [in my home country]. We just sit and just our teacher speaks.

When probed, she clarified that her discomfort arose from a combination of limitations in her language skills and the difference in expectations in the two educational systems.

One context at OCAD U where students are regularly asked to contribute actively in class is during "critiques" in studio classes. During a critique, student projects are displayed and classmates are asked to give verbal responses to each other's work, including suggestions for improvement. Critiques may be conducted in a more or less formal way, depending on the class, and participation typically contributes to the course mark.

This student felt that as a peer, it was inappropriate to comment on a classmate's work and she attributed the discomfort to her background:

You never do that in my [design college in home country]. In my school . . . only the teacher would make some comments. I'm used to that. . . . Never ever would some students in my class who I never talked to [would comment] "I don't like this, I don't see any purpose, etc."

The same student felt that she does not "*have this power of knowledge to critique [other students'] work,*" especially concerning giving negative feedback.

Some students made a clear distinction between formal classroom critiques and the informal critiques that occur when students work on studio projects with other Pathway students outside of class. In informal critiques, familiarity with other students and a sense of shared linguistic challenges provided some students with a more comfortable space for the exchange of opinions, which suggests that the barriers they faced were not purely linguistic, but they were also affected by the social context in which they were expected to perform.

Culturally based reservations about contributing to critique can be compounded by limitations in language skills. For example, non-native speakers may struggle to find appropriate expressions to formulate feedback that is diplomatic. As one student explained: "*I don't know how to speak in a gentle way, so I don't want to make rude judgment for others' artwork.*" While this student had felt comfortable sharing ideas in critiques in a postsecondary institution in her home country where she knew her classmates well, not knowing how to be *"polite and kind"* in critiques and not being familiar with other students in OCAD U classes created a barrier to her active participation.

It should be noted that students were, in general, keen observers of the cultural context they found themselves in, and perceptive about the expectations placed on them. That they were actively negotiating these expectations is highlighted by the fact that some, while understanding instructors' expectations, made an active choice not to strive to meet them. This is particularly well illustrated by one students' reflection during the fall interview. Commenting on her reservations about speaking up in class, she explained:

> *Even in the ESL class, if there is someone who is really talkative, I don't really talk. I know what I have to say, why do I have to speak out, right? If the professor asks a question and if no one speaks up, then, OK, I'll go. It's part of my character. I don't want to say "listen to me, listen to me." If you want to talk, go ahead.*

Expectation of Autonomous Learning and Originality

Many interviewees observed that originality in their design work is expected and highly valued at OCAD U. In addition, some students indicated that professors expect students to work independently without much guidance. This barrier was raised primarily in relation to studio classes, with students commenting that professors often do not demonstrate techniques or show examples, expecting students to generate their own original ideas for studio work. Students also mentioned that they are expected to learn certain skills independently outside of class, whereas in their home country, it would be an expected role of the instructor to deliver step by step guidance. Interestingly, students commenting on this expectation came from a variety of countries of origin, including China, Korea, Japan, and Iran, suggesting that this expectation may be unfamiliar to students from very diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.

One student commented on the lack of guidance from professors on how a project is to be carried out:

> *For example, you are making a lamp. . . . Teacher is not actually teaching you every single detail about what you need to do to make a lamp. . . . They don't really teach us the basic info. They think "you guys know already." They told us to do the research but there are some thing[s] we have to know before we do the research.*

Another student felt that although the assignment sheet and verbal explanation about projects in class were clear, her professor did not provide the opportunity she needed "*to talk individually, just to see what is [her] problem doing this project.*" The student had the impression that even asking for clarification was disfavoured by her instructor.

Some students specified that the approach at OCAD U varied from expectations in similar classes in their home country. One student interviewed in the fall commented that he liked the OCAD U professors' emphasis on originality and brainstorming and said, "[professors] want you to think about it even if you don't have a perfect image or artwork." While the student agreed with the expectation, he also felt that "teachers should give more suggestions." and said,

"Sometimes we just talk and think wild. Teachers should give us some rules and make us in the right track."

Another student made the connection between the lack of specific guidance and the expectation of originality, but remained critical of the pedagogical approach. She found that seeing examples of finished work, in addition to written assignment sheets, clarified professors' expectations in studio projects:

> *Some professors want student to make original work. That's why they don't show examples, last years' students or other artists.' . . . If they show us . . . something the professor think[s][is] good, I see a clear goal. I won't make exactly the same thing, but follow the clear goal, then I can make a better project.*

This student felt that the lack of direction, and the focus on autonomous work, amounted to a lack of *teaching* on the instructor's part. This reservation remained for some students in the spring semester. For example, one student noted that he and his classmates did not receive suggestions or guidance from the professor in carrying out studio projects, and commented, "*I learned everything by myself. . . . I learned nothing from the class.*" The student further described the class as follows:

> *[Professor] didn't give us brainstorming or inspiration. . . . She just gave us the intro assignment sheet and we do it by [ourselves], and we get feedback, that's critique, then you can leave. Then the next class [we do] presentation.*

Comments such as the one above suggest that students were struggling not only with the unfamiliarity of the expectations placed on them, but also with the failure of their instructors to meet their own expectations of what a teacher should provide to students.

Negotiating Group Projects

Another common challenge our respondents identified was the difficulty of negotiating group projects. From our data it is difficult to determine to what extent this challenge was specific to the experience of ESL students, and to what extent it may be similar to the challenge that negotiating work with peers presents to many Canadian-educated students.

In the fall interviews, students discussed general difficulties with group projects but acknowledged the necessity of working in a group, as their future design careers would require them to work in a team. In the spring interviews, students spoke more about the specific challenges of group projects, in particular navigating the varied communication styles and work habits of their peers. One student described the problem she had with group work as follows: *"We are fighting because we can't communicate with each other. . . . In order to start working, it took two days, because we had to fix relationships."* Another student attributed the difficulty he had with group work to personality conflict rather than linguistic challenge: *"One guy didn't listen to anything and he [would] do whatever he wants, so I was kind of stressed. . . . I was the one who [was] telling him things. I don't think his idea is good. The guy keeps saying to do his idea. So it was a struggle."*

It is likely that limited language skills made it more difficult for ESL students to negotiate roles diplomatically, as one student stated: *"Sometimes we had different opinions. . . . So this tension . . . I don't think maybe his or her idea [would] work at all. I try to put my ideas and trying to be still nice. It wasn't easy."*

While in the interviews students generally did not directly identify their difficulties with group work as arising from a difference in expectations between OCAD U and their home countries, some of their remarks suggested that they found group work particularly challenging when working with their fellow ESL students, as in this student's comment:

> *For me, especially for group work in ESL class, there is lots of ESL students with language gaps, I think that's the problem for me. Two things. First one is language level of other students. Another one is more personal things. Not mature as native students.*

Another student, in one of the follow up interviews in second year specified that native speakers appeared better prepared to negotiate work in group projects:

> *This year, I had a project and I was actually surprised. . . .Maybe because in the first year it was people who was ESL class . . . with these three girls, they were just straight from high school. Maybe they teach down that skills better. . . . It was super supporting. They looked very strong to me . . .[in] group project skills.*

These comments suggest that it is possible that Pathway students found it particularly challenging to work in groups because it was an unfamiliar expectation for many of them. Likewise, despite the fear of judgment they expressed in the fall interviews, it is possible that they found it easier at times to work on group projects with native speakers educated in Canada, as these students were themselves more accustomed to group work.

Impact of Pathway on Student Engagement

A central focus of our research was whether participation in Pathway had an impact on the engagement levels of the participants. We have two sources of evidence from our qualitative data that indicate areas where students' engagement increased over the year. One is somewhat indirect: If students identified a certain barrier to their engagement in the fall and mentions of this barrier declined in the spring interviews, we can take this as an indication that the experience of this barrier was less significant for our respondents. Since they identified the barrier as an impediment to their engagement in their courses, we might suspect that this change allowed increased engagement. A more direct source of evidence of a change in engagement are responses to direct questions put to our participants during the spring interviews asking them to compare their level of engagement in the fall and spring in the areas identified in the survey.

Of course, a change in engagement alone is insufficient to determine the impact of Pathway. It is possible that all ESL students, regardless of their program, experience some increase in engagement during the course of their first year due to an improvement in language skills and

increased familiarity with academic expectations. Thus, in this section we will highlight evidence from our interviews where students attributed their change in engagement to particular aspects of Pathway.

The data that follows on change in engagement and its sources will be organized following the key barriers discussed in the previous section.

Change in Language Skills

While the impact of Pathway on language skills was not a central focus of our research, students identified limitations in language skills as an important barrier to their engagement. Although limitations in language skills were in most cases compounded by lack of comfort with academic expectations, it is safe to assume that an improvement in language skills would at least partly contribute to a student's increased comfort engaging in his or her courses.

Limitations in speaking and writing skills were each mentioned by about two thirds of students in the fall as a barrier. This dropped to about a third of students mentioning each barrier in the spring. More than half the students explicitly mentioned that their writing skills had improved, while about a third mentioned an improvement in speaking.

In the case of writing skills, some students attributed the improvement to explicit instruction in their ESL writing class. While this was not a common comment, one student did indicate that she applied skills learned in her ESL writing class to projects in her other classes:

> What I was learning in the ESL class influenced my other classes. For other classes we had to do research papers. I felt more confident with that. [Instructor] helped me a lot. The [inaudible] teachers, they boost your confidence, and you take confidence and you apply it to different projects.

However, students were equally likely to attribute the change to help from friends, or from the Writing & Learning Centre. It is important as well to note that our non-Pathway ESL students also took an ESL writing class. Thus, skills learned in the ESL class should not necessarily be considered a benefit of the block program design.

It is perhaps surprising that after a year of study, only a minority of students reported an improvement in their speaking skills. Some students mentioned that the encouragement they received to speak in their Pathway classes carried over into increased confidence speaking in other classes. On the other hand, Pathway students whose speaking skills improved were equally likely to attribute the improvement to group work with other students or conversations with friends outside of class. Some said they had deliberately sought out contact with native speakers to improve their speaking skills. What is notable is that about a third of students said that their speaking had not improved at all or had even worsened. Students who said this attributed it to lack of contact with native speakers and with the low language level in Pathway. This finding will be further discussed in the section on Perceived Benefits and Liabilities of Sheltered Classes. (see Appendix B, Table 3 for detailed frequency counts for change in language skills).

