

BREAKING THROUGH BORDERS:
RECONCEPTUALIZING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PEDAGOGY FOR ENGLISH
LEARNERS

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Submitted to the faculty of the School of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education
in the Department of Curriculum Instruction
Indiana University
December 2021

Accepted by the School of Education Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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November 19, 2021

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Acknowledgements

My road to achieving a doctorate was long and strenuous, but I would not have been able to accomplish such a feat without the help of my family, friends, IU LCLE Cohort I, SOE writing group, IU professors, EL students, and Rosa.

When the road became challenging, my family and dearest friends provided the support I needed to navigate the rough terrain. My husband and best friend, Jim, has always been by my side to encourage me when I felt low and share his belief that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. There were many times I wanted to give up and just focus on family and work. My dearest friends, IU Cohort I, SOE writing group, and IU professors reminded me that my research was important for others to understand the struggles ELs face in education. Dr. Sharon Daley repeatedly lifted me up with her constant words of encouragement. Not only has Dr. Daley never let me wander aimlessly from the path, but she also reached out to make sure I knew she was by my side. While teaching, the EL students provided inspiring words that drove me to reflect and change my teaching praxis. Yet another person who accompanied me on this journey was Rosa. Rosa attended EL content literacy courses with me, endured the student interview, joined Zoom meetings for member checking, and wrote her critical migration memoir. Her struggles are the reality of so many ELs in America, especially the refugee population, who sit quietly in class stressed with the language barrier and cry at home trying to understand the expectations of school. I hope to continue to advocate for ELs and promote changes in education that provide empowerment of this diverse population.

My road to empower ELs, educators, staff, and administrators is long and winding. I do not see the end in sight, just another curve in the road.

Michelle R. Robison-Koehler

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As the linguistic and cultural diversity of the classroom continues to evolve, English learners (ELs) are not able to meet the academic expectations within the current American educational system, which leads to ELs' over-enrollment in remedial courses, over-representation of low scores on standardized tests, and disproportionate high school drop-out rates (United States Department of Planning, 2016). Sociocultural theory of language and learning development states, learning is situated within the communities and social interactions individuals mediate which develop a knowledge bank known as funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Street, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). The theoretical framework of this practitioner research project drew upon ELs' funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy to ground transformative critical literacy instruction within the secondary setting. Data included sources relevant to evaluating current academic and literacy expectations within the academic setting, classroom literacy practices through observations and interviews, student interviews, student artifacts, field notes, practitioner reflection, member checking, and critical migration memoirs. Data analysis consisted of thematic coding to break down core themes related to students' academic funds of knowledge obtained outside of the classroom, relevant for learning in the academic setting. Through the evaluation of ELs' funds of knowledge and literacy practices, within and beyond the boundaries of the

classroom, ELs can negotiate spaces to gain access and eliminate borders.

Keywords: English learners, funds of knowledge, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical literacy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As an English as a second language (ESL) teacher, I began my journey with navigating how to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, discovering a personal mission to advocate and empower immigrant and refugee students, and providing professional development for educators about pedagogy relevant for English learners (ELs). Along the way, I have come to understand the significance of both praxis and research related to the struggles immigrant and refugee students encounter on their paths, which are similar to the experiences of my immigrant Sicilian family decades before. In essence, my journey as a practitioner-researcher is historically rooted as I seek to improve my teaching praxis and continue to promote culturally relevant educational reform for immigrants.

Statement of the Problem

While America prides itself as a country where immigrants and refugees can prosper, the educational system has yet to provide adequate teaching methods to support the success of the multicultural and multilingual student population, as evident in educational achievement gaps (McFarland et al., 2019; United States Department of Planning, 2016). Evidence of academic inequities for minority ELs includes their higher grade retention, placement in remedial courses, and failure and drop-out rates (J. McFarland et al., 2019; McHugh & Sugarman, 2015). The one-size-fits all educational framework revolves around the English-speaking, American-born student population, while the fastest growing student population comprises immigrant and refugee students entering K-12 grades. This changing school demographic underscores the importance of culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the classroom, calling for further research on the “varied sociodemographic characteristics and learning needs of students with a migrant background” (McHugh & Sugarman, 2015, p. 2; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009b). Yet, there has

been a continuous lack of preparation in teacher education and professional development programs for teachers to incorporate students' cultures into their classroom practices (Banks & Banks, 2001; Irvine, 1990). Therefore, in this practitioner research I seek to contribute to knowledge about ways to utilize ELs' funds of knowledge in culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction in all content courses to decrease educational disparities.

Decades of research on the labeling and marginalization of immigrant and minority students gave rise to conceptualizations of culturally relevant pedagogy, but there have not been sufficient changes in classrooms to decrease academic disparities for immigrants (Hernandez et al., 2013; Lucas et al., 2008). District accountability demands revolve around improving grades, standardized testing scores, and high school graduation rates, as is the case with the State of Michigan School Grades statewide accountability system (Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2020, Fall 2019). Within the mid-western high school where I teach, ELs' scores fall below the State of Michigan's average student performance on state tests (Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016-19). EL scores have tended toward the bottom 30% on standardized tests measuring academic achievement in future college achievement. High-stakes assessments and course failures lead to grade retention. Ultimately, ELs drop out of school at a rate higher than that of native English speakers (Michigan Department of Education. (2015-16).

Unfortunately, continuous labeling has not provided the pedagogical resources needed for teaching ELs, including in-depth knowledge about the educational needs of language minority student populations, such as immigrants and refugees. Realizing my own need to improve my pedagogical practices and understanding of how to provide content teachers with resources specific to the marginalized EL population, I was determined to find tools with which to reduce

academic achievement gaps, provide opportunities to bring students' cultures into the classroom, and empower ELs through voice and choice in their high school journey. Thus, I began another journey as an EL teacher and researcher.

During the last four years, I have pursued inquiry into the history of educational inequality my own immigrant family faced. While developing ways to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogical practices through incorporating ELs' funds of knowledge, conveying high expectations of their academic performance, and teaching critical literacy, as advised by Creswell and Poth (2018) I was also reflecting on my own "social position, personal experiences, and political and professional beliefs" (p. 21). Through personal reflection as a researcher and grandchild of immigrants, I understood the deep passion that drove me to change the negative narrative of ELs' academic achievements and undertake the present inquiry.

One component of this practitioner research was for the ELs to create written and digital migration memoirs as a way of critically evaluating the oppressive forces leading them and their families to leave their home countries. To guide them in this project, I modeled memoir writing through my Grandmother Rose's migration journey from Sicily, Italy. As my grandmother never spoke English, I called her Nonna ("grandmother" in Italian) Rose. In doing so, I was situating myself within the research process by exploring my family's migration history and Sicilian heritage and reflecting on my mother's experiences as an immigrant child (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I had found my calling as a teacher—to advocate for the academic success of marginalized ELs. My mission is to empower ELs through literacy relevant to the multicultural student, so they would want to come to school to learn. I am a first-generation high school graduate on my mother's side. I was determined that the ELs in my classroom would have the opportunity to become high school graduates, too.

Reflecting on the past, I consider it an extraordinary turn of events that I am pursuing a doctorate, while my mother never had the opportunity to graduate from high school. My Nonno (grandfather) Joe grew up on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in Sicily, while my Nonna Rose was born as the child of immigrants in St. Louis. Being a sickly child, Nonna was sent to live with her grandmother in Sicily, where the weather was much warmer. This is where my Nonna and Nonno Joe met. In 1922, Nonna Rose returned to the United States, where she married Nonno Joe and they raised their family. In the family history stories were told of the family of ten surviving on Nonno Joe's meager earnings peddling produce at the Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan. My Nonno Joe died when my mother was 11 years old. As the youngest child, she was kept home to care for Nonna Rose, who never learned English, until my mother married. It was a hard life, but beliefs, traditions, and strong family bonds were deeply rooted in our Sicilian culture.

As a descendant of immigrant grandparents, I never questioned what my family had because there had been so much sacrifice during the Great Depression. We lived in the modest home that my mother's father had built in a small Michigan town. Thinking back, I remember seeing her class ring and thinking about graduating in the same school district. I am haunted by the discovery that my mother had not completed high school. Before becoming a teacher, I worked for former high-school classmate of my mother, who remembered her fondly. He asked me if she ever graduated. Immediately, I responded with a quick "yes," never having thought to ask her about her life growing up in a Sicilian immigrant family whose first language was Italian. Returning home after work, I prodded my mother with questions about her graduation, wanting to hear all about it and see her yearbook. Tears rolled down her cheeks, she quietly stated she did not graduate. It all clicked! All of the times I had homework questions, she would say, "Go ask

your father.” Never once did she open a book to look to see if she could help. My father had control of most of the finances and any paperwork that arrived, but I assumed this was usually the man’s role. My mother's tears were of not knowing how to read well enough to help her children with homework. Not having completed her education was a secret she hid for decades. I shed tears for not knowing how hurt she was when her children accomplished milestones not afforded to her. Being a first-generation high-school graduate has enabled me to pursue careers of my choosing, dental hygienist and teacher. Also, these careers have given financial stability for my family. Lastly, these careers have allowed me the opportunity to be an active part of my children’s learning and advocate for their education.

In conclusion, my mission to help ELs graduate and advocating for students whose parents may not have the ability to directly support their students' academic success has a personal connection

Research Questions

There is a cause for gaining an understanding of how all knowledge is constructed, what knowledge students bring to school, and how scaffolding and transfer of knowledge to be taught to ELs. The purpose of this proposed dissertation research is to investigate the following questions:

- What funds of knowledge do ELs bring to class that are beneficial for their academic success?
- How can I incorporate ELs’ funds of knowledge into my curriculum and teaching praxis?

