Summary of doctoral research – Chris Van den Broeck

Under the guidance of Dr. Paula Kristmanson, and with the support of the Second Language Research Centre at UNB, it is my intention to explore the possibilities of adopting a critical approach to literacy in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classrooms, through action research. Having now progressed into my third year of doctoral studies, and having completed my comprehensive exams, my proposed research questions have evolved into: 1) How, and to what extent, can a critical inquiry/pedagogical approach to EAP (English for Academic Purposes) affect second language learners (i.e. at an institution like UNB)?; and, 2) How, and to what extent, can a critical inquiry/pedagogical approach to EAP (English for Academic Purposes) affect second language teachers (i.e. at an institution like UNB)? I see the notion of troubling the roles of EAP teachers, EAP learners and the institutions in which they are placed as being subject matter well worthy of exploration. For those directly outside the field, I can anecdotally attest to the idea that simply not very much is fully understood about EAP programmes, teachers and learners. I have often heard it said that those in the domain of EAP exist in an educational ‘gray area’, trapped in an almost purgatory-like state, unsure of where they fit within the overarching scope of the academic institution. It is my hope that through an exploration of these concepts, a more meaningful understanding of the complex relationships between second language learners, their instructors, and the post-secondary institutions in which they exist may be better appreciated, and more fully understood.