Decreased Fear of Judgment

This is the barrier that showed the clearest change for our participants. While eight of our 12 interviewees mentioned it as a barrier in the fall semester, only three said it was still a barrier in the spring.

In the fall, many students indicated that Pathway was a "safe space" where they felt free of judgment, by either their instructors or peers, compared to their integrated classes. They contrasted this with their experiences in integrated classes. For example, one student talked about initially feeling less confident speaking during integrated classes:

> *Everybody speaks so fast and use more [inaudible] word to describe and depict things, especially in presentation. . . . Everybody is much better than me in speaking. For the first month, I struggled.*

In contrast, in Pathway classes the same student felt, *"comfortable speaking and discussing"* because he thought his, *"English might be better than somebody else's*." The student specified that this was due to the shared experiences with his ESL peers: *"Everybody is from different countries, so we might have experiences in common."*

Several students also reported in the spring semester that they felt more comfortable working with native speakers on group projects, suggesting a decreased fear of judgment in this context. Students' shifting experience of group work will be discussed further later in this section.

Our data do not indicate conclusively the source of students' decreased fear of judgment in their integrated classes over the year. It is likely attributable to a combination of factors including increased familiarity with academic expectations and some improvement in language skills. Students also reported in the spring that having interaction with native speakers in classes, for instance through group work, and outside of class through social interaction, made them realize that they can in fact communicate with native speakers.

However, it seems plausible that the confidence students gained from the safe space of Pathway may account for at least some reduction in the fear of judgment Pathway students experienced in their classes as a whole. Although comments explicitly attributing the reduced fear of judgment to the safe space experienced in Pathway were not common in our interviews, this interpretation is supported by the comment made in the spring semester by one student who indicated specifically that professors encouraging her to speak in Pathway classes helped increase her confidence. At the same time, she qualified her statement by saying that the confidence did not fully carry over into the mixed environment. Asked whether the confidence in speaking she gained in Pathway affected her experience in other classes, she responded:

> *It helps a little bit but not fully. I can't get over [the fear] for just a year, speaking with native speakers. I think it's better to take the Pathway, feel comfortable and after you have practiced, you feel comfortable to speak in [integrated] classes.*

<u>Increased Confidence in Contributing Actively in Class</u>

By spring about half the respondents reported increased comfort in contributing actively in class, including in at least one of the following areas: asking and answering questions, critiquing other students' studio work, or giving an opinion during a class discussion. In general, students reported this increased engagement in their integrated classes rather than in their Pathway classes, which is understandable given that they already reported being very comfortable in their Pathway classes in the fall.

Students attributed this change to a variety of sources. Some students felt their increased comfort arose primarily from familiarity with the institution and environment. One student said she felt shy about speaking up in class in the Fall because she was *"not used to the environment,"* whereas she talked about feeling much better in spring because *"Now [she got] used to it, and it's fine for [her] to talk more and participate more."* Another student commented:

> *When you got to a place firstly, you feel a little awkward and nervous, right, but right now, it's almost gone. Maybe that's why I'm more comfortable. I don't think it's a matter of English.*

In the spring, this student, in discussing the expectation to contribute in critique, attributed her increased comfort to improved command of subtlety of expression in English:

> *Instead of saying "I don't like your project." I'm trying to find different words. I understand how to do my expression better. . . . "You need more work," instead of saying, "no it doesn't work."*

Another student attributed her increased comfort contributing to critique to both improved language skills and better understanding of instructors' expectations:

> *Talking about my project, I feel more comfortable, because my language has improved a little bit. I feel like I know what teachers want. I know what teachers like. So I can talk about those.*

It is difficult, from our interview data, to draw a direct connection between students' participation in Pathway classes and their increased comfort in actively contributing in their classes in general. However, it seems plausible that the reduced fear of judgment discussed in the previous section may be a contributing factor and that this may, to some extent, have carried over from the safe space established in the Pathway classes. A comment from one student explicitly supports this interpretation. As she explained: *"I was learning in Pathway and it gave me confident to talk in regular classes. It's like I was learning English in Pathway and use it in regular classes. It helped me."* Comments such as these support the link established by our quantitative data between participation in Pathway and active contribution in class, particularly during critique, with our survey data showing positive changes in this area for Pathway students but not for non-Pathway ESL students (see Appendix B, Table 4 for frequency counts on changes in engagement).

Response to Expectation of Autonomous Learning

Several of our students spoke in the spring of increased comfort with the academic culture and instructors' expectations. One student reported:

> *Even with less study, I can get better marks. When I came here, I wasn't sure what my professor wants and how I can just do those. Now I know what's going to help me get good marks and what they want.*

As the student explained, the increased understanding of professors' expectations allowed her to better manage her time and to feel less lost or overwhelmed than she had in the fall.

What is most striking in our interview data, however, is the wide range of autonomous learning strategies our interviewees had developed by spring to overcome the barriers they encountered and meet the expectations placed on them. Almost all our respondents said they sought support from friends and family and accessed professors outside of class, while over half said they studied with other OCAD U students outside of class and accessed academic support services such as the Writing & Learning Centre (see Appendix B, Table 5 for complete list of strategies). The frequency with which Pathway students sought help from friends and family is particularly striking. When asked in the spring, "where do you seek help with your school work?" almost all the interview participants mentioned seeking help from family and friends. It seems likely that students adopted these strategies, at least in part, as a response to the lack of in-class guidance from faculty they reported.

Of the independent learning strategies students reported utilizing, one strategy can be directly attributed to Pathway. In both the spring and fall, more than half our participants reported studying with other students outside of class. Of these, most participated in an informal study group consisting of Pathway students that met in a campus study space. (This group had already been formed in the fall by the time of our initial interviews). Students in this group worked together primarily on their studio courses, but also helped each other with Liberal Studies assignments and exam preparation. It seems very likely that Pathway facilitated the formation of this study group early in the year by bringing students together in a shared set of course sections. This contrasts with the typical experience of first year OCAD U students, in which students have individual programs and, even when they share courses with friends, are likely to find themselves in different course sections.

The group consisted entirely of Asian students, but from different countries. It is important to note that the common language was therefore English and the study group contributed to both the use of English among the participants and cross-cultural contact among ESL students of different national origins. The members of the group were diverse in their exposure to Canadian culture; some were new to Canada, while some had been in Canada from four to five years. Some were new graduates from high school, and some had college education in their home country. One of the newcomer students in the group said these friends helped her adjust to the new environment in the new culture.

Participants said that input from other students improved their studio work and they benefited from students' different cultural perspectives. As one student commented on their study group: *"We have many different kinds of friends, in their countries, they have all different ideas and it gives me many different ideas and make me think of other things."* The same student appreciated that her friends' feedback gave her the "*perspective [she] didn't know,"* which allowed her to "*make better artwork."* As to Liberal Studies, another student felt that the friends in the informal study group helped her understand complex concepts in preparation for an exam.

Some said they felt more motivated to study with other students. One student explained: *"If a person is doing their work, I feel like to do it with them."* Another student stated that if she went home, she would have *"procrastinate[d] and waste[d] time,"* but the study space where the group met *"[was] the environment to push you to do [course related work] with other people,"* because everyone was doing course work there.

Furthermore, they were able to practice skills by critiquing other students' work in an informal setting. The students in this group were already very familiar and comfortable with each other by the time fall interviews took place; even the students who were shy to comment on other students' work in class said they were comfortable sharing their opinions. Asked what the difference is between giving feedback to friends and in a class critique, one student commented: "*When I work with them, it's casual and . . . not formal. Also we were together more than two months. So I got close to them*." Students were very keen to exchange opinions. As one student explained: "*When I'm free I will think about some ideas to give other people."* Another student felt that talking about projects with other students outside of class was expected of them by their professors. The student understood the benefit of peer interaction as follows: "*We can be more honest because we are students."*

Some of these students said that as a group, they tried to figure out what the professor expected in studio assignments, as it was difficult at times to understand the professors' expectations due to linguistic challenges and cultural differences; participation in the study group helped directly address the lack of guidance from faculty that students reported. It is interesting to note that all five students in this group decided to volunteer for the interview. They must have felt that it was valuable to share their experiences.

Attribution of collaborative study habits to Pathway is supported by our quantitative results, which found that, compared to non-Pathway ESL students, Pathway students experienced an increase in informal engagement with other students (including students from other countries) outside class, and that this increase was directly related to improved academic performance in studio courses.

Thus a significant outcome of the program may not be the benefit of language support students built into their classes, but rather the collaborative learning strategies and social support the program helped them develop outside of class.

Shifting Experience of Group Projects

Our participants' experience of group work is complex. In the spring interviews, they discussed increased comfort working with native speakers on group projects, reflecting a decrease in the fear of judgment that they experienced in this and other contexts. One student talked about her experience of working on group projects with native speakers for the first time in the winter term as follows: "*At first . . . I felt a little scared, how can I communicate with these people. They were good and they understand me. So I felt comfortable after I talked to them.*" As a result of this experience, this student realized the benefit of working with different people and commented: *"I know they can understand me, different cultures. I got more confidence to talk to [native speaker] students."* Another student, who had previously had little interaction with native speakers and felt shy to speak to them, talked equally positively in spring about her experience of working on group projects with native speakers: "*We can still communicate and . . . talk about our opinion. There is not much difficulty in the communication.*" This student realized that being understood by native speakers was not as challenging as she had imagined: *"Sometimes I haven't make a complete sentence, but they can ask you. . . . Even though I'm not speaking fluently, they can guess what's my meaning."*

However, as mentioned earlier, students reported in the spring that work on group projects remained a challenge, and some specified that working with other ESL students (presumably in their Pathway classes) posed a particular barrier. If some of this difficulty arose from a lack of familiarity Pathway students had with group projects, it does not appear that the program itself contributed to any improvement of their skills in this area. One student commented directly on the lack of explicit instruction in this area: "*Even better if they taught us how to work in a group, the method*."

Student Perceptions of Benefits and Liabilities of the Sheltered ESL Program

Our respondents indicated that they had benefited from three aspects of Pathway: the explicit academic and language support they received, the "safe space" and group cohesion that existed for them in their Pathway courses and the cross-cultural interaction with other students. However, as we will see, students' views of the safe space aspect of the program were complex, with many viewing it as a liability, especially by spring. This ambivalence is best captured in the student profiles included at the end of the Qualitative Results section.