Theoretical Framework

My interpretive framework for addressing inequities in education for marginalized ELs related to ignoring their multicultural and multilingual assets is based on Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural research on socially mediated spaces of learning; Luis Moll's (1992) research on Funds of Knowledge, that is, the knowledge and skills ELs have gained through family and social interactions that could be used to inform curricula and pedagogy and increase their engagement and success (Daddow, 2016); and Freire's (1968) ideas of critical literacy. Danish and Gresalfi (2018) explain that, prior to teaching and assessment, educators need to "consider human activity to be inseparable from the context, practices, and histories in which activities take place" (p. 1). The sociocultural theory of language and learning, funds of knowledge, and critical literacy provide the backdrop for developing culturally relevant critical theoretical practices in the EL classroom. According to Gay (2018), culturally relevant praxis "us[es] the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 77). This approach goes beyond identifying and affirming students' culture in the classroom. As Ladson-Billings (1995b) asserts, culturally relevant pedagogy provides opportunities to "develop critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (, p. 469).

Funds of Knowledge

Sociocultural theories of learning such as funds of knowledge are indebted to the Russian philosopher Lev Vygotsky, who studied the role of culture and social interactions in children's education (Shabani et al., 2010). As Mishra (2013) explains, Vygotsky's research addressed how "a child came to learn the habits of mind of her/his culture, including speech patterns, written language, and other symbolic knowledge through which the child derived meaning and which

affected a child's construction of her/his knowledge" (p. 21). Thus, ELs develop the content of their knowledge and mode of learning through culture, as it "teaches children both what to think and how to think" (Mishra, p. 27).

According to Hull and Moje (n.d.), sociocultural research focuses on equity for ELs through identifying "the range of ways that learners require specific literacy interventions, usually dependent on shifting contexts or demands posed by different cultural, language, or discourse communities" (p. 4). Moll et al., (1992) examined how household dynamics, classroom practices, and after-school study groups of teachers and university researchers could function as "mediated structures" which benefit students. (. They found that "capitalizing on household and other community resources" made it possible to "organize classroom instruction that far exceeds in quality the rote-like instruction these children commonly encountered in schools" (p. 132). Through their ethnographic research they conceptualized Funds of Knowledge as historically and culturally developed bodies of knowledge within the home and society where students live. Floyd and Carrell (1987) argue that ELs' funds of knowledge are important for learning in the academic setting, as "prior background knowledge of culture-specific information presupposed by a text affects reading comprehension of the text" (p. 91). Street (2005b) emphasized the importance of understanding students' funds of knowledge as an essential pedagogical tool of inquiry by uncovering "what our students know and who they consult for help with academic tasks" (p. 23). It is even more imperative to learn ELs' funds of knowledge, as they routinely isolate themselves, lacking both confidence as academic writers and any meaningful sense of belonging in the dominant community (Street, 2005b). Therefore, incorporating ELs' funds of knowledge will help build a foundation for learning, as they can draw from their depth of

knowledge for English language and other content learning (Floyd & Carrell, 1987).

A solid body of research supports the assumption that students come to school with funds of knowledge, which have been socially, historically, and culturally developed and mediated.

Unfortunately, Moll et al. (1992) assert, “teachers rarely draw on the resources of the funds of knowledge from the child’s world outside the context of the classroom” (p. 134). Incorporating ELs’ funds of knowledge into reflective practices allows educators to create a whole child pedagogy, which is important for making personal connections within diverse classrooms.

Behizadeh (2014) describes these as *authentic literacy experiences*, in which the “real world” experiences of students frame authentic educational experiences.

Critical Literacy

It’s not enough to know how students develop language and literacy. More importantly, the focus should be on helping them develop critical and reflective thinking to resist the dominant ideologies’ deficit narratives of their capabilities. Therefore, I include the perspective of critical literacy in my theoretical framework to evaluate sociopolitical practices, power relationships, and language and identity within and beyond the borders of the classroom.

Referencing Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), Willis et al. (2008) state that a key premise of critical theory is that “certain groups in any society are privileged over others, and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural” (p. 33).

Historically, Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) brought to light the origins of injustice for the marginalized societies in Western Europe by describing the ideology and hegemony generated by societal hierarchies. Willis et al. (2008) defined *hegemony* as “any

form of domination that implies power, although more modern ideas also propose that the oppressed can effect change” and *ideology* as “types of representation that conserve and perpetuate a ruling class's ideas and conserve their power through material bases and institutional processes” (p. 20). Through the decades, researchers have sought to identify dominant ideologies and hegemonic strategies that dehumanize society's minority classes (Morgan, 1997; Willis et al. 2008). Being literate in the language and content of the dominant ideology bestows power. Freire (2005) explains the process of “reading the world” before “reading the word,” whereby “the Subject recognize[s] himself in the object (the coded concrete existential situation) and recognize[s] the object as a situate in which he finds himself, together with other Subjects” (p. 105).

Questioning the role of these dominant ideologies and hegemonic practices in education creates a lens for identifying the marginalization of minority students (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 2008)., Through his analysis of politics and society Freire (2005) developed the notion of *critical consciousness* as crucial to understanding dominance, focusing on an educational system that preserves the power of the elite through sterile curricula (Willis et al., 2008), and proposed *emancipatory literacy* to promote social justice and empowerment by supporting learners to become critical thinkers who question their social realities and forms of oppression (Gee, 1996; Willis et al., 2008). This axiomatic interconnection of literacy and emancipatory education was expressed in Freire and Macedo’s (1997) claim that “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world (p. 23),” giving rise to *critical literacy*. First published in 1968, a significant year for world revolutions, Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was field-defining as a treatise on pedagogical practices centered around multicultural students’ language and culture to produce emancipatory learning

opportunities (Freire, 2005). Through liberative pedagogy, marginalized students can push against oppressive forces, such as banking system of education, in which knowledge is given to students as input detached from students' productive activity and without encouraging reflectiveness in their learning (Freire, 2005). Freire's work has since become a cornerstone of global critical research focusing on marginalization due to culture, race, ethnicity, and social class.

Freire's work exposes the dehumanizing banking system of education in which teaching involves depositing material rather than empowering students through critical literacy practices in social and cultural contexts, which debunk the monolithic model by which dominant Western conceptions of literacy are imposed on other cultures (Street, 2005a). In summary, critical literacy gives students the ability to perceive, reflect on, and question oppressive forces in their education and seek liberation to pursue authentic and culturally meaningful learning experiences.

I have chosen critical literacy as the backbone for this practitioner research because a vital component of culturally relevant pedagogy is critical reflection and empowerment through consciousness raising among immigrant and refugee students in the American educational system. My hope is to deliver a plan for including transformative literacy in all content courses for the increasingly diverse student population in U.S. secondary schools.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is Ladson-Billings' (1992) and Gay's (2018) culturally relevant pedagogy, primarily focused on students' personal knowledge resources as assets rather than deficits for academic learning, as shown in Figure 1. The three criteria that will frame how ELs' knowledges are evaluated are the following: 1) whether, with the teacher's and guidance, they promote development of academic skills; 2) whether they take advantage of

students' culture as an agency for learning, and 3) whether they help students develop a sociopolitical and critical consciousness of the societal influences that cause inequities and marginalization (Gay, 2018a). Culturally relevant praxis (CRP) comprises asset- or strength-based pedagogies by which students' families and communities are considered sources of personal and cultural strengths and intellectual capabilities, and prior accomplishments are valued as beneficial for learning in the academic context (Milner IV, 2007). As the conceptual framework of this practitioner study, culturally relevant pedagogy is nested within the theoretical framework comprising sociocultural learning theory, funds of knowledge, and critical literacy. First steps will include uncovering how ELs build their funds of knowledge within their homes and communities and identifying what knowledges can be beneficial for their academic learning. Beyond understanding and making use of students' lived experiences and socially developed knowledges, culturally relevant pedagogy can provide opportunities for critical inquiry into academic injustices through critical literacy instruction. The basis of this practitioner research project will be my incorporation of CRP and critical literacy instruction in my teaching, and my goal will be to reflect on and gain insight into my teaching practices, leading to ways to influence the system to increase inclusion the EL students in pedagogies that are culturally relevant to all members of multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

To design curriculum and instructional methods that are relevant to multicultural classrooms, educators need to understand that ELs have knowledges from their homes and communities as well as from academic settings. CRP provides teaching practices that are relevant and authentic to multicultural and multilingual student populations. The salient goal of CRP is the intellectual, social, emotional, and political empowerment of students by giving them

a voice in their learning and in changing society (Harmon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1992). CRP begins with the teacher problematizing teaching by evaluating teacher-student interactions, curriculum and standards, and norms and expectations in schools and communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1995b) advises that there are "three broad propositions or conceptions regarding self and other, social relations, and knowledge" (p. 483) that educators must adhere to. Practicing CRP requires "an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483).

Academic Success. Academic knowledge and the English language are vital components for ELs to gain full access to the school and home communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Lee, 2010; Lee, 2018). To support the success of diverse EL students, Lucas et al. (2008) state, educators need to acquire

deep content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of how children and adolescents learn in a variety of settings, skills for creating a classroom community that is supportive of learning for diverse students, knowledge about multiple forms of assessments, and the ability to reflect on practice" (p. 362).

In essence providing ELs adequate support for academic achievement requires tools that extend beyond those typically taught in teacher preparation programs to. It takes a depth of knowledge of language and culture pedagogies, multiple ways of assessing ELs' abilities, how to maintain supportive and enriching classroom environments, and reflective practices.

Also, the Every Student Succeeds Act ("Thomas Jefferson: an essay or introductory lecture...dialects of the English language) of 2015 mandates that educators align content standards with English proficiency standards for ELs (Kinney, 2015; Lee, 2018). One

underlying tenet of CRP stresses that all students should be brought to high levels of achievement to become full members of society (Lee, 2010). Unfortunately, ELs are not reaching high academic achievement scores and proficiency on standardized testing, which relegates them to remedial courses which are generally information and drill oriented and not effective in advancing non-native speaking students English literacy (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Additionally, traditional remediation classes in K-12 “neglect to consider institutional accountability for student outcomes” (Relles, 2017, p. 283), causing underprepared students’ seclusion from appropriate learning opportunities (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). When they are not allowed to participate in courses oriented to standardized assessments, there is a disconnect between the content taught and how ELs are evaluated (Lee, 2010).