The analysis presented in this section is based primarily on our interview data. However, we also analyzed an open-ended question on the survey asking students to comment on the "advantages and disadvantages of studying in English Language Pathway." This data gave us responses from all 17 of our survey respondents. Analysis of the open-ended survey question (summarized in Appendix B Table 7) reveals similar themes to those that emerged from the interview data. However, it should be noted that concerns about the safe space and lack of interaction with native speakers were expressed less frequently in the survey responses than in our interview data. It is possible that participants felt more comfortable commenting frankly on this downside of the program in an interview context.

Explicit Academic and Language Support

A number of Pathway students identified specific instruction they received in Pathway as benefits. Specific instruction mentioned included:

- Language-related sentence structure and grammar, including explanation of vocabulary;
- Academic skills primarily related to Liberal Studies courses, including essay structure, researching method for essays and reading skills (skimming, guessing the meaning of words from context);
- Detailed explanation of course material, including reading and assignment requirements, sometimes accompanied by examples both in Studio and Liberal Studies courses.

In general, students who mentioned explicit instruction as a benefit felt it had contributed to the development of their language skills and their understanding of the expectations on particular assignments. They did not report that the explicit academic and language support they received in their Pathway classes contributed to their levels of engagement. Thus, despite the difficulty students reported in meeting the expectations of active participation in class, autonomous learning, and work on group projects, our interviewees did not indicate that they received any explicit instruction in their Pathway classes that helped them perform in these contexts.

It should be noted that the explicit academic and language support Pathway students received was delivered primarily in their ESL Writing course, a course that was also part of the program of non-Pathway participants. Thus this instruction may not be a unique aspect of the experience of Pathway students.

Safe Space/Group Cohesion

Pathway students commonly talked positively about the safe space Pathway provided and indicated that this safe space contributed to their engagement in their Pathway classes. Many respondents said that the understanding of ESL barriers expressed by their instructors and peers made them feel more comfortable participating in class:

> *[The instructor] will explain the reading, it's more interesting. It's kind of extra help for us. I think it's really comfortable to talk more, to show your opinion in class. You know you can listen well and you can try to speak well too. People are not native speakers, so they will understand you.*

Students' comments indicated that there was a strong sense of shared identity and understanding amongst ESL students because they were facing similar linguistic and cultural challenges. This contributed to group cohesion, most strongly felt in the fall (added by Mina), as illustrated in the following comments from the fall interview:

> *In the Pathway class, comfortable speaking and discussing. [I'm more comfortable because] I think my English might be better than somebody else's. Everybody is from different countries, so we might have experiences in common. Everybody is new to the country so that makes this class like a group.*

In the Pathway program, they could understand me. We are in the same situation. That made us more closer. It made me more comfortable studying with them.

The "block program" design of Pathway, in which students shared several courses together, contributed to this group cohesion.

Pathway is more like acting more like a group, all the Pathway people, all the friends. I have at least three classes together. I have more time with them, get the chance to get friends.

The group cohesion helped students not only in class, but also in navigating the institution, as illustrated by this student's comment:

Each course has lots of info, including room change. A lot of events are going on too. ESL course really helped me, because we can exchange information. We are in the same situation. We read email and yeah, we didn't understand, what does that mean. It's for us, we have to take that course, we have to take that extra, we have to go there to get that, and so on.

Students are nice. Even people who speak English very well [in Pathway], they are really happy to talk to you. Sometimes you have problems and you can go and ask them and they are very happy to explain it to you, even some things that are not related to class.

These positive comments about the safe space aspect of the program were common in the fall, and were repeated by many students in the spring when asked about the overall benefits and liabilities of studying in Pathway. However, in the spring, a number of students identified safe space as a *liability*. While most continued to feel that the support and understanding they received from their Pathway instructors was beneficial, fewer students in the spring considered the understanding of peers to be a benefit compared to the fall. Further, several specified that the lack of interaction with native speakers slowed their language development. As one student explained:

Most of the classes [we take each semester] are Pathway, so we only talk with Pathway people, 'cause we have the same class, we have the same projects and we got used to each other. You don't have the chance to hear the native speakers talk. It really affects you.

Some also felt that the limited language skills of their peers in Pathway held back their language development. The sense of group cohesion that was strongly expressed in the fall came through less strongly by the spring as an increasing number of students felt more ready for the challenge of interacting with and sharing classes with native speakers. One interview participant even chose to switch out of the Pathway program in the winter semester to challenge herself more.

Overall, our respondents expressed a keen ambivalence about the safe space provided by Pathway. While they appreciated the comfort they felt in that environment, some actively sought out the challenge of interacting with native speakers in their integrated classes and felt that, in

the long run, interaction with native speakers was essential to improving their language skills and confidence. As one student put it, reflecting back on the year:

Advantages [of Pathway] is when you first start, it helps you a lot to feel self-confident to talk, to feel that everybody is just like you. . . . The problem is in the long run, you are in your safe zone. . . . If you stay there such a long time, you just get used to being in Pathway, just ESL student and the real world is really scary.

Although one student specified that the mix of sheltered and integrated classes was a well-designed feature of Pathway that allowed her to benefit both from the safe space of the sheltered classes and the challenge of the integrated ones, many students did not seem to feel that the program design struck the right balance between the benefits gained from sheltered classes and the liabilities of isolation. In general, students who entered the program with stronger spoken language skills and more previous exposure to native speakers, felt least satisfied with studying with other ESL students. In some cases they specified that Pathway was most appropriate for students with lower language skills or for those who were newer to Canada. Thus, it is likely that no one program design would strike the right balance for all students.

At the end of this section we offer a series of more extensive interview excerpts that show how the experience of students of a variety of backgrounds developed over the course of the year.

Cross-Cultural Interaction Within Pathway

While a number of students specified that the lack of interaction with native speakers was a drawback of the program, others mentioned that they appreciated the cross-cultural contact with ESL students from a variety of countries that Pathway provided. One student felt that Pathway provided a greater opportunity for cross-cultural interaction than integrated classes and commented:

Especially in Pathway, everybody is from different cultures. If you are from Asia and another person is from Europe, you can gain a lot of different experience. This does not exist in native class.

For a non-Asian student, who was very confident in English and did not feel he benefited much from Pathway, cross-cultural interaction was one of the best experiences he gained in the program: *"I like working with people with other cultures. There is a lot of Asian culture, people from Korea, China. . . . That was good."*

A couple of students specified that the presence of other students from their own country made it too tempting to speak their own language; however, given the dominance of ESL enrolment from a small number of countries at OCAD U, these students would likely have encountered students of their own background in other classes as well.

Our quantitative data indicates that the students who self-selected into Pathway were, in fact, from a greater diversity of national and linguistic backgrounds than the general OCAD U ESL

program. Thus, although some participants regretted the partial isolation from native speakers that resulted from the program design, the diversity within the group enriched their experiences in their first year.

Transition to Second Year

In general, our interview participants from the follow-up phase (interviewed in the second semester of their second year) seemed to be adjusting well to the demands of their studies in second year. They continued to be challenged by certain academic expectations, but they rose to the challenge by drawing on a range of independent learning strategies.

Challenges of Second Year Curriculum

Pathway students transitioning to second year faced some challenges that they likely shared with other OCAD U students, in particular developing the time management skills to keep on top of an increasingly demanding workload. In addition, however, they reported that the expectation of active participation in classes, particularly through formal presentations and participation in critique, posed an increased challenge as projects in second year became more complex and concept driven compared to first year projects. While some reported an improvement in presentation skills through help from professors and increased experience presenting, the same students commented they hoped for further improvement. As one student put it: "*The project is getting deeper. There is lots of deeper research and require professional presentation skills in front of the clients, even not only students but clients as well.*" This student commented later: "*I hope I can reach certain level as native [speaking] student.*" Some said that the expectation to actively participate in classes was even greater than first year and that their first year program had not prepared them for this expectation.

The challenge students identified in preparing presentations and contributing to critiques was augmented for some students by the loss of the safe space they had benefited from in Pathway. As one student commented, "*[Professors] were using much more difficult terms and kind of speaking fast and those things were hard for me to understand. . . . It's kind of hard to ask professor to speak in easier words. That was hard.*" Consequently, this student felt she didn't fully understand what the professors were talking about. Another student commented: "*[Professors] see that we are ESL students, but I don't think they care about it, so I had to practice a lot.*" The degree to which students were challenged by this transition depended on their overall level of confidence in their language skills; those who felt less confident in their language skills felt the loss of safe space most keenly.

Engagement in Second Year and Impact of Pathway

While some students spoke to the challenge of the loss of safe space, even those who were least confident did appear to be striving to participate more. Some talked about spending more time reading, writing and practicing presentations. As a group, their engagement levels appeared to increase, manifested in particular by the maintenance and development of a wide range of independent learning strategies, including accessing professors outside of class more than they did in first year, and seeking advice on their projects from upper-year students in their discipline. One strategy in particular seemed to have been carried over from their first year experience—Pathway students continued to study collectively with other students to a great degree, with collaboration with classmates in their programs replacing the informal study group that was formed during first year. Their friends from Pathway continued to be a source of social and emotional support.

In second year, some respondents again mentioned that isolation from native speakers in the first-year program held back their language development and that this was something they had to strive to overcome in second year. For example, this student felt that first year did not increase her confidence in speaking or in interacting with native speakers and consequently: *"In second year, [it's] still not that much easy to talk with native [speakers]."* At the same time, most students reported feeling comfortable collaborating and interacting with students from a range of backgrounds, including native speakers.

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely the impact of Pathway on participants' second year experience. It seems that Pathway may have most influenced students' continued employment of independent study strategies and collaborative learning, likely something that was fostered by the supportive learning community they experienced as part of Pathway in first year. In addition, some of our interviews suggest that the experience in Pathway provided an orientation to academic culture at OCAD U, in particular the kind of relationship assumed between faculty and students. One student, for instance, commented that while she had considered a teacher as an authority figure based on the academic expectations of her home country, she learned through observing some of the Pathway faculty that at OCAD U students interact with teachers in a "*very open [and] very friendly*" manner.

It should be noted that, while some students found the loss of safe space difficult, this does not mean that they did not benefit from having experienced it for the first year of their program. However, as noted in the analysis of institutional data, the edge Pathway students received in terms of academic achievement in their first year was erased in their second year. This suggests that the safe space they experienced in first year did contribute to their success (at least in first year) and that some form of continuing support would be appropriate in second year.