In summary, encouraging academic success for ELs becomes a challenge when educators are not instructed on pedagogical approaches appropriate for ELs. The current educational framework and expectations of K-12 education center on identifying and filling gaps in ELs knowledge, not on providing bridges between multilingual students’ current knowledge and further academic success.

Cultural Competence. Milner (2017) states that CRP is constructed on the principle that an individual’s culture includes his/her “racial and ethnic identity, class, language, economic status, and gender” (p. 5). Gay (2018) advises that the incorporation of students’ cultures in the classroom, should revolve around their “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles” (, p. 17). Additionally, it is important to know components of culture fall into one of two categories: visible, such as crafts, music, art, and technology, and invisible, such as, values, beliefs, feelings, opinions, perspectives, and assumptions (Gay, 2018b). It is through understanding these visible and invisible cultural norms and traditions that

educators begin to perceive how instruction can be distorted (Gay, 2018b). Thus, Ladson-Billings (1992) argues, CRP takes a stance against the assimilationist approach of fitting students' cultures into the current educational framework, focusing instead on using students' cultures for "helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge" (p. 314).

Sociopolitical or Critical Consciousness. Ladson-Billings (1995b) also advises that, in addition to supporting academic success and cultural competence, teachers "must help students to recognize, understand, and critique social inequalities" (p. 476). To do so, Aronson and Laughter (2016) point out, through reflexivity teachers must recognize "sociopolitical issues of race, class, and gender in themselves and understand... the causes before then incorporating these issues into their teaching" p. 166). They observe that a key sociopolitical issue that often gets overlooked in the multicultural classroom is that "immigrant and English language learner labels are often used synonymously" (p. 166). This becomes a social justice issue for educators to prevent remedial English instruction for ELs, whose primary language has long been established, such as Native Americans or Chicana@ Americans (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

In addition to ELs' generic labeling, Lee (2010) states that educators need to be cognizant of ELs' use of their first language for code-switching, bridging, and building knowledge, emphasizing that "the role of students' primary language in CRP is central, [as] students use their primary language to make sense of practices" (p. 459). Best practices of CRP would indicate biliteracy education for ELs rather than English-only classroom instruction. Whether or not this standard is possible, educators can create culturally relevant student learning when they incorporate high academic expectations, develop their own and students' cultural competence, and facilitate empowerment through sociopolitical or critical evaluation. This type of instruction

provides evidence of authentic caring, dismantling of stereotypes' dismantling, and willingness to learn alongside the ELs (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Gutierrez (2001) observes that through "classroom processes, cultural processes, and social processes in the literacy and learning processes" (p. 564), ELs can build emancipatory knowledge and language skills.

In conclusion, CRP begins with the student.

Organization of Proposal

In this chapter, I have identified the problems ELs face in the academic setting and explained my positionality and passion as a teacher-researcher personally connected to the research. I have also provided the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study and stated my goals of investigating ways to effect changes in pedagogy and literacy to close achievement gaps and give voice to minority immigrant and refugee students. In the next chapter, I review the literature review on ways to uncover the assets that language minorities attain from their lived experiences and interactions at home and in their communities. The final chapter in this dissertation proposal presents the proposed methodology as practitioner research in the form of a case study of two Middle Eastern refugee students navigating the American educational system. During the implication of this qualitative research, other productive lines of inquiry may unfold.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since as early as colonial America, generations of immigrants and minority populations have faced the deficit narrative of underperforming academic achievement (Justice, 2017; LeMay, 2018). Understanding the struggles my Nonna (grandmother) and mother faced drove me to search the literature to find information and ways of teaching relevant to educating a diverse student population of multicultural and multilingual ELs. In this literature review I sought to answer these questions: "What funds of knowledge do English learners bring to the classroom that are beneficial for their learning?" and "How can I use culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy to create authentic and relevant learning opportunities?" These questions were pathways to a praxis relevant to transforming the traditional classroom into an environment in which ELs could learn and I could reflect and grow as a teacher and researcher. Toward this end, this literature review includes the political and legal construction of educational reform, key court cases dedicated to equal education rights for minority students, and elements of an asset-based praxis of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy to support ELs in academic settings.

Summary of the Literature Review

In this literature review I sought to uncover the roots of deficit narratives applied to immigrants and minority groups, by which politicians have pushed personal agendas and legislation including presidential legacies, ultimately creating our American exclusionist society (Massey, 2020).

When I was growing up in suburban Michigan, my teachers promoted proficiency in English as a metaphorical key to unlock the door to personal and financial success in America. This was possibly a way to validate English language instruction, but until my adulthood I did

connect being illiterate in English as a lock that prohibited individuals from fully participating in society. The United States once proclaimed it welcomed immigrants and that those with a strong work ethic would prosper here. Unfortunately, the deficit narrative brought silence and shame to my Nonna and mother, locked out of society as illiterate Sicilian immigrants. I am a first-generation high-school graduate on my mother's side of the family, a fact I did realize this fact until uncovering that my mother had dropped out of school. Fast forward decades, I am now a full-time EL educator of immigrants and Middle Eastern refugees in the secondary setting, and key to full social and economic participation is still out of reach for immigrants whose first language is not English. The exclusionist nature of American society is still documented in data showing that ELs who have had grade retention score within the bottom 30% of achievement on standardized testing, ultimately leading many to fail to complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum Guidelines for graduation and leave high school without a diploma (Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, Fall 2019). This literature review's historical journey revealed the changes needed in education as classrooms become more diverse. Key resources for such change are ELs' funds of knowledge as assets necessary for learning and empowerment, and culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy as beneficial praxis.

Roots of Immigration Education in America and Monolingualism

The American government was founded on the principle of freedom from oppressive monarchies, and the American Constitution mandated that the people fundamental rights, such as personal liberty, freedom of speech and assembly, religious choice, and due process of law (Hancock, 1776). Governed by the Constitution, the new leadership wanted the American republic desired to grow and develop through trade with European countries. At this time of early growth, inviting multilingual Eastern European immigrants to settle in the new America

was considered imperative for commerce. In his 1784 address to the regents of the University of the State of New York, Benjamin Franklin announced, "I am making an extensive collection of such French Books as I think may be serviceable in America, where I hope that Language, which contains an abundance of useful Learning, will be more and more cultivated" (para. 1). The case of multilingual and multicultural importance in the United States was evident in 1790 with the first census, in which it was documented that "25% of the population spoke languages other than English" (Wiley & Wright, 2004, p. 142). With over 10 million immigrants arriving during the colonial and revolutionary periods, often for religious freedom, small groups formed communities based on language, culture, and religious beliefs (LeMay, 2018). According to Justice (2017) the local congregations provided education, called "church schools," which received vouchers from the government for their funding Justice also explained that President Jefferson believed in religion within public education but argued that "a republican form of government depended on the intelligence and virtue of the people, and that religious coercion was among the worst forms of tyranny" (p. 450). Within the era of conflict and persecutions among Christian sects, Jefferson condemned such behavior as bigotry, superstition, and coercion Hence, the First Amendment's provision for freedom of religious choice established a "relationship between religious bodies and universal civic education" (p. 439). Religion-based educational systems reflected the various mindsets of each of the governors of the 13 original colonies.

In addition to educating the immigrants, there was a push to educate the Native population of the country, deemed savages, starting with the scheme of civilization for the Cherokee Nation proposed by James McHenry to President George Washington (McHenry, 1796), by which the men would raise cattle, grain, and tobacco, while the women would

manufacture cotton and linen for trade with the White settlers (McHenry, 1796). Thus, the colonists' belief system was the substructure that shaped the expectations of all inhabitants, in this case relegating the Native population to service roles for the benefit of Europeans.

As the founding fathers believed in the necessity of formalized education, they continued to shape its components. First was instruction in English, as documented in Thomas Jefferson's (1825) *Introductory Lecture explaining the importance and formalized instruction of the Anglo-Saxon and Modern dialects of English*. Thus, began our monolingual United States, where English is the academic language of instruction across all grade levels and content. Next, during the 1830s and 1840s, the framers created the "common school" to make free schooling available to all students (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004). Ohio was one of the first states to create a free public-school system with monitored learning standards and allocation of public funding, intended to reform society by creating a new identity (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004). In 1837, Samuel Lewis became the first Superintendent of Common Schools in Ohio (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004). Horace Mann was then appointed as the Superintendent of Common Schools in Massachusetts (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004), and both Lewis and Mann proceeded to create a framework for developing a republican society modeled after the European school systems during the first state educational convention in 1836 known as the Western Literary Institute (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004). The goal was to provide equal education supported by tax funds for all students described as "a complete system of common school instruction for the whole people" (p. 599). The concept of a public educational system that accommodated all students, regardless of socioeconomic status was engendered to benefit society.

Change came with segregation following the Civil War and restrictive local immigration laws. Hendrick (1975) stated that "As of 1856 negroes were being denied equitable access to

both the common law and the common school." In the xenophobic environment of World Wars I and II, supreme court rulings upheld holding legal discrimination. From 1849-1970 in the California Public Policy created or strengthened divisions in society, resulting in the denial of equitable education to non-White, minority children and enduring social and political discrimination against their communities (Hendrick, 1975). The middle-class White majority had created a "them and us" rift still present today and made explicit during the Trump administration. (p. 19). While the 14th Amendment of the Constitution granted the right to life, liberty, property, and due process to all persons born or naturalized in the United States in 1868, it did not end the legacy of slavery or gain equal access to equitable education for minority students. In 1896, in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, the United States Supreme Court ruled that separate-but-equal was constitutional for public places, including schools, but only the separation was upheld in practice.