Individual Student Perspectives

A central goal of our research was to explore students' perceptions of the benefits and liabilities of studying in all-ESL courses. In particular we wished to know: did students feel that the "safe space" created by this learning context benefited their engagement in their other courses, or did

the partial isolation from native speakers hold them back from contributing in integrated classes? As already discussed, students were acutely ambivalent about this aspect of Pathway. To capture the complexity of student perspectives on the benefits and liabilities of studying in an all-ESL environment, we have included some extended interview excerpts as Appendix D. These highlight the ambivalence many students felt about the safe space aspect of the program.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Responses to Research Questions

Below we detail responses to each of our research questions. We draw on relevant qualitative and quantitative data to support our responses.

1. What are the background characteristics of students who opt into Pathway?

Based on the demographic and educational background data obtained from OCAD U's administrative records, Pathway attracted ESL students who were relatively new to Canada, had less prior experience within the Canadian education system and had lower spoken English skills.

Apart from the differences in prior English-speaking experience, several other background differences affected the socio-cultural make-up of the resultant learning community. As a group, Pathway students were more culturally diverse than the rest of the ESL cohort, and came from more educated family backgrounds where both parents had pursued higher education beyond high school or college. It is unknown whether these differences were idiosyncratic of this particular year's cohort, or whether they would recur in future years as well. Nevertheless, exposure to diverse cultures was recognized by many of our interviewees as a benefit of the program.

2. What barriers did Pathway students perceive to their engagement in OCAD U classes?

Responses to this question are drawn from our interview data. Our participants reported experiencing barriers to engaging fully in their classes in two specific contexts, both of which are very important in the OCAD U Design curriculum: contributing actively in class, particularly during critique, and negotiating roles in group projects. Students were held back from contributing in these contexts in part because of their language skills — both contexts require diplomacy and subtlety of expression that can be challenging for language learners — and because of lack of familiarity and practice engaging in these activities in their home country. In both contexts, they commonly feared judgment by their native-speaker peers and instructors.

Another key challenge for our respondents was OCAD U instructors' expectations of a high degree of autonomous learning and originality on the part of first-year students. Many of our respondents specified that they were used to receiving more close and clear guidance from instructors on assignment expectations.

3. Did participation in Pathway have an impact on the level of engagement of the participants (positive or negative)? Did it help to mitigate any of the challenges students identified?

Both our quantitative and our qualitative data speak to this question. According to our survey data, one month into the academic year students enrolled in Pathway already reported higher levels of engagement, both formal (i.e., participating in class activities and discussions) and informal (i.e., studying with other students outside of class). These differences remained significant throughout the year. However, due to the non-random sampling design, it is unclear whether these differences can be attributed to a rapid increase in engagement during the first month of Pathway, or whether the program had attracted more engaged students to begin with. Indeed, it is possible that students who chose to enroll in the Pathway program were, by nature, more interactive learners who preferred to learn in a group setting and thus sought out such opportunities. This interpretation is certainly consistent with the finding that, as a group, Pathway students reported being more comfortable interacting with English native speakers.

More importantly, an analysis of our survey data, combined with institutional data on student background characteristics, indicate that regardless of initial differences in engagement or other background characteristics, being in Pathway was associated with a number of positive *changes* in engagement not evident among the ESL students integrated in regular (non-Pathway) classes. Over the academic year, Pathway students (but not other ESL students) became more open about commenting on their own and their classmates' design work in Studio classes. The quantitative data also indicate that they became more experienced working on assigned group projects with other students outside of class. In addition, Pathway students were found to maintain high levels of informal out-of-class engagement throughout the year with their fellow students, as well as academic involvement with their friends and family throughout the year, while other ESL students became less and less willing to discuss their studies with friends and family.

In short, the quantitative data suggest that Pathway was successful to some degree in enhancing students' formal and informal ways of engaging with their coursework, particularly in the areas they identified in the interviews as most challenging: participating in critique, group work and the expectation of autonomous learning.

Our interview data supports and further extends the survey findings: while our respondents continued to face barriers to engagement at the end of year, they did become somewhat more comfortable participating actively in class, including in critiques, as well as working with native speakers on group projects. They reported, in particular. a decrease in fear of judgment by native speakers. Although we cannot draw a definitive connection between the program design and this outcome from our qualitative data alone, there are some indications that the safe space created in the Pathway program contributed to students' engagement. Students were encouraged by the faculty to speak in Pathway courses and the understanding of ESL barriers by faculty and peers made them feel comfortable in speaking up. The confidence gained in Pathway courses may have helped students engage in critiques in integrated classes and group work with native speakers.

Participants in our interviews also reported an increase over the year in the employment of independent learning strategies. This could be seen, in part, as a response to the faculty expectation of autonomous learning. Consistent with the quantitative results, the autonomous learning styles that students came to rely on the most by spring were: seeking support from family and friends and studying with other OCAD U students. Of these two strategies, the program design explicitly facilitated students studying together by bringing together students with a shared block of courses. It is possible that Pathway students, who were already more engaged at the beginning of first year than other ESL students, took advantage of the extra language support the program offered and collaborated with peers who were equally keen to seek help from faculty and classmates. It also seems possible that Pathway program design was particularly conducive to the engaged learning style of the students it attracted, and helped maintain and strengthen their academic engagement.

Our survey data does not identify any negative effect of participation in Pathway on the engagement of program participants. While some interview participants indicated that the relative isolation from native speakers inherent to Pathway held back the development of their speaking skills, they did not as a group report decreased engagement in any of the areas they were asked about. Rather, the isolation may simply have slowed the rate of improvement they aspired to attain.

4. Did participation in Pathway have an impact on the academic achievement of the participants (positive or negative)?

The response to this question comes from the analysis completed of the institutional data comparing Pathway students to the entire first-year ESL cohort (as defined by enrollment in the first year ESL writing course).

Despite having lower spoken English proficiency on average, and all other background characteristics being equal, students in Pathway earned significantly higher overall first-year GPAs than the rest of the ESL cohort. In and of itself, however, this difference is not necessarily indicative of Pathway's success, as it could be attributed to the higher initial levels of engagement observed among Pathway students. Indeed, within the group of ESL survey respondents as a whole, students who were initially more engaged in their classes (i.e., asked questions, voiced opinions, discussed their work) as well as outside of class (i.e., got together with other students to work on assignments) tended to earn higher grades than their less engaged peers.

To conclude with confidence that it was Pathway that resulted in the improved academic performance, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the higher GPA was related to *changes* in engagement experienced by Pathway students but not by other ESL students (namely, higher participation in Studio classes, greater frequency of studying with other students outside of class, and continued course-related involvement with friends and family). This was indeed the case, but only for the academic performance in Studio courses; being in Pathway had no significant impact on the academic performance in Liberal Studies courses. This may suggest that the program was helping boost students' engagement in precisely the areas where our

qualitative data suggest they experienced the greatest challenge—in participation in studio classes.

5. What were the Pathway students' perceptions of the benefits and/or liabilities of studying in ESL only classes?

Our response to this question is drawn from our interview data. Students' responses to this question constitute some of the most interesting results of our research, in that they reflect exactly the same ambivalence that the staff who designed the program (and others in the institution) expressed towards ESL-only classes. While students said that the 'safe space' created by this ESL-only environment was a strong benefit of the program, a number of interview participants indicated that they were acutely aware of and disappointed by the relative isolation from native speakers. These students felt that participation in the program had held back, in particular, the development of their spoken English skills.

It should be noted that despite this ambivalence, both our quantitative and qualitative data indicate that students did benefit from increased engagement as a result of participation in the program, including increased comfort collaborating with native speakers and speaking up in their integrated courses. Thus, it may be that any negative impact on engagement resulting from the partial isolation was outweighed by the increased confidence students gained from the safe space. Our interviews also indicate that students who wanted more interaction with native speakers sought it out in their integrated classes and outside of class. One student indicated explicitly that the mix of integrated and sheltered courses was an important feature of the program design.

Our interview data suggest that the balance of benefit vs. liability of the safe space may have varied depending on the initial confidence level of the students, with students who had least confidence in their spoken skills benefiting most from the safe space and those who were initially most confident feeling least satisfied with the program design. Our data also indicate that students' perceptions of the relative benefit and liability of the safe space shifted over the course of the year, with some who initially appreciated this feature of the program feeling by spring that they were ready for much more interaction with native speakers. One interview participant even chose to transfer out of the program in her second semester.

It appears that the learning community/block program aspect of the program design (the fact that students shared a number of courses) contributed to the sense of group cohesion and the support that students were able to offer each other, both with their language and academic skills, and with navigating course and institutional expectations. A very important benefit of the learning community/block program aspect of the program design was that it allowed program participants to form their own study group and to assist each other with the several courses they had in common. This is a benefit of learning communities that has been pointed to in the literature (see earlier discussion) and was confirmed by our research.

An additional benefit of the program, pointed to by some of our interview participants, was the cross-cultural interaction among the Pathway students. Our quantitative data shows that as a group, Pathway students were more culturally diverse than the groups of ESL students in other

sections of the first-year writing course, which may have enhanced this cultural exchange. Our interview data indicates that this cultural mixing was maintained outside the Pathway programs as the informal study group, formed by the program participants, included students from a variety of national backgrounds. The language of communication in this study group was English. Thus, while Pathway students experienced some isolation from native speakers, their interaction in English with ESL students from a variety of backgrounds would have contributed to their language development, whereas ESL students outside the program may tend to work primarily with students from their own linguistic group. In our follow-up interviews in second year, most respondents said they continued to work and interact with students from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

A final benefit of the Pathway program identified by our interview participants was specific instruction received on language and academic skills. As noted earlier, some of this instruction may be similar to that received by non-Pathway ESL students in their ESL writing class. However, from students' descriptions of this course, the Pathway ESL instructor appeared to be particularly sensitive to the needs of ESL students and to their experience of the OCAD U curriculum. Similar comments were made about a couple of the teaching assistants working with the program. Although this possibility was not explicitly identified by students, and perhaps not apparent to them, some of the sensitivity Pathway instructors demonstrated may have resulted from their collaboration with each other, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the challenges and expectations of their students as compared to instructors of a single isolated course. [11]

It should be noted that while our interview participants indicated that instruction in their ESL writing course contributed to their general language development and improvement in academic skills, the examples given related primarily to skills required for Liberal Studies courses. Students did not indicate that they had received any explicit instruction in the ESL writing course that would have prepared them to engage more easily in the aspects of OCAD U courses that they found most challenging, such as participation in critiques and group projects. Perhaps these skills were not covered in the context of a writing course. However, they did not indicate that they had received explicit instruction in these skills in the Pathway studio courses either. In fact some students explicitly stated that they did not receive such instruction in the Pathway program. Thus the hope on the part of the program designers that the sheltered courses would help to integrate skill building with course content was perhaps not fully achieved.