In the late 19th century, immigrants faced discrimination promulgated by the anti-Catholic American Protective Association and the Immigration Restrictive League, who advocated denying entry to individuals deemed genetically undesirable. In the early 20th century, a literary test required immigrants over the age of 16 to read 40 words in any language to exclude illiterates, who were labeled as undesirables from the public-school system (Ovando, 2003). As eugenicist theories flourished, societal mindsets revolved around a homogeneous Euro-American culture, forcing immigrants to assimilate to the middle-class norms of the early 20th century (Cremin, 1961; Ovando, 2003). One example of the quest for a homogeneous culture was the provision of "Americanization classes [meant] to prepare immigrants for integration into mainstream society" (Ovando, 2003, p. 5). Additionally, east coast states instituted so-called steamer classes to teach English to immigrant children before they could be admitted to public

schools (Cremin, 1961). During the World Wars, xenophobia, particularly towards Germans and Japanese, regardless of whether they were United States citizens, became normal behavior for Americans. It was during this period of heightened negativity toward minority groups Nonna immigrated to America in 1922 from Italy, where she had received limited schooling due to health issues. She could not speak English and found that the land of opportunity seemed to serve only the dominant white middle class during this era. Life was difficult for my Nonna, because she was a sickly child. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but lived much of her youth and teen years in Sicily with her maternal grandmother. Upon returning to America, she was not welcomed in school because she could not speak English. Instead, stayed at home with her parents, who themselves had not received proper education in Sicily and later rebuked her for choosing to marry someone they had not chosen for her. Without knowing English, she relied on my Nonno (grandfather), who had learned to use social English from working at the Eastern Market in Detroit to support his family's household. In America, free public education existed in writing but not reality for my Nonna and Nonno as Sicilian immigrants.

Minority groups fought back for legal rights and to receive equitable educational opportunities. In 1923, the *Meyer v. Nebraska* Supreme Court ruling struck down a state law prohibiting the teaching of foreign languages or their use as a medium of instruction (McReynolds & States, 1922), which was vital to bilingual education for language-minority students. The *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931) case and *Mendez v. Westminster School District* in 1947 (Blanco, 2010) confronted segregation policies that denied equal education for non-native English speakers. In the 1930s, children of Mexican immigrants in California, who were considered mentally inferior and posing health risks to White children, were placed in separate schools for non-English students until they were proficient in English (Blanco, 2010). In

1954, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, stating that "segregation of children in public schools solely based on race deprives children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal" (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). The courts cited the 14th Amendment, of the American people, granting, the same inalienable rights to all U.S. citizens regardless of race, as noted in the previous section.

Minority families sought legal representation for their marginalized children in the American school system. While the legal cases' outcomes may not have had immediate success, key factors within the cases laid the groundwork for changes in the 20th century as globalization increased the intersecting of cultures in classrooms

The Cultural Deficit Paradigm

The first two centuries focused on the American ideals of assimilation and a homogenous identity for immigrants, as set forth by our founding fathers and the U. S. Constitution. Then, beginning with the National Defense Act of 1958, the American educational system sought to become the center of change to compete for global power. The National Defense Act instituted and financed foreign language, math, and science courses necessary for competing with the Soviet Union and gain global dominance in space exploration (Ovando, 2003). Unfortunately, one result of these educational initiatives was the continuation of the deficit narrative for multilingual and multicultural minority groups as mainstream monolingual learners were geared towards accelerated English-only academic instruction (Ovando, 2003). Then in the mid 60s, when equity in education again seemed bleak, President Lyndon Johnson launched the War on Poverty, which sought to remediate racial and social injustices.

Change for minorities began with two critical pieces of legislation, the Civil Rights Act and the Economic Opportunity Act. Before Johnson's War on Poverty, language minority students were placed in English-only classrooms and forced to sink-or-swim. With the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Johnson's new crusade, Wiley and Wright (2004) state, "educators and policymakers become more sensitive to the needs of their rapidly growing language-minority student population" (p. 153). The final piece to the language debate puzzle was put in place with the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), requiring support for ELs with certified teachers and curriculum (Ovando, 2003). The relevance of these acts lies in reality, as Ovando (2003) points out:

For the first time in American educational history, the federal government embarked on an educational experiment that sought to build upon students' home cultures, languages, and prior experiences in such a way that they could start learning without first being proficient in English. (p. 8)

Unfortunately, low-income, marginalized racial and ethnic groups were assigned another deficit indicator at school with the 1978 standardized identification of limited English proficiency, which created identifiers of ELs' inadequacies in education compared to their English-speaking peers, which relegated them to remedial instruction (Wiley & Wright, 2004; Ovando, 2003). This movement was counter from conceptualizations of learning as socially mediated (Vygotsky, 1978) and built upon learners' funds of knowledge acquired from home culture and family life experiences (Moll et al., 1992).

Cognitive theorist Piaget posited that learning was an innate trait to be developed through teachers, whereas sociocultural theory (SCT) regards learning as a process of language and cognitive development through interpersonal communication within the learner's cultural-

historical context (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1994). ELs learn language through their socially mediated daily home and school interactions (Gee, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the construction of knowledge is not limited to receptive learning within formal instructional settings (Bruning et al., 2011; Shabani et al., 2010; Street, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1994). There are two key components of Vygotsky's SCT: mediated learning occurs through interactions with educators and more capable peers, and language is a valuable social and cognitive tool established through dialogue (Bruning et al., 2011). The *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), conceptualized by Vygotsky (1978), references the area between the learner's current and potential knowledge or skill gained through mediated learning (Wertsch, 1994; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Additionally, ELs' language development is culturally constructed through parents, family members, and community, which provides relevant language input and experiences directly related to cultural norms and practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1994; Zuengler & Miller, 2006).

As referenced earlier in this proposal, Moll et al. (1992) defined funds of knowledge as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). Funds of knowledge provide abundant cultural and cognitive resources for learning in the educational setting (Moll et al., 1992), which are essential for creating culturally relevant pedagogy for a diverse multicultural and multilingual EL student population.

While the diversity of the school population has been increasing, changes in curriculum and pedagogy are needed to enable ELs to utilize their funds of knowledge as a foundation on which to build new academic knowledge. My mother could not build from her Sicilian knowledges ingrained in her daily life outside of school. Rather, she was forced to drop out of

high school due to the belief that foreigners must assimilate, and all students must become English-speaking Americans.

A Stance for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Prompted by Education Reform in the 1980s

America was the global trade powerhouse of automobiles, industrial machinery, and pharmaceuticals in the 1980s but slipped from the top ranking due to their global competitors, which prompted research and education reform geared toward increasing student achievement and eliminating illiteracy (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The recommended list of education reforms, rooted in academic rigor and measurable standards in high schools and post-secondary schools, aimed at increasing student achievement, as the point has been reached at which “America’s place in the world will be either secured or forfeited” (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 44). While Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush commissioned investigations into education reform for underperforming American youth, researchers were demonstrating how culturally responsive teachers and culturally relevant learning environments were beneficial for closing achievement gaps and increasing graduation rates.

Two key inquiries into the American educational system were the 1983 *A Nation at Risk: An Imperative for Educational Reform* and the Charlottesville Educational Summit in 1989. The *Nation at Risk* report stated the mediocre educational performance of American youth failed the Nation, as global competitors were outranking the United States in commerce, industry, science, and technological advancements (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). At the Charlottesville Educational Summit, President Bush took the initiative to institute six national educational goals in 1989, prompting the transformation of the American educational "crisis" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Vinovskis, 1999). The Bush administration

promoted the position that without properly educating the young generation, the American economy would struggle in the future (Vinovskis, 1999). The goals focused on eliminating illiteracy by having every child reading at grade level and capable of reading the newspaper upon entering high school by 1997 (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Vinovskis, 1999). Therefore, the national educational goals centered on preparing a well-educated workforce “in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world economy” (Bush, 1989).

Since the 1980s the lens of education has focused on the failures of academic literacy achievement, sparking controversies such as the debate over literacy methodologies between "traditional" linguistic approaches and "whole language" education (Harmon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). More recently, social, cultural, and critical practices of language and literacy education promote reflective and collaborative learning, such as utilizing ELs' funds of knowledge as learning resources and adopting culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Medina & del Rocio Costa, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1995a) defined *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP) as a critical pedagogy focused on collective empowerment through academic success, cultural competence as a model for learning, and critical consciousness of social inequalities. According to Ladson-Billings (1992) culturally relevant pedagogy takes a stance against the assimilationist approach of fitting students' cultures into the current educational framework. Instead, CRP focuses on using EL students' culture for "helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge (p. 314).

Gay (2010) lists the attributes of culturally responsive educators, saying they are: socially and academically empowering; knowledgeable about students' multi-dimensional attributes; validating of every student's culture; comprehensively socially, emotionally, and politically

knowledgeable; and emancipatory in liberating students from oppressive educational practices (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Culturally relevant teaching focuses on cultivating educators' to be reflective and responsive mediators of language and learning so as to support student empowerment and achieve outcomes that bridge minority students into society (Gay, 2010, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). When culturally responsive teachers take a stance for all learners to succeed, especially those marginalized by dominant Euro-American educational expectations and social norms, they develop culturally relevant pedagogy for learning and empowerment.

A teacher's personal connection to students through *positionality*, *caring*, and *culturally relevant learning environments* encourages academic excellence and motivation (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Gay, 2018 asserts that *shared beliefs* with students and staff about cultural diversity promotes open dialogue and personal connections, and *Caring* characteristics as critical components of CRP's instructional effectiveness include "patience, persistence facilitation, validation, and empowerment for the participants (p. 103). *Culturally relevant learning environments* foster a sense of belonging so students can utilize critical dialogue to develop critical consciousness of issues of social justice (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Understanding students' and family's funds of knowledge is a basic tenet of CRP practices. Medina and del Rocio Costa (2010) evaluated the funds of knowledge of Puerto Rican teacher candidates who were situated within the community in which they would eventually teach Spanish as the native language, so their lived experiences and native literacies were resources for mediation of Spanish language development and creating "challenging, nurturing, and respectful learning [classroom] environments" (p. 5).

1. The reality is that the majority teacher (white middle-class female) is likely to face a heterogeneous student population (students with varied racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, often of low socioeconomic status). Additionally, they will be held accountable for these students' academic gains, aligned with educator evaluation criteria (Howard, 2003). Thus, teachers need to reflect on their positionality within their current classrooms. Gay (2010) reiterates that teachers need to "create, clarify, and articulate clearly defined beliefs about cultural diversity generally and in education specifically because personal beliefs drive instructional behaviors" (p. 216). Howard (2003) states, "critical reflection requires one to seek deeper levels of self-knowledge and to acknowledge how one's world-view can shape students' conceptions of self" (p. 198), warning that deep reflection might be painful when addressing questions of key areas of racial conflicts, such as the following:

2. How frequently and what interactions did I have with individuals from racial backgrounds different from my growing up?
3. Who were the primary persons who helped shape my perspectives of individuals from different racial groups? How were their opinions formed?
4. Have I ever harbored prejudiced thoughts towards people from different racial backgrounds?
5. If I harbor prejudiced thoughts, what effects do such thoughts have on students who come from those backgrounds?
6. Do I create negative profiles of individuals from different racial backgrounds? (p.198)

According to the United States Office of English Language Acquisition, in 2016-17 ELs constituted 9.6% of the K-12 total enrollment, and their numbers were growing each year

(United States Department of Education, 2020). True critical reflection on self and others is necessary for educators to develop a welcoming classroom climate centered on the students' cultures, maintain individualized expectations of academic achievement, and promote emotional well-being (Gay, 2010; Harmon, 2012). Additionally, immigrant children's and language learners' language and cognitive development needs must be met through culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McFarland et al., 2019).

Giroux (1989) stated that the Regan and Bush Administrations' education reforms of the 1980s made schools "the new scapegoat for the increase[ed] failure of the American economy to compete in the world market" (p. 728) and argued that "A curriculum policy must be put forth that argues for the importance of drawing on the cultural resources that students bring to school as a way to begin developing new skills and engaging in existing knowledge" (p. 730). Although cultural diversity was viewed as a deficit rather than an asset, culturally aware teachers built culturally responsive learning environments where reflection and shared beliefs guided learning.

A Call for Critical Literacy in the Common Era

The current "one-size-fits-all" Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and accountability measures of standardized testing create limits for ELs (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). National and state educational reforms in the 20th Century presumably centered on inclusion and equity for all students. However, their vague definitions and means of implementation and focus on changes in four primary categories, "standards, assessment, and accountability; school finance reforms, teacher training and school resources; and school choice options" (United States Department of Education, 2003, p. 2), resulted in continued failure for marginalized students. Giroux (1989) argued that education reform should include critical literacy, by which "empowerment of students means providing them with a curriculum and an

instructional agenda that enable them to draw on their histories, voices and cultural resources in developing new skills and knowledge” (p. 729). As stated by Norris et al. (2012), through questioning, exploring, and challenging power dynamics between the reader and author, critical literacy "examines issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and change" p. 59). Despite the growing diversity of the student population, educational reform continued to be irrelevant for multicultural and multilingual ELs as shown in their failing standardized test scores and low graduation rates, resulting in negative connotations, and labeling.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act was advertised as a way to close achievement gaps for the poor and minority student populations (Wright, 2006). The NCLB, built upon previous federal Acts and grants, provided financial support for developing educational programs and resources for low-income and minority students (Guilfoyle, 2006). Two key components of the NCLB Act that provided funds to support ELs were Titles I and III, As Capps et al. (2005) explained Title I included support for additional reading and math intervention for ELs, and Title III provided funding on an annual basis to improve their English proficiency However, the NCLB Act’s goals were for ELs to be taught the same content as the general education population and held accountable for standardized testing (Capps et al., 2005), without modifying curriculum to incorporate ELs’ funds of knowledge and cultural background. That is, ELs were expected to achieve proficiency on standardized testing with extra tutoring but without building on their cultural schemas or first language.

During President Barack Obama’s term in office, the NCLB Act was replaced with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. Title III of the ESSA specifically targets ELs and their English-language acquisition. Yet again, there was a modification to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, instituted by President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

According to the International Literacy Association (2016), the ESSA “was designed to reduce the role of the federal government in mandating state education policy and provide more fiscal flexibility” (p. 8), so it prohibits federal prescription of curricular or pedagogical approaches to educating ELs” (p. 32). Now states were to create their own proficiency standards and assessments in the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Commenting on this shift, Giroux (1989) stated, “The real battle should be over what counts as knowledge, who decides if knowledge that students already possess is valuable, and what else they must learn and for what purpose” (p. 730). The Obama administration gave more choice at the state level for educating ELs, but the current mandated Common Core State Standards and language proficiency standards of the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium did not give voice or choice for the immigrant and refugee ELs in my EL classroom.

Therefore, I sought to investigate literacy as more than a cognitive process needed for ELs to gain proficiency on standardized testing. I found that the New Literacy Studies (NLS), as Gull and Moje (2012) described, "centered on understanding how context, learning environments, social interactions, cultural practices, and cultural tools inform and shape reading and writing" (p. 1). Street (2005), one of the founders of NLS, stated that the two models of literacy that NLS references are the "autonomous" model and the "ideological" model. The "autonomous" model or "literacy in itself—autonomously—will have effects on other social and cognitive practices" (p. 417). In actuality, the autonomous model of literacy superimposed Western institutional literacy practices upon other cultures. Alternatively, the "ideological" model ascertains that literacy is socially constructed whereby versions "are always rooted in a particular world-view and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize

others" (p. 418). NLS advocates argued that to counter the manipulative use of literacy, there was a need to develop a critical consciousness and critical literacy instruction.

The definition of being literate evolved with the mode and context in which students were reading and writing in the globalized world, calling for critical literacy instruction, which Vasquez (2017) defined as "a theoretical and practical framework that can readily take on [shifting] challenges creating spaces for literacy for literacy work that can contribute to creating a more critically informed and just world" (p. 1). Diverse ELs were able to connect to their historical learning legacy but were still required to fit into the rigid American education built on CCSS and standardized testing. Therefore, proponents of critical consciousness in literacy instruction began questioning the dominant ideologies framing literacy instruction and their underlying purposes. Rather, the blueprint of critical literacy instruction should be specific to each EL classroom to incorporate various cultural and linguistic understandings of literacy.

Critical literacy is not definite entity imposing its own set of standards. Rather, as stated by *Peters, and Lankshear (1995)*, "standards or criteria exist on the basis of which we distinguished critical conceptions and practices of reading, writing, or viewing texts from non-critical or a-critical literacies" (p. 54). Thus, as Huang, 2011 stated, critical literacy begins with an analysis of the text and the underpinnings of the author's purpose and bias. Additionally, Huang points out, ELs may not have the background knowledge of the western countries' historical, social, and cultural issues taught in American classes.

One example of critical literacy praxis is *Campano's (2007)* five years as a fifth-grade teacher-researcher in a diverse urban school district of a midsized city in California, where he sought to utilize ELs' funds of knowledge for learning and critical inquiry. He found that many ELs were forced into remedial "intervention" courses, which ultimately served as gatekeepers,

leading to an increased high school drop-out rate for the ELs. Therefore, he utilized ELs familial stories for reading and writing instruction as a means for students to access their cultures, heritages, and traditions in hopes of building on their funds of knowledge to improve academic gains. He described this approach as “a pedagogy based on the theoretical assumption that critical inquiry into these very experiences might yield genuine knowledge about what it means to teach and learn in diverse urban classrooms” (p. 37).

In his book, *Immigrant Students and Literacy: Reading, Writing, and Remembering*, (2007), Campano described his culturally relevant praxis of reflecting, creating a culturally relevant learning environment, and ultimately advocating for change in curriculum for ELs. He outlined his three-stage approach to teaching and research, which included an inward-looking perspective on teacher reflexivity, an outward perspective on students as a community of learners, and the teacher’s role in the larger community, as a modified approach to teaching viewed through the lens of a researcher. While the California curriculum created homogenized learning for all students, and the accountability system led to the marginalization of students from other national education systems and whose native language was not English, in his classes these students were able to create a community through shared narratives. By utilizing ELs familial stories as a curricular resource, Campano sought to deconstruct the deficit-based instruction of “making poor students only receivers and victims of knowledge, not creators” (p. 36). By privileging ELs’ voices in their writing and sharing stories about themselves, he provided an opportunity to celebrate the various cultures in the classroom beyond the mandated curriculum.

There is no scripted program for teaching critical literacy; rather, in the literature of the last 30 years it is identified as a contextualized process for supporting the learning of culturally

diverse students. Unfortunately, the practice is not identified on the CCSS or widely implemented in English classrooms, which is why I sought to uncover ways in which ELs can critically evaluate texts as a means of learning and empowerment. Hopefully, in this era of digital support for learning, there will be increased access to culturally relevant literature and practices by which ELs can have voice and choice in their language acquisition and learning.