6. Are any benefits or liabilities of Pathway carried over into second year?

The program's effect on academic achievement in second year can be gauged from the quantitative analysis of institutional data. To gauge the effect on engagement in second year,

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[11] Collaboration between instructors and awareness of expectations in the various courses was a potential benefit of the block program design anticipated by the staff designing the program. It is interesting that none of our interview respondents pointed specifically to this collaboration between faculty as a benefit of the program. It is possible that this collaboration did not take place in significant ways. Or, if it did take place, this benefit of the program was not transparent to students.

we have to rely exclusively on data from our follow-up interviews, as the engagement survey was not re-administered to students in second year.

Unfortunately, the improved academic performance in studio courses evidenced in first year did not carry over into the second year of studies. According to OCAD U's administrative records, the GPA edge that Pathway students had while enrolled in the program was no longer significant once the program was over and they integrated into regular classes.

Effects for engagement in the second year are harder to discern. Students reported being challenged by the transition from the safe space provided by Pathway to a full program of integrated courses. However, it should be noted that the challenge posed by the transition does not mean the program was without benefit. For some students it certainly eased their transition into university studies in first year and it is inevitable that students would experience some challenges transitioning out of the program.

Despite challenges in second year, students reported continued high engagement. Most students made a concerted effort to contribute actively in class, particularly in critique, and all reported continued employment of a range of autonomous learning strategies, particularly studying with other students. While we cannot say for sure that these high engagement levels resulted from Pathway, it is plausible that patterns of engagement established in first year may have carried over.

As in our initial interviews, students in the program continued to report ambivalence about the reduced contact they had had with native speakers in their first year. However, despite this, they continued to report increased comfort working with and interacting with native speakers. It is interesting to note a disjuncture in our findings. On the one hand evidence in both the surveys and the interviews indicated that students benefited from the program, yet on the other hand, many participants reported frustration with the program design. This highlights the importance of designing programming that not only benefits students but also responds in a transparent way to their perceived needs.

Recommendations for Design of Sheltered ESL Programming

A number of recommendations arose from our research that may be applicable to the design of sheltered, content-based ESL programming at other institutions. While the experience of the Pathway students might be most applicable to students in other programs – such as professional programs – that require a lot of social interaction in class, they could also be relevant to students in small upper-year seminar classes with an emphasis on class discussion. Additionally, since one of the effects of Pathway was to support students in pursuing independent, collaborative learning strategies outside of class, this type of sheltered learning program could potentially benefit even students in large lecture classes if their program includes a tutorial component where they can build social connections.

1. The benefits of sheltered, content-based programming can be enhanced by a learning community/block program design

The fact that students in our program shared a number of courses contributed to group cohesion, boosting their confidence and reducing isolation. It also allowed them to create an informal study group on their own where they studied together for several of their courses. The potential to create similar learning communities may be limited to programs with a shared curriculum.

2. Linking ESL support to a program of study offers the opportunity to support the acquisition of program-specific skills

Programs such as ours that are specific to a particular curricular program or stream offer the opportunity for instructors to support students in the acquisition of discipline-specific language and also to provide explicit coaching in the academic expectations and types of classroom interaction that are specific to that program of study. It should not be assumed that this support will occur simply by the creation of sheltered sections. Rather, it needs to be deliberately built into the program in ways that are transparent to the students.

3. Program design should strive to balance the benefits of safe space with the potential liability of isolation from native speakers

A sheltered program should strive to include a mix of fully sheltered sections, sheltered adjuncts to integrated courses and fully integrated courses, with the goal of creating "safe spaces" for participants while still ensuring contact with native speakers. Striking the right balance of these elements will likely involve some trial and error at any given institution, with refinement of the program in successive years. Additional features could be built into the program to encourage interaction with native speakers, such as a conversation partner or a mentorship program, and twinning of sheltered and integrated course sections to encourage interaction and exchange of ideas. (One of our participants specifically recommended the inclusion of a conversation partner program as part of the Pathway program).

4. Enrollment in sheltered programming should be based on self-selection

Our findings indicate that not all students benefit equally from participation in a sheltered program. Some, who are particularly confident in their speaking skills, may in fact be held back by the relative isolation from native speakers. In contrast, those who were relatively new to the Canadian education system and had the least experience interacting with native English speakers may have benefited the most from the safe space provided by the program. However, it would be difficult to predict from language proficiency scores or time in Canada alone who could most benefit from such a program; this would likely depend more on individual learning style, personality and available social support.

Thus, we recommend that ESL students should not automatically be placed in sheltered programs. Rather, "directed self-placement" (self-placement based on an advisory session) is a viable alternative. As administrators and advisors learn more about who benefits most from a particular program, they will be better able to advise students. However the final decision should be left up to the students' evaluation of their needs and level of confidence. Making such programs voluntary will likely contribute to participants' engagement and group cohesion.

5. The diverse background of participants can be drawn on as a component of program content

Cross-cultural interaction between ESL students from various national and linguistic backgrounds can be a benefit of sheltered programs. This can be drawn upon in the planning of

course content, with explicit discussion and sharing of different perspectives on the course material, as well as explicit discussions of cultural differences in learning styles and academic culture.

6. Support is needed for the transition to integrated programming

The final goal of sheltered programs, such as Pathway at OCAD U, is to enable students to participate more fully in integrated classes. Inevitably, participants will need to transition from a sheltered program to the regular curriculum. Our follow-up interviews indicate that students did face challenges with the transition to a fully integrated program, in particular the loss of safe space. Thus, support services should be planned for students transitioning out of a sheltered program. This might be in the form of "supplemental instruction" (voluntary study groups for selected courses), non-credit program-specific skill-building workshops, or a mentorship program.

Study Limitations

Like all studies, this one has some limitations. In this section, we address these limitations and close with some ideas for future research.

First, as participation in the Pathway program is voluntary, our research is subject to a problem of self-selection. That is, those who select into the program might differ from the comparison group in terms of demographic characteristics and engagement. Indeed, the quantitative analysis of institutional data shows that students who self-selected into Pathway are more engaged than the general ESL student population. Thus, it is difficult to attribute the change in engagement reported in our qualitative data directly to an effect of the program. However, in our analysis of the survey and institutional data, even after taking differences in demographic characteristics and engagement into account, we still found differences between the Pathway students and the control group both in academic achievement and in terms of changes in engagement levels. Additionally, some of the students' comments do suggest that they themselves attributed benefit to the program.

Second, as this is a study of student experiences in a very specialized curriculum (Design) with a particular set of skills and challenges, the ability to generalize from this study's findings to ESL programming in other post-secondary settings may be limited. However, as remarked on earlier, the results are likely relevant to other institutions with curricula that demand a high degree of active class participation, such as professional programs or programs with small seminar classes.

Third, the differences observed here in students' experiences may be influenced by differences in course instructors' expectations and approaches, as well as differences in course content. For example, we found that in the spring interviews more students talked about the challenges of exhibiting "critical thinking" because a particular course they were taking at the time demanded such skills.

Fourth, it was not always clear whether students' comments and their experiences in courses pertained to their Pathway courses or to their integrated courses, and thus it was difficult to definitively conclude that confidence gained in the sheltered courses was carried over into the integrated ones.

Fifth, we had quite a low number of non-Pathway interview respondents, making it challenging to use the qualitative data to make comparisons between Pathway and non-Pathway students' experiences. To deal with this, we chose to focus only on the Pathway interviews, and rely on evidence internal to these interviews to draw our conclusions.

As the first two limitations pertain to the very nature of the program, it would be difficult to construct a study to control for them. The final three limitations could be dealt with through follow-up research based on detailed classroom observation: observing student behaviour in different contexts (e.g., sheltered vs. integrated courses) and over time, and asking them directly what had influenced their choices/motivation in specific contexts. In such a study, it could also be useful to include instructor evaluations of student participation at different points in the year, and incorporate an analysis of the actual content and teaching approach in the sheltered classes.

Conclusions

Our quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that participation in English Language Pathway in the Design program at OCAD University contributed significantly to students' first-year academic achievement, particularly in studio courses. In addition, it contributed to their ability to engage in their classes and their comfort in doing so, particularly in areas they initially found challenging, such as making active contributions in class and participating in group work. Students perceived the primary benefits of the program to be: a) the sense of safe space they experienced due to sympathetic instructors and a group of peers with shared experiences; b) the group cohesion and social support that resulted from studying with the same group of students in a number of classes. At the same time they reported ambivalence regarding this safe space, and many of them indicated that it isolated them too much from native speakers and didn't challenge them sufficiently, thus holding back the development of their language skills.

Our findings suggest that ESL students can benefit from studying in sheltered ESL sections of credit courses, particularly if these form part of a block program or learning community. At the same time, such programs should be designed to mitigate, as much as possible, the effect of the relative isolation from native speakers that can result from the sheltered design. This could be achieved by including in the program design a mix of sheltered sections, adjunct tutorials, or study groups attached to regular course sections, and fully integrated sections, as well as building in opportunities for interaction with native speakers. The balance of sheltered and integrated courses could also be shifted as students enter their second semester. In addition, attention must be devoted to supporting students in their transition to a full load of integrated classes at the end of the program.

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Appendix A: Research Instruments

The spring survey administered to Pathway students is given below, as well as the spring interview guide for Pathway students. Similar surveys, with small variations, were administered to Pathway students in the fall and to non-Pathway students in the fall and spring. Similar interview guides were also used for Pathway students in the fall and for non-Pathway students in the fall and spring.

Spring Survey—Pathway

This survey is a part of a research project to find out about the experience of ESL students in classes at OCAD U. We will use the information to make recommendations about how to design programs for ESL students at OCAD U. We will also share the results with people designing programs for ESL students at other universities.

Student information:

1. Name
2. Student number

If you filled out the survey in the fall, please skip to the section "Your Experience in OCAD U classes."

3. Age
4. Gender

OCAD U program:

1. Are you in art or design?

    art   design

2. In which program are you currently registered?

Graphic Design	Sculpture & Installation
Industrial Design	Curatorial Practice
Environmental Design	Printmaking
Material Art & Design	Drawing & Painting
Illustration	Photography
Advertising	Integrate Media
	undecided

Language/educational background:

1. What is your native language?

2. In what year did you move to Canada? (example: 2004)

3. In which grade did you begin your studies in Canada?

                               grade or year level

        Elementary school   ___

        High school grade   ___

        College or university   ___

4. In what country did you do most of your elementary school studies?

5. In what country did you do most of your high school studies?

6. What was the highest level of education you completed before coming to OCAD U?

        Secondary school (high school) ___

        College   ___

        Bachelor's degree   ___

        Master's degree   ___

        PhD   ___

Your experience in OCAD U classes:

Which course(s) did you find most challenging at OCAD U this year (fall 2009 & winter 2010)? Why do you think these courses were challenging?

In your classes at OCAD U:

1a) How **often** do you ask questions in class?

1	2	3	4	5
very often				almost never

1b) How **comfortable** do you feel asking questions in class?

1	2	3	4	5
very comfortable				very uncomfortable

2a) How **often** do you answer a question the professor has asked the class (without calling on you specifically)?

2b) How **comfortable** do you feel answering a question the professor has asked the class (without calling on you specifically)?

3a) How **often** do you give your opinion in a class discussion?

3b) How **comfortable** do you feel giving your opinion in a class discussion?

4a) How **often** do you talk about your art or design studio work in class?

4b) How **comfortable** do you feel talking about your art or design studio work in class?

5a) How **often** do you comment on a classmate's art or design studio work in class?

5b) How **comfortable** do you feel commenting on a classmate's art or design studio work in class?

6a) How **often** do you discuss ideas or questions about the course with your professor after class or outside of class?

6b) How **comfortable** do you feel discussing ideas or questions about the course with your professor after class or outside of class?

7a) How **often** do you study with other students?

7b) How **comfortable** do you feel studying with other students?

8a) How **often** do you study with students from a different home country?

8b) How **comfortable** do you feel studying with students from a different home country?

9a) How **often** do you work on an assigned group project with other students?

9b) How **comfortable** do you feel working on an assigned group project with other students?

10a) How **often** do you work on an assigned group project with students from a different home country?

10b) How **comfortable** do you feel working on an assigned group project with students from a different home country?

11a) How **often** do you work on an assigned group project with native speakers of English?

11b) How **comfortable** do you feel working on an assigned group project with native speakers of English?

12a) How **often** do you discuss ideas from your courses with friends or family outside of class?

12b) How **comfortable** do you feel discussing ideas from your courses with friends or family outside of class?

13)

What were the advantages and disadvantages of studying in the English Language Pathway program?

Pathway courses are:

Tutorial of LBST1B03 Introduction to Visual Studies I: History and Ideas

Tutorial of LBST1B06 Introduction to Visual Studies II: Critical Frameworks

GDES1B23 Design Process

GDES1B26 Introduction to Experience Design

LBST1B12 Essay and the Argument

Spring Interview Guide—Pathway

Try to cover all these questions at some point during the interview.
Encourage students to elaborate.

Conversation starters and clarifying background

1. Are you still studying in X? [refer back to the student's response in the fall interview]

2. Are you still planning to Y when you finish? [refer back to the student's response in the fall interview]

Expectations, challenges

- Have a list of classes students took in fall and winter without identifying which ones are Pathway and non-Pathway.

3. So now that we're near the end of the year, how have you found your courses at OCAD U?

4. You wrote in your spring survey that [course(s) referred to in spring survey] was/were challenging. Why do you find that/those course(s) challenging?

5. In the fall you found A & B about course X challenging [refer back to the student's response in the fall interview]. Have you had similar challenges this semester? Why?

- Follow up on specifics for individuals to determine whether what the student finds challenging is due to language limitations vs. culture and/or personality. Possible probing questions include: were the same things challenging in your home country?

6. In the fall you thought OCAD U professors expected X [student's response in the fall interview] to be successful in classes. Now that you've almost finished a year at OCAD U, do you still feel the same way? [If it has changed] why do you feel differently now?

7. Do you feel you understand what professors expect you to do in order to do well on assignments? Has your understanding changed? Why?

8. What language skills do you need to succeed in classes? During this year at OCAD U, do you feel these language skills have improved? What has helped?

9. Do you feel you are participating or active in your classes? In what ways?

Engagement

With a list of classes to refer to, ask about responses on the survey regarding the following areas:

10. You noted in the fall that you felt X about [each of the categories listed below] and now you feel Y.

> 10a. Do you think there has been a change for you? Why?
>
> 10b. Is it still challenging? Why? Were the same things challenging in your home country?
>
> > *Try to determine whether what the student finds challenging is due to language limitations vs. culture and/or personality.
>
> 10c. Do you feel differently in different classes?
>
> - asking & answering questions (survey questions #1, 2)
>
> - discussing own thoughts & opinions (survey #3, 4, 5)
>
> - approaching a professor outside of class (survey #6)
>
> - working with students with different linguistic and cultural background (survey #8, 9)
>
> - (working with other students in a group (survey #7))
>
> - socializing with other students; does social interaction impact/strengthen school work?

11. Where did you seek help with your schoolwork other than your professors and TAs?

Pathway

- Start this section by clarifying which courses are Pathway.

[Refer to the spring survey response.]

12. Are there advantages and disadvantages to being in ESL only classes?

13. How has your background affected your experience in this program? [Background includes how many years the student has been in Canada, whether they have studied in a post-secondary institution prior to coming to OCAD U, the level of emersion in the language when they studied English, and their life experience.]

14. You said [in the fall and current interviews] you felt/learned X in Pathway classes. Has that affected your experience in other classes?

15. Do you know any students who are ESL students and didn't take the English Language Pathway program? How do you think their experience in first year has been compared to yours?

Appendix B: Qualitative Codes and Frequency Counts

Table 1: Codes and Definitions for Barriers to Engagement

Barriers: Academic and Classroom Expectations	
Code	**Definition**
Time Management	Finishing and handing in assignments on time.
Expectation in critiques	Expectations associated with presenting own studio work and commenting on other students' studio work in a group critique during the class.
Expectation of critical thinking	Expectation to analyze issues or subjects by putting them into context and making an informed evaluation.
Giving opinion in class	Expectation to give opinions in class discussions or in response to professor's questions.
Expectation of originality	Expectation to create work based on students' own ideas. This applies most often to studio courses.
Expectation of autonomous learning	Expectation of working independently on projects without a lot of guidance from instructors and expectation of learning certain skills on one's own outside of class. This applies more often to studio courses.
Lack of clarity of expectation	Students are not clear on what professors expect in assignments and marking criteria.
Pedagogical approach	Barriers associated with instructors' idea of what teaching involves, including the marking criteria, course content, methods of delivering the course content, schedule, and strictness.
Expectation of research and citation	Expectations to conduct research independently, the requirement to cite sources and the method of citation in both liberal studies and studio courses.
Expectation in exams	Expectations associated with exams, including method of preparation suitable for the exam format, the length of time given at an exam and marking criteria.

Resistance, rebellion and/or rejection	Students are aware of the expectations of the professors, but do not try to meet them.
Other - academic	Academic barriers mentioned by interviewees that did not fit into any of the above barriers.
Lack of background knowledge of course material	Students' lack of background knowledge of the course material. (e.g. Western art history for a Chinese student who had studied Eastern art history in their home country) or general lack of background knowledge.
Instructor's lack of awareness or accommodation of ESL barriers	Instructor is not aware of ESL barriers or not willing to make accommodation for these barriers.
Instructors' style of delivery	The pace, speed, tone of voice, attitude and level of language when instructor delivers information in class.
Group projects	Challenges associated with working on assigned group project with classmates.
Lack of maturity or skill level of peers	Student feels that lack of maturity or skill level of peers prevents him/her from engaging academically or socially.
Different relationship with peers vs. home country	Barriers associated with peer-to peer relationship at OCAD U that interviewees feel are different compared to home country.
Different relationship with instructors vs. home country	Barriers associated with student-instructor relationship at OCAD U that interviewees feel are different compared to home country.
Other – classroom and group dynamics	Barriers due to classroom and group dynamics mentioned by interviewees that did not fit into any of the above barriers.

Barriers: Language Skills	
Code	Definition
Fear of judgment of instructors	Students' fear that they would be judged by instructors for their lack of language skills.
Fear of judgment of peers	Students' fear that they would be judged by native speakers or by unspecified peers for their lack of language skills.
Difficulty speaking	Barriers due to difficulty in speaking in classes, including giving opinion, answering questions and presenting and commenting in critiques, as well as outside of classes, including asking professors questions, discussing with professors and having social interaction with peers.
Lack of vocabulary	Barriers due to lack of vocabulary
Reading comprehension	Barriers due to difficulty understanding course related reading.
Writing skills	Barriers due to lack of writing skills required to fulfill course work, including lack of knowledge of English language essay structure and academic tone of writing and difficulty putting together grammatically correct sentences.
Difficulty understanding lectures and peers	Barriers due to difficulty understanding what the professor delivers in lectures and what peers say during class.

Note on frequency counts:

In the tables below and all the other tables that present qualitative results, we divided the students' responses into three categories based on how many students mentioned each item (out of a total of 12 respondents).

Very frequent response: the item was mentioned by 6 or more Pathway students.
Common response: the item was mentioned by 3-5 Pathway students.
Occasional response: the item was mentioned by 1-2 Pathway students.