Conclusion and Further Research

Unfortunately, there have not been profound changes in curricula and teacher education for providing ELs the support needed to promote their language and literacy development and reduce their achievement (Li & Edwards, 2010; McFarland et al., 2019). Three essential factors contributing to academic failures are 1) the lack of preservice teacher education and in service teacher professional development programs focused on multilingual and multicultural student populations (Lucas et al., 2008; Street, 2005b); 2) curricula not aligned with the goals, cultural expectations, and literacy practices of the students in classrooms (Lee, 2010; Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006; Moll et al., 1992); and 3) lack of critical pedagogies to balance the socially and politically dominant ideologies in schools and society, which are important for mediating spaces within and beyond the classroom for all students to become full members of society (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Therefore, I seek to investigate the use of critical literacy with my EL students in order to gain an understanding of their funds of knowledge as a means of bridging home and academic learning, incorporating the use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the EL classroom, and teaching literacy as a means of empowerment for the growing refugee student population in Michigan. Through the years, my own family has faced the barrier of a faulty educational system for immigrants. I am a first-generation high school and university graduate. I hope to reflect on my

cultural heritage and positionality as a teacher-researcher, ultimately becoming an advocate for curriculum change for marginalized ELs. It is not enough to identify their failing academic achievement scores without providing the proper tools and support to help them to reach their life goals.

Chapter 3: Practitioner Research Methodology

I could not agree more with Campano's (2007) metaphor of education as a *pressure cooker*, with its "increasing demands on teachers, including larger classes, pressures to follow a rigid standardized curriculum and 'teach to the test,' [and] decreased support for public education" (p. xi). During the seven years I have been teaching in the mid-western state of Michigan, the EL student population in my district has grown to over 3,800 students and now constitutes 15% of the district's total student body. Seeking to understand how best to support this growing EL population, I decided to begin by reflecting on my teaching praxis and ELs' funds of knowledge. Therefore, I chose practitioner research as a method to find ways to change my teaching from my district's sanctioned practices such as tracking, testing, binary curriculum instruction, and teacher-centered instruction. Supporting my decision was Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) description of practitioner research as "a valuable mode of critique of the inequities in schools and society and knowledges hierarchies, which have implications within as well as beyond the local context" (p. ix).

After identifying the literacy instructional practices associated with hierarchies of power and the ideologies that support them, I used practitioner research to examine culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and critical literacy with a case study of a female EL high school student who was a Middle Eastern refugee student. Much of the rationale of the present study is based on a three-year pilot program in which I focused on cosmopolitanism and critical literacy instruction involving a summative critical migration memoir project, modeled on my grandmother's critical migration memoir. Through data collection, analysis, and teacher reflection, I realized that my own reflexivity and epistemology drive much of my teaching and advocacy for immigrants. This

chapter walks the reader through the procedures of my practitioner research case study, including researcher's positionality and epistemology, site selection, data collection and analysis, research ethics, significance of the study, and limitations. Throughout the research process, my focus remained constant on a conceptual framework comprising CRP and critical literacy for ELs as a means of decreasing the deficit perceptions and academic disparities that cause marginalization.

Choosing Transformative Practitioner Inquiry through a Case Study

Prior to pursuing a doctorate in literacy, culture, and language education at Indiana University, I would have situated myself with the postpositivist mindset of a single reality that can never really be understood (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011). Recently, my mindset has changed towards transformative qualitative research and the implications of research that leads to social change. This social change, more so social justice, is not only my role as an educator and researcher but also the role I push my students to pursue for cultural identity and freedom from oppression. I have come to realize my positionality as a white-female, descendant of an Euro-American family, is the majority in an American educational system where the students in my classroom are diverse. Also, I have come to recognize that I cannot change my birth, rather use it to empower those whom I come in contact with and be a voice for anti-racist dialogue through educating others about the minority EL population. Lincoln, et al. (2011) referred to this voice and flexibility.

Since I ascertain that the American educational system failed immigrants for decades, I had chosen transformative framework of practitioner research for small acts of change with my teaching praxis and curriculum for ELs. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) stated teaching is “radically local---embedded in the immediate relationships of students and teachers, shaped by

the cultures of schools and communities, and connected to the experiences and biographies of individuals and groups” (p. 10). This key component of practitioner inquiry resonated with me; therefore, I knew as a teacher and researcher, I needed to start in my classroom. The first steps of this qualitative inquiry involved investigating ELs’ funds of knowledge and literacy practices within my classroom, and the absence of knowledge bases which have developed from families’ social practices, work experiences, and social history (Moll et al., 1992). This project was driven by social research, which aims for positive social change and evaluation of practitioner practices within the EL classroom, where students have a voice in their learning and empowerment (Coe et al., 2017; *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 2011). Through qualitative inquiry, research is focused on how literacies have the possibility to aide ELs to develop language, socialize within the academic and social settings, and develop their identities. It is not only valuable for students to utilize their literacies in the classroom, but also important for teachers to share their life experiences and build critical pedagogical practices that are pertinent to each child’s social and academic need beyond mastery of concepts.

Utilizing the case study methodology, I argue ELs’ funds of knowledge, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical literacy instruction are essential for diverse student populations. My direction of this case study involves the qualitative inquiry of one Middle Eastern refugee student, to show the depth of knowledge she came to class with based on her lived experiences.

The two overarching questions guiding my research to evaluate my teaching praxis and incorporate home literacy and language beneficial in the classroom were:

- What funds of knowledge do students bring to class that are beneficial for academic success?

- How do I incorporate ELs' funds of knowledge into my curriculum and teaching praxis?

In conclusion, I chose to change my actions as a teacher-researcher away from the dehumanizing "banking of knowledge" that the American educational system provides (Freire, 2005). Rather than analyze the educational system as "banking," receiving, filing, and storing deposits, I believe literacy instruction and dialogue should empower students by questioning the influences in society that oppress the nondominant white Euro-American culture (Freire, 2005). Therefore, my epistemological and ontological beliefs are in freeing the nondominant EL population from the Western standardized curriculum/standards that identify them within the bottom 30 percent through critical pedagogy that encourages cultural awareness and empowerment.

Researcher Positionality and Epistemology

Milner (2007) stressed the importance of a life-long process developing one's positive racial/ethnic identity, in order to gain "deeper racial and cultural knowledge about ... [oneself] and the community or people under study" (p. 388). Therefore, I have provided a description of my family's cultural influences that shaped my identity and ultimately led me to become an EL educator.

My father is a mix of European nationalities but growing up we did not spend much time with his side of the family. They spoke English, were formal in mannerisms, and did not accept my Italian mother. Therefore, my mother shaped my world through her Sicilian-Italian traditional parenting style, cooking skills, and Roman Catholic faith practices. My maternal

grandmother was born in America but, due to her ailing health, was sent to the warmer climate of Sicily, to be raised by her grandparents. My maternal grandfather was born and raised in Sicily, where he met and married my grandmother, after which they moved to the United States. Thus, both of my mother's parents can trace generations of their lineage to Terrasini, Sicily. Growing up around my mom's family, I longed to speak Italian, which I thought of it as a secret code with which one could talk about anyone in the room who did not know it. Therefore, I took Latin, Spanish and Italian in high school and college but actually never truly became proficient in any of those languages. One of my mom's wishes before passing away was to travel to the village of Terrasini, Italy, where her parents grew up. I took my mom and dad through Italy and Sicily where we learned about and celebrated our Italian heritage. As a graduation gift for my daughter, Ashley, I returned with her to tour more of Italy and Sicily. I am also passing my strong Sicilian-Italian culture on to my children through traditions, cooking, and our Roman Catholic faith.

Not until recently did I realize that being an EL teacher is not just a passion of mine, it is a goal to have no student feel as my mother did due to her being raised by immigrant parents who never attained a high school diploma. My mom mirrors my classroom where there are students whose parents may not have graduated from high school in their home country and have limited English proficiency to support the educational needs of their children's classwork or talk to school personnel about their children's successes or struggles, which can ultimately lead to a struggling student with nowhere to turn. My mother was ashamed of the fact that she also never graduated but never complained that she had to stay home to help her ailing mother.

I aspire to keep our Italian culture a part of my children's lives and support the immigrant children in my class. Getting to know each student as an educator and participating in cultural

identity projects and ethnographic writing as a researcher have shaped my instructional goals for students' success, which I collaboratively create with them at the start of the school year.

Research Site

The research site was a comprehensive public high school in the Midwestern State of Michigan, where at the time of the study 1,860 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. The district was the second largest in Michigan, totaling 28,000 students, of whom the EL population constituted 15%, the largest groups being Middle Eastern refugees (from Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Albania) and Mexican. During the previous six years of my teaching career, the EL population of the target high school had risen from 55 students in 2013 to 132. Therefore, this practitioner research was not only near and dear to my heart, but a necessity to support ELs, who were marginalized within the school community.

A typical day for an EL would be two hours of direct English instruction within an EL classroom, based on their English proficiency. I was one of two full-time EL teachers for the 132 students, with no teacher-student ratio required. For example, the Content Literacy 1 (CL1) class was composed of ELs who were identified as basic, due to Lexile level scoring and their WIDA scores in reading, writing, listening, and speaking proficiency. At the time of this writing, I teach content literacy instruction within a self-contained EL classroom, Newcomer, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, and provide EL support for content courses during lunchtime. ELs are required to take state mandated standardized assessments and Michigan Merit curriculum coursework in order to receive a high school diploma, regardless of their English proficiency. Note that there are many American-born students who are also identified as ELs and have gone through the American school system since kindergarten, usually because their parents are not proficient in English and

the main language spoken at home is the parents' native language. Many immigrant parents have not graduated from high school and assumed labor jobs in America to feed their families. The lack of support for EL parents to learn English and to gain an understanding of American school expectations for their children is an aspect of how ELs are marginalized and why they are failing in schools.

Permissions for this study were granted by the following individuals and entities: Indiana University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the target high school principal, female EL student, and parents of the participating EL student in the study. The study's stakeholders included me (practitioner and researcher), content teachers, school administration, and immigrant families of the EL student population that at the time of the study constituted approximately eight percent of the total population of the high school. Additionally, the ELs were stakeholders as students and members of the community within the school and the local community in which they resided.

Through sharing their migratory struggles coming to America due to the conflicts of beliefs leading to war in their countries ELs reveal their vulnerability to events beyond their control. For example, under a dominant Muslim government, Chaldean Christian families were forced to flee to bordering countries for safety, from which many sought asylums in America. Another a reason for families to travel so far and leave behind all their relatives and belongings was access to a free public education for their children. Immigrant families are highly invested in their children gaining adequate language skills and content knowledge to pursue post-secondary academics and gain employable skills.

With my frustration as an educator and child of immigrant grandparents, I saw the need to change what I could within my classroom. I have provided not only academic support across grade levels and content areas but also social and emotional support. I am the first person the administration calls when there is a discipline problem or the need to call a parent, because of relationships I have established with families. My prep period is scheduled during the lunch break so that I can help ELs with selecting high school courses, completing college applications, and creating resumes, as well as talk to students who have been expelled from content classes, test Newcomer ELs for their English proficiency, and more. The need, oh the need! I am considered these students' American mom and take the label with pride. Students have assumed that I was born in Italy. I explain that my Italian heritage defines my identity and actions, but my nationality is America. Data have driven the identification of where the ELs were failing, but it has been my reflection and actions that guided my changes for equitable learning.

Case Study Participant

The EL student I selected along with her parents for this practitioner research project had been identified as Middle Eastern refugee. I had chosen to focus on this female refugee, Rosa (pseudonym) due to my four years as her primary EL educator, during which I had cultivated close ties with her. Thus, I was connected with the student academically and felt comfortable asking her parents if they would also participate in the research project. As she would write her senior critical migration memoir project in my class, Rosa would share her migration story in that project, and the dinners I shared with her family in her home as a teacher who goes beyond the average expectations, such as helping Rosa set up technology in her home, afforded me further avenues for insight into her life experiences. When I had explained my research and

invited her to become my case study participant, Rosa and her parents were excited to participate and share their language and knowledge gained from lived experiences.

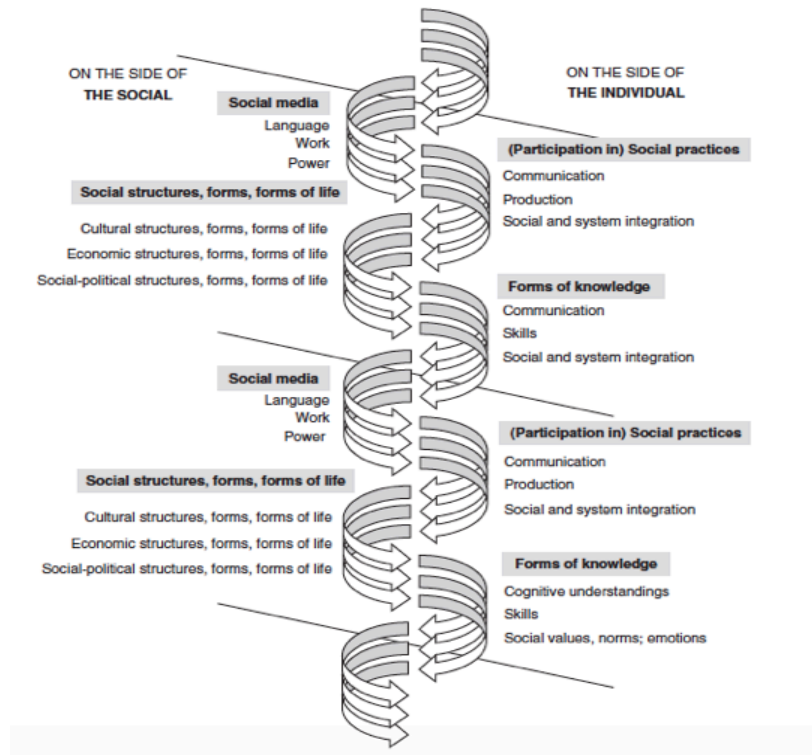
After obtaining IRB approval for the study, I gained formal permissions from the educators involved, the EL student, and her parents, whom I interviewed and observed at their residence. Under the State of Michigan COVID-19 restrictions, I utilized technology to acquire the data needed for coding and labeling. I conducted and recorded the interview with Rosa on Zoom, uploaded the video to IU Kaltura, and used the transcription for coding. Additionally, much of the student's artifacts were uploaded to my school's educational program and easily accessed for analysis. Therefore, the COVID-19 restrictions caused only minimal limitations in my research project.

Data Collection Methodology

Data collection was conducted over six months, during the second semester of Rosa's senior year. Also, I utilized Kemmis and McTaggart's (2007) spiral of self-reflective cycles for reciprocal evaluation of data collection, which prescribes additional data collection, as seen in Figure 1, *Recursive Relationships of Social Mediation that Action Research Aims to Transform*. The steps included *Planning* a change, *Acting* and *observing* the process and consequences of the change, *Reflecting* on these processes and consequences, *Replanning*, *Acting* and *observing again*, and *Reflecting again*, and so on.

Figure 1

Recursive Relationships of Social Mediation that Action Research Aims to Transform



Note. Retrieved from Kemmis & McTaggart (2007, p. 281), Figure 10.2.

The recursive actions of acting, observing, interpreting, and modifying while processing and integrating input from the practitioner, student, and parents involved critical reflection and member checking throughout the investigation. With regard to the focal participant, it was more important to develop an authentic understanding of her practices as they evolved within situations than it was to apply a formulaic research model (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). The next step of the practitioner research was to investigate Rosa's social practices within particular settings as a basis for transforming educational practices, as listed in seven critical features within the self-reflective spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007):

- Evaluate the social practices of the individual within their society
- Examine the knowledge and interpretive categories of the participants within their social and material world

- Evaluate interactions of social practices
- Evaluate the constraints of their social structures which limit their self-development and self-determination
- Empowers individuals from the limitations of social media
- Develops reflexivity through a spiral of cycles
- Transforms theory and practice

This repeated cycling was very important to clarify the teacher's perspective and also continuously evaluate if I needed additional data. As shown in Table 1, these data included the core academic courses and standardized testing scores required to receive a Michigan high school diploma and ELs' funds of knowledge, my culturally responsive teaching practices, and my critical literacy instruction in our EL classroom.

During the recursive practice of being a teacher-researcher, the reality of collecting data and understanding what data were needed depended on the actions of the participants. Therefore, the data collection was subject to change and open for further research and investigation.

Table 1*Data Collection*

Data Collection		Frequency	Storage
Current curriculum & Michigan graduation requirements	Review of subject language and content standards, teacher websites, district pacing guide, Michigan Merit Curriculum guidelines for graduation, Michigan Merit Exam for graduation (SAT & Work Keys)	Once, focused on semester 2 curriculum	Practitioner's computer and IU One Drive
Teacher-researcher reflection	Personal evaluation of teacher/researcher positionality and bias through a reflective and written account	Minimum of five times, after critical dialogue	Evernote digital resource; practitioner's phone & computer
EL lesson plans and classroom observations	Evaluating EL students' English language use, content knowledge, content expectations, language expectations for collaboration and responding to the teacher	Two critical literacy lessons within the EL classroom, during semester 2	Practitioner's computer and IU One Drive
Student artifacts	Assignments, notes from class, any written material required from students in the content classroom and their summative Migration Memoir Essay	Once at the end of semester 2	Practitioner's locked storage, computer, and IU One Drive
Fieldnotes	Descriptive fieldnotes and reflective journaling on all data sources, during and following the data collection	Minimum of five times, EL lesson plans and during critical dialogue, during or after class. In addition to all EL lesson plans.	Practitioner's locked storage, computer, and IU One Drive
Student interview recording on Zoom	First language education of content and English language instruction, the primary language used at home, knowledge learned from family and community (i.e., measuring, farming, automotive, etc.) that could be beneficial within the academic setting	Once for one-hour	Practitioner's computer and IU Kaltura Media Space
Member checking	Reviewing notes and interviews that were made during observations and interviews with the students and teachers	Minimum of twice, during the middle and end of data analysis; zoom meeting for two half-hour sessions; recorded, only in computer word document media uploaded to Kaltura	Practitioner's locked storage, computer, and IU One Drive; IU Kaltura Media Space

Current Curriculum and Michigan Graduation Requirements

The first step of building background knowledge was to acquire the most up-to-date quantitative analysis of EL grade retention, graduation and drop-out rates, starting with the summer of 2019. The second step was to evaluate the language and content standards and curriculum pacing guides teachers were expected to teach within the EL and content classrooms. The standards and pacing guides were assessed for areas in which students' funds of knowledge could be utilized and the limitations immigrants faced because of not receiving previous content instruction, obstacles that interrupted learning, and English language barriers. The data sets were put into an Excel spreadsheet for organization and thematic coding.

Teacher-Researcher Reflection

I conducted memoing pertaining to curriculum expectations and transformative pedagogy on my phone with the Evernote digital application and stored it on my personal computer for analysis. I recorded reflections during and after two critical literacy lessons and throughout the semester.

Classroom Observations and EL Lesson Plans

As the teacher-researcher, I noted classroom observations during my EL instruction. These notes and lesson plans were uploaded to Indiana University's One Drive for thematic coding.

Student Artifacts

While all students were expected to complete assignments for the course, the assignments that I collected for analysis were not given grades and were optional for Rosa so she would have the option of determining when she would share her work to be used in this study. Additionally, this option as well as suspension of grading reduced the teacher-student power dynamic. One key summative assignment was the senior EL critical migration memoir. In her critical migration memoir, Rosa recounted her pre-migration, migration, and post-migration experiences through the critical lens of immigrating to America. The project, however, was not only autobiographical. She was able to take a stance in whatever fashion she chose and share her guiding principles or advice for future immigrant students. Previous assignments involving critical reading, writing, and dialogue were the foreground of how to write her memoir. I asked Rosa for permission to copy her work for analysis and secured the documents in a locked file cabinet at home.