Table 2: Barriers to Engagement Frequency Counts

Barriers: Academic and Classroom Expectations (Pathway)	
Fall Pathway (12 respondents)	Spring Pathway (12 respondents)
Very frequent response: Time management (6) Expectation in critiques (6)	**Very frequent response:** Lack of background knowledge (general & cultural) (12) Pedagogical approach (8) Expectation of critical thinking (7) Time management (6) Group projects (6)
Common response: Group projects (5) Expectation in exams (4) Lack of background knowledge (general & cultural) (4) Expectation of research and citation (3) Giving opinion in class (3)	**Common response:** Expectation in critiques (5) Expectation of autonomous learning (4) Lack of clarity of expectations (4) Instructor's style of delivery (4) Expectation in exams (3) Giving opinion in class (3) Expectation of originality (3)
Occasional response: Expectation of autonomous learning (2) Expectation of critical thinking (2) Expectation of originality (2) Pedagogical approach (2) Different relationship with profs vs. home (2) Instructor's lack of awareness or accommodation of ESL barriers (2) Different relationship with peers vs. home (2) Lack of maturity or skill level of peers (1) Lack of clarity of expectations (1) Resistance, rebellion and or rejection (1) Other - academic (3)	**Occasional response:** Resistance, rebellion and or rejection (2) Lack of maturity or skill level of peers (2) Expectation of research and citation (1) Other - academic (6) Other – classroom and group dynamics (1)

Table 3: Change in Language Skills from Fall to Spring (Pathway)

	Improved	Some improvement	Not much improvement	Worsened
	# of students	# of students	# of students	# of students
Writing	7	1	2	
Reading	3	1	1	
Speaking	4	0	3	1
Vocabulary	1	1	0	
Understanding lecture	1	0	1	

Table 4: Positive and Negative Change in Classroom Engagement from Fall to Spring

Positive change in classroom engagement (Pathway)	
	# of students
Group work	6
Asking & answering questions in class	5
Critique other students' studio work	4
Seeking support form professors outside of class	3
Giving opinion in a class discussion	2
Presenting own studio work in critique	1

Negative change in classroom engagement (Pathway)	
	# of students
Group work (Pathway)	1
Giving opinion in a class discussion	1
Asking & answering questions in class	1
Presenting own studio work in critique	1
Seeking support from professors outside of class	1

Table 5: Developing Individual Learning Strategies

Individual Learning Strategies	
Pathway Fall (12 respondents)	Pathway Spring (12 respondents)
Very frequent response: Accessing professors outside of class (6) Studying with other OCAD U students outside of class (6)	**Very frequent response:** Seeking support from friends and family (10) Accessing professors outside of class (9) Studying with other OCAD U students outside of class (7) Accessing campus services (6)
Common response: Listening to OCAD U lecture Podcast (3)	**Common response:** Listening to OCAD U lecture Podcast (4) Reading course textbooks (3)
Occasional response: Accessing campus services (2) Reading course textbooks (2) Seeking support from friends and family (2) Revising written work (1) Preparation for critiques and presentations (1)	**Occasional response:** Revising written work (2) Preparation for critiques and presentations (1) Find sources in native language (1) Create studio work based on what professor likes (1)

Table 6: Perceived Benefits and Liabilities of Pathway

Benefits of Pathway	
Pathway Fall (12 respondents)	**Pathway Spring (12 respondents)**
Very frequent response: Safe space due to instructors' awareness and accommodation of ESL barriers (10) Safe space due to peers' understanding of ESL barriers (8) Learning community (6) Cross-cultural contact within ESL (6)	**Very frequent response:** Specific instruction (9) Safe space due to instructors' awareness and accommodation of ESL barriers (8)
Common response: Safe space due to same level of English as peers (4) Specific instruction (4) Mix of ESL and integrated courses (3)	**Common response:** Learning community (5) Safe space due to peers' understanding of ESL barriers (4) Cross-cultural contact within ESL (4) Mix of ESL and integrated courses (3) Right level of instruction (3) Less pressure (3) Confidence in integrated classes (3) Safe space unspecified (3)
Occasional response: Right level of instruction (2) Safe space unspecified (2) Less pressure (2) Confidence in integrated classes (1)	**Occasional response:**

Liabilities of Pathway	
Pathway Fall (12 respondents)	**Pathway Spring (12 respondents)**
Very frequent response:	**Very frequent response:** Lack of interaction with native speakers (7) Safe space (lack of challenge) (6)
Common response: Lack of interaction with native speakers (3) Skill level of classmates (3)	**Common response:** Skill level of classmates (5) No difference from regular class (5)
Occasional response: Safe space (lack of challenge) (2) Speak own language (2) No difference from regular class (1) Other reasons (4)	**Occasional response:** Speak own language (2) Other reasons (5)

Table 7: Perceived Benefits and Liabilities of Pathway based on Spring Survey Responses

Benefits of Pathway
Pathway Spring Survey (17 respondents)
Specific instruction in Pathway (5) Safe space due to instructors' understanding of ESL barriers (4) Learning community (3) Right level of instruction (3) Safe space unspecified (3) Safe space due to peers' understanding of ESL barriers (2) Cross-cultural contact within ESL (1) Less pressure (1)

Liabilities of Pathway
Pathway Spring Survey (17 respondents)
Safe space (lack of challenge) (3) Lack of interaction with native speakers (1) Other reasons* (5)

*Other reasons include lack of organization in one of the courses (2), not as helpful or practical (1), may have difficulty in second year (1) and not enough grammar and vocabulary taught (1)

Appendix C: Quantitative Data Sources

Table A. Background and Academic Variables Used in the Analyses

Data Source	Data Format
Administrative Records	
Age	[# years]
Gender	Female / Male
Immigration Status	Visa / Permanent Resident / Canadian
Country of Citizenship	[country name]
English Proficiency Test Scores	[IELTS / TOEFL IBT scores]
OCAD Program	Bachelor of Design / Bachelor of Fine Art
Registration Status in 2009	Full Time / Part Time
FTE Credits in 2009	[# credits]
Overall GPA for 2009	[GPA out of 100]
Liberal GPA for 2009	[GPA out of 100]
Studio GPA for 2009	[GPA out of 100]
Registered at OCAD in 2010	Yes / No
Overall GPA for 2010	[GPA out of 100]
Liberal GPA for 2010	[GPA out of 100]
Studio GPA for 2010	[GPA out of 100]
Administrative Intake Survey	
Were you born in Canada?	Yes / No
You indicated you were born outside of Canada. How many years did you study in Canada before coming to OCAD? (include elementary and high school; use 0 if you did not study in Canada before coming to OCAD)	[# years]
What is your mother's highest educational attainment?	I do not know / Did not finish high school / Graduated from high school / Some or completed college / Attended university without earning a degree / Completed a Bachelor's degree / Completed a Master's degree / Completed a Doctoral degree
What is your father's highest educational attainment?	I do not know / Did not finish high school / Graduated from high school / Some or completed college / Attended university without earning a degree / Completed a Bachelor's degree / Completed a Master's degree / Completed a Doctoral degree
Engagement Survey	
What is your native language?	[language name]
In what country did you do most of your elementary school studies?	[country name]
What was the highest level of education you completed before coming to OCAD?	Secondary school / College / Bachelor's degree / Master's degree / PhD

Table B. Background Characteristics of the ESL Cohort (PC vs. NPC)

	Pathway	Non-Pathway	Valid *N*	Test Statistic	*ES*
Age (years):			95	$F(1, 93) = 0.66$	.08
Mean	21.22	22.49			
SD	3.72	7.18			
Range	(17-32)	(17-51)			
Gender (%):			95	$\chi^2(1) = 0.80$	.09
Female	60.9	70.8			
Male	39.1	29.2			
Immigration Status (%):			95	$\chi^2(2) = 8.37$	**.30**
Temporary Visa	39.1	20.8			
Permanent Resident	52.2	38.9			
Canadian Citizen	8.7	40.3			
Country of Citizenship (%):			64	$\chi^2(1) = 3.47$	**.23**
South Korea or China	38.1	62.8			
Other	61.9	37.2			
Mother's Education (%):			83	$\chi^2(3) = 8.86$	**.33**
Secondary	4.5	27.8			
College	9.1	21.3			
University	77.3	44.3			
Graduate	9.1	6.6			
Father's Education (%):			82	$\chi^2(3) = 7.03$	**.29**
Secondary	4.8	19.7			
College	4.8	21.3			
University	57.1	36.1			
Graduate	33.3	22.9			
Study in Canada (years):			86	$F(1, 84) = 9.42$	**.32**
Mean	2.17	4.41			
SD	1.95	3.29			
Range	(0-7)	(0-16)			
Study Experience (%):			86	$\chi^2(2) = 12.90$	**.39**
0 years	21.7	15.9			
1-3 years	52.2	17.5			
4+ years	26.1	66.6			
Below Min. English Prof. (%):			77		
Listening	0.0	1.8		$\chi^2(1) = 0.36$	.07
Reading	5.0	3.5		$\chi^2(1) = 0.09$	.03
Speaking	30.0	3.5		$\chi^2(1) = 11.16$	**.38**
Writing	10.0	7.0		$\chi^2(1) = 0.18$	.05

Table C. Background Characteristics of Survey Respondents (PR vs. NPR)

	Pathway	Non-Pathway	Valid N	Test Statistic	ES
Age (years):			32	$F(1, 30) = 1.46$	**.22**
Mean	21.47	20.00			
SD	4.26	2.14			
Range	(17-32)	(18-25)			
Gender (%):			32	$\chi^2(1) = 0.38$	.11
Female	70.6	80.0			
Male	29.4	20.0			
Immigration Status (%):			32	$\chi^2(2) = 11.59$	**.60**
Temporary Visa	41.2	26.7			
Permanent Resident	52.9	13.3			
Canadian Citizen	5.9	60.0			
Country of Elementary Ed.(%):			32	$\chi^2(1) = 2.08$	**.26**
South Korea or China	41.2	66.7			
Other	58.8	33.3			
Mother's Education (%):			32	$\chi^2(3) = 5.23$	**.40**
Secondary	13.3	5.9			
College	33.3	5.9			
University	46.7	82.3			
Graduate	6.7	5.9			
Father's Education (%):			30	$\chi^2(3) = 3.39$	**.34**
Secondary	0	7.2			
College	6.2	21.4			
University	62.5	57.1			
Graduate	31.3	14.3			
Study in Canada (years):			30	$F(1, 28) = 8.65$	**.49**
Mean	1.71	3.85			
SD	1.57	2.41			
Range	(0-5)	(0-7)			
Study Experience (%):			30	$\chi^2(2) = 6.29$	**.46**
0 years	23.6	15.4			
1-3 years	58.8	23.1			
4+ years	17.6	61.5			
Level of Prior Education[12] (%):			32	$\chi^2(1) = 0.92$	.17
Secondary	64.7	80.0			
Post-Secondary	35.3	20.0			

Note: Differences in English language proficiency could not be estimated due to very small cell sizes.

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[12] Survey respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education they completed before coming to OCAD.

Appendix D: Individual Student Perspectives (interview excerpts)

The excerpts below highlight the complex views students held regarding the advantages and disadvantages of participating in a sheltered program, as well as how these views changed over the course of the year and into their second year. The first three excerpts are from students who continued to feel generally positively about the program throughout the year, while the remaining excerpts illustrate the increasing ambivalence many students felt by spring. In some cases, we have included students' reflections from the follow-up interviews, looking back on their experience in Pathway having already completed much of their second-year program. (All names are pseudonyms).

Olivia: Female, originally from Asia, in Canada less than a year.