Fieldnotes

I wrote fieldnotes by hand in my fieldnotes journal. These fieldnotes included quotations of students' dialogue, my reactions, areas for future exploration, and a sketch of the setting of the classroom. I took fieldnotes routinely throughout the entire semester as reflective journaling regarding students' language and cognitive development, interactions, and other behaviors, as well as student-teacher collaborations. I organized these notes on an Excel spreadsheet for thematic analysis.

Student Interview

I conducted a one-hour interview with Rosa at a time of her choosing on Zoom, which was recorded for later analysis. I asked a list of scripted questions (Appendix A) with flexibility for her answers followed by open conversation. I transcribed the interview for thematic coding and member checking. Having the interview recorded enabled me to evaluate areas which were unclear, correct or provide additional transcription, make connections to other data, and complete multiple coding steps.

Member Checking

Throughout the semester, I met with Rosa for member checking of the data and analysis. Her input helped me reflect on and plan the next steps of the research. During our conversations, she explained certain patterns of behavior, academic and social interactions, and questionable areas or word choices. Notes on these conversations were analyzed and added to the excel spreadsheet for thematic coding. Table 2 summarizes the alignment between the data collected and my research questions.

Table 2*Research Question Alignment*

RESEARCH QUESTION	DATA COLLECTION	DATA ANALYSIS	ANTICIPATED RESULTS
What funds of knowledge do students bring to class that are beneficial for academic success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current curriculum & MI graduation requirements; • Teacher-researcher reflections; • EL classroom observations; • Student artifacts; • Fieldnotes; • Student interview on Zoom; • Member checking on Zoom 	<p>Evaluation of ELs’ funds of knowledge beneficial in the academic setting.</p> <p>Evaluation of the culturally relevant pedagogy principals of academic rigor, cultural competency, and empowerment.</p>	<p>Gap in ELs’ academic content learning due to instructional focus on language acquisition, not content.</p> <p>Lack of educator whole child instruction and funds of knowledge incorporation within the content classroom.</p>
How do I incorporate students’ funds of knowledge into my curriculum and teaching praxis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current curriculum & MI graduation requirements; • Teacher-researcher reflections; • EL classroom observations; • Student artifacts; • Fieldnotes; • Student interview on Zoom; • Member checking on Zoom 	<p>Identify core academic standards needed for academic coursework completion.</p> <p>Evaluate and critically reflect my culturally relevant teaching praxis, specifically what went well and what did not.</p>	<p>Lack of educator knowledge pertaining to the Common Core Standards for English Language development in content courses.</p> <p>Critical reflection of ways that culturally relevant teaching can be incorporated within all classroom settings.</p>

Creating this table enabled me to evaluate whether I had enough data to successfully address my research questions, clearly define what I was going to analyze within the data, and project anticipated results of the analysis.

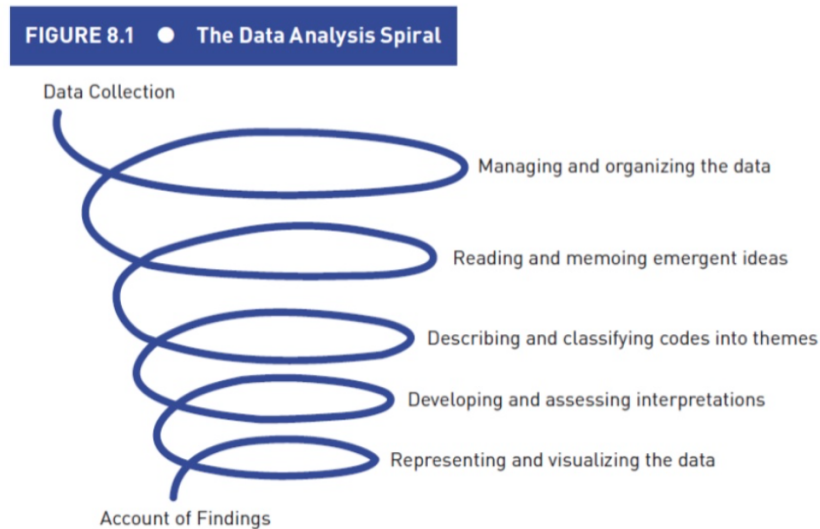
Thematic Data Analysis Process for Validating Results

Data analysis and reporting followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) *Data Analysis Spiral* (Figure 2). First, *managing and organizing the data* included securing all artifacts, videos, and Zoom recordings within Indiana Universities secure IU cloud storage system and my personal

computer, which is password protected and secured when not in use. After creating an organizational system for evaluating the data, I read through the documents repeatedly to get a sense of patterns, connections, similarities, differences, and areas needing further investigation. Through the second step of *reading and memoing for emergent ideas*, I became familiar with the subjects and data. *Describing and classifying codes into themes* was conducted through an Excel spreadsheet with columns for initial code, subcategories with actual data, Rosa's location (if applicable), and sources of the information, as seen in Table 3. This visual display helped me to find areas where I needed additional information or member checking with Rosa. Thematic coding involved identifying first keywords and then codes, followed by combining codes into themes. *Developing and assessing interpretations* entailed further member checking of my interpretations and review for possible revision or extension of the analysis. I also evaluated whether the report of the analysis was aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework to decide if further investigation and/or reframing of the research questions was needed. Lastly, *representing and visualizing the data* was accomplished by creating easy-to-understand matrices for possible publication and presentation.

Figure 2

The Data Analysis Spiral



Note: Retrieved from Creswell & Poth's (2018, p. 186), Figure 8.1.

For data analysis and report writing, I utilized Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral to manage and organize the data, read and memo emergent ideas, describe and classify codes into themes, develop and assess interpretations, and represent and visualize the data. After continuous reading and rereading with memoing, I started the first stages of coding. I created an Excel spreadsheet with columns such as, initial code, subcategories with actual data, the location of Rosa (if applicable), and sources where I collected the information, as seen in Table 3. Again, the visual helped me to find areas where I needed additional information or member checking to clarify areas with Rosa.

Table 3*Initial codes (in-vivo, descriptive, etc.)*

Initial Code	Subcategories & data	Place	Codes*	Sources
Struggle	<u>War (subcategory)</u> : kidnapped; ransom, Civil war, armed attack; fall of ruling regime in Iraq; no job; collapse of Iraq currency, economic blockade; civil war, militant Islamic militias; burned house; terrorism	Iraq	1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c	Memoir, Student Interview, Student Artifacts
	<u>Life in Iraq (subcategory)</u> : all Muslim; “I can’t wear religious necklace, like Mary or Christian, they will kill me. Nobody over there help each other: either Chaldean or Arabic. You can’t have both religions. You must be Muslim or Christian. Rosa does not care about that.”		1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c	Student Interview, pg. 4 for exact quotes
	<u>Life in Lebanon (subcategory)</u> : “We had a lot of hard time; The language that we spoke was only Chaldean, but when we get to Lebanon, we learn Arabic.”	Lebanon	1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c	Student Interview of Parent
	<u>COVID 19</u> : brother can’t get married and traditions have to be done at home; people are afraid; people stay home; world pandemic; forced to quit job at XXX Fruit market	America	1a, 3a, 2a, 2b, 2c	Memoir
	“We have to remember everything happen with us in life. If it is sad and happy, it strengthens us.”		1c	Student artifact

*Final Code Categorized based on Themes 1, 2, 3

After I had created nine initial codes, along with subcategories, I grouped them based on understanding the Middle Eastern Refugee, funds of knowledge, and culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy. After creating expanded codes and categories, the three themes were created from the data analysis.

Theme 1: *Understanding the Whole Child Within and Beyond the Borders of the Classroom* evolved from the data gathered at the beginning of the second semester curriculum, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4*Theme 1: Understanding the Whole Child Within and Beyond the Borders of the Classroom*

Theme Described					
<i>Understanding the whole child within and beyond the borders of the classroom</i>					
Final Code Categorized		Final Code Categorized		Final Code Categorized	
<i>Generations of culture and traditions</i>		<i>Adaptation during migration</i>		<i>Life is transient</i>	
Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied
<i>Roots of culture and traditions</i>	<i>First identity and oppression</i>	<i>Accepting change</i>	<i>Seeking acceptance</i>	<i>Global extensions of family</i>	<i>Eager to learn</i>
Initial Codes Named		Initial Codes Named		Initial Codes Named	
<i>Home country</i>		<i>Migration and displacement</i>		<i>New life and opportunities</i>	

I chose to modify González, et al. (2005) Funds of Knowledge chart to create a Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix to evaluate home/community practices relevant for my EL classroom application. The first step was to correlate initial funds of knowledge codes with data sources of home/community practices. Next, I categorized the codes into final categories, along with my descriptors connecting Common Core State Standards and district pacing guides, as referenced in Table 5.

Table 5

Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix

Funds of Knowledge Related to Academic Learning	Home/Community Practices and Data	Final Code and Explanation
Economics	<p>Rosa explained how she recently changed jobs as a cashier during a casual conversation before her Student Interview. She stated, “I work at a fruit market [near the high school]” (Student Interview).</p> <p>Also, Rosa marketing in her senior year as an elective course. “I like to study about business” (Getting to Know You Student Artifact).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma:</i> Working at an American convenience store could provide knowledge in Economics, E2: The National Economy (MDE, 2019b).</p> <p><i>Knowledge needed for elective and life relevant courses:</i> Rosa took the marketing course in her senior year, as an elective. Connecting her work experience could provide funds of knowledge in Economics, E2: The National Economy (MDE, 2019b).</p>
World History: Geography	<p>War in Iraq key terminology in-vivo: “ransom, civil war, armed attack, fall of ruling regime in Iraq, no job, collapse of Iraq currency, economic blockade, civil war, militant Islamic militias, burned house, terrorism” (Memoir).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma:</i> Her knowledge of war in Iraq could provide funds of knowledge in her world history course. W7 WHG – Era 7. Global Crisis and Achievement, 1900-Present (MDE, 2019b).</p>
United States Government: Citizenship	