This student was new to Canada. Both in the fall and spring she reported that a shared understanding of linguistic barriers with other ESL students made her feel comfortable speaking up in Pathway classes. The safe space Pathway provided has helped her transition into the new cultural and linguistic environment at OCAD U. The student emphasized these advantages more than the disadvantage of not having interaction with native speakers.

Fall: *Compared to other classes, [speaking up in Pathway, I feel] more confident. . . . You know the whole class is not native speakers, so you feel like you are just one of them. [In integrated classes] I get nervous when I ask questions. I don't want to speak English in front of classmates. They are native speakers. They really like to give opinions and raise their hands.*

Spring: *In the [integrated classes], professors don't encourage you to speak, because they don't know if your English is good. The professors in Pathway encourage you to speak. They want to you to be not shy . . . [feeling confident to talk in Pathway] helps [in integrated classes] a little bit but not fully. I can't get over for just a year, speaking with native speakers. I think it's better to "take the Pathway, feel comfortable and after you have practiced, you feel comfortable to speak in [integrated] classes. . . . [The disadvantage of Pathway is that] you are meeting the same group of people. Less opportunity to make friends with native speaker. It's just the first year, so I think it's fine.*

Nathan: Male, originally from Asia, 5 years in Canada.

In both the fall and spring interviews, this student emphasized the benefits of the safe space and the social and academic interaction with other ESL students in Pathway. He felt that instructors, a TA and peers who understood ESL challenges provided a safe space where he felt comfortable asking questions. The student felt that some of the Pathway courses were not that different from regular courses. Although he pointed in the spring interview to the lack of interaction with native speakers as a disadvantage, he focused more on the benefits of friendship with other ESL students and mutual support in school work they provided to each other. It should be noted that he found the program beneficial despite having lived in Canada for several years before beginning his studies at OCAD U.

Fall: [*In Pathway*] *classmates are ESL, it's easier to ask questions . . . during tutorial or lecture. Even other courses they say you can ask questions during the lecture or the class, but I don't want to. Maybe sound stupid to other students. I'm shy. . . . I just think I'm going to ask later. Maybe I miss the chance. In this course, I can ask question right away if I don't understand. . . . Sometimes when other people ask questions, that's the one I wanted to ask too. . . There is symmetry. We can understand each other.*

Spring: *[In Pathway it was] comfortable [to ask questions], because they know I'm ESL. . . .[The disadvantage of Pathway is that] maybe I have same friends . . . not native [speakers]. I don't have any problem with that. But maybe sometimes they will help me if I have native speaker friends. Other than that, there isn't any disadvantage. . . .Pathway is more like acting more like a group, all the pathway people, all the friends. I have at least three classes together. I have more time with them, get the chance to get friends. Even we are same ESL course, somebody is better in English, I can get advice from them.*

Michelle: Female, originally from Asia, 5 years in Canada.

In the fall interview, this student talked about feeling nervous in front of native-speaking peers and instructors and appreciated other ESL peers who shared her linguistic challenges. She pointed out the time pressure of school work as one of the barriers to interacting with native speakers. In the spring interview, she expressed concern that her peers interacted exclusively with ESL students and didn't try to interact with native speakers.

Fall: *When I take [instructor's] ESL [writing] course, I can relax and I'm OK. Challenging when I have to take courses with native speakers. If I have to make a presentation in front of native speakers, I'm nervous . . . I can't speak like them. . . . Teachers of non-native speakers are good at listening to non-native speakers' English. Native speaker teachers cannot understand us well. . . . That's why I'm afraid to speak to native speakers. . . . [With Pathway classmates] even though our background is different, Korean or Mexican, we are in the same situation, we have the same problem, English. I feel closer to them or something.*

Spring: *Good things about Pathway was that everybody was really nervous because it's first year, so it was helpful to have . . . a whole year [ESL writing] class about how to write essays, writing, reading and sometimes [instructor] taught us something that we didn't know that probably native speakers already know. That was helpful. Bad things . . . it's really tense and a lot of the ESL students are suffering from English, and also Canada is not our native country. So we get too close and we just hang out with only ESL students. It's good but they don't even try to have a native speaker friend.*

Second year: *I started knowing students from [my major program of study] . . . but it's just different feeling when I was taking class [in second year] with my friends from Pathway, because I have been known them for a long time and we were suffering because of the English things . . . . I found that [ESL students] don't have to find native speakers friends, you know. If you are comfortable around spending time with non-native speakers, I think that's fine. I tend to spend time with my [friends,] non-native speakers. . . . I don't choose friends because of the*

language. If they are someone who I like and then that person is native speakers, I just be a friend.

Jason: Male, originally from Asia, 1 year in Canada.

This student mentioned in the fall that Pathway classes provided a safe space because ESL students had a shared understanding. By spring, he felt more confident in integrated classes. Further, because he already had some years of university education in design in his home country and is serious about his future career, he felt that Pathway students were not as mature as native-speaking students.

Fall: *In my opinion, Pathway students have a huge gap between native [speaker] students. . . . I feel confident in English Pathway and I can do a great job in the classroom. Once I get into the class with native speakers, I can get more improvement but I don't feel confident. Everybody speaks so fast and use more [inaudible] word to describe and depict things, especially in presentation. . . . [I'm more comfortable in Pathway because] I think my English might be better than somebody else's. . . . Everybody is new to the country so that makes this class like a group.*

Spring: *For the first semester, [Pathway] is better for me, because it's my first [time] getting OCAD and experiencing university in Canada. It make[s] a link for the language. That went well. Teachers get more patience. They are aware you are international student. . . . For this winter, I improved a lot, and I don't have any problems with regular class teacher. . . . [The disadvantage of Pathway] is language level of other students. Another one is . . . that [Pathway students are] not mature as native [speaker] students. . . . I had better communication with native [speaking] students.*

Second year: *[This year] I can feel I'm learning different ideas, culture and design experience from other students [and I didn't feel that way last year]. . . . I think this year . . . [professors] don't feel like spend lots of time on international students, cause they really don't know we are international students. . . . Sometimes, I have difficulty with understanding of some information, and yeah, I think that's the issue I have. . . . Cause I think this year is getting much complicated than last year. So I think it's a different level. . . . It's [because of] the way of professor talks.*

Sara: Female, originally from Middle East, 2 years in Canada.

This student felt confident in the safe space in Pathway in the fall term, but also recognized that she learned more in the more challenging context of integrated classes. The combination of Pathway and non-Pathway classes was beneficial to this student. Her account articulates well the benefits and liabilities of the safe space.

Fall: *When you go with native speakers, you learn something. With ESL students, you learn, but you are so brave to talk and use your knowledge. You practice with ESL students and maybe go with native speakers and then you learn. . . . So I think it's a good combination. I have to put myself to talk in front of native speakers.*

Spring: *I thought I have to be in an environment in more with native speakers and challenge myself. . . . . In Pathway] you are the best every time and you can speak, but when you go to native speaker class, it's different. . . . At first it was hard, because I just came from my safe zone. . . . I couldn't understand my teachers very well at first, then I just got use to it. . . . Advantages [of Pathway] is when you first start, it helps you a lot to feel self-confident to talk, to feel that everybody is just like you. . . . The problem is in the long run, you are in your safe zone. . . . If you stay there such a long time, you just get used to being in Pathway, just ESL student and the real world is really scary.*

Kate: Female, originally from Asia, 2 years in Canada.

This student had a lot of exposure to native speakers in high school and felt from the start that the language skills of other Pathway students were detrimental to her language improvement. She recognized she needed more English language input from classes of native speakers and felt that having a majority of classes with Pathway students made it difficult to interact with native speakers.

Fall: *In the Pathway, professors are really nice and try to help us. But for example, [in a design course] everybody is asking about English and vocabulary and grammar, so we cannot focus on the design process. . . . My English is getting worse. . . . In the class everybody uses non-proper English. . . . From that I don't learn anything. In the non-ESL class, I'm trying to get the professor and other students in the class and it helps me to learn more expressions or new grammar, new vocabulary.*

Spring: *Most of the classes [we take each semester] are Pathway, so we only talk with Pathway people, 'cause we have the same class, we have the same projects and we got used to each other. You don't have the chance to hear the native speakers talk. It really affects you. . . . There is nothing challenge me [in Pathway]. I need to talk more with native speakers so I can improve my English and I can experience more words [and] learn. . . how to express your opinion.*

Tina: Female, originally from Middle East, in Canada a few years.

This student talked positively about the lower pressure in Pathway classes and instructors' understanding of ESL challenges. Peers who have the same level of English made her comfortable, though she recognized this as a liability for language improvement. In the spring interview, she emphasized the negative aspect of having ESL peers and talked positively of challenges in integrated classes as an impetus for language improvement. This may mean that her language skills had improved to the extent that she was ready for the challenges in integrated classes.

Fall: *[Pathway] really declines my stress, especially in first year, we already have stress. So it's better. [In the ESL-only class] your English really improves, but not as much as you speak or you are in connection with native [speakers]. Because all the students are same as you, so it's not going to change anything. Teachers are great. Teachers spend more time to explain everything. . . . [It's] a little bit difficult [to talk and share ideas with native speakers]. . . . It's not*

going to be always like this. . . . I realize native people, if they come to my country, they would have the same problem.

Spring: *[The disadvantage of Pathway is that] you are always with people who are in the same level as you. You are never going to change your level that much. You have to put pressure to try to survive or change yourself to be better. . . . [Being in integrated classes] is helping more than being in Pathway. I'm not saying I'm regretting being in Pathway. No way. . . [In integrated classes] they don't know we are Pathway student[s], so they see us the same as other. It was positive. If they just want to me same as Pathway, nothing is going to be happen. They have to see us the same as other.*

Second year: *[Being in all integrated classes] affects my marks [in Liberal Studies]. [laugh] That's I realized at the end of the semester, how challenged I was. [laugh] . . . I need [challenge], actually, but it doesn't mean I enjoy it. . . . I have to spend more time, I have to try harder. . . . Definitely, always challenged makes you . . . try harder and then you achieve something more. . . . If I had the Pathway class, for second year for second year, third year, fourth year, it would be horrible, I couldn't handle anything after our school.*

[One of] the problem was that . . . in first year, that they didn't give us . . . much confidence to talk, and that's why in second year, still not that much easy to talk with native [speakers]. . . . Having some kind of group discussion or talking with people who are native in first year. . . . It could be a way to improve it and give more confidence. . . . I would really like to have a mentor who speaks, who's like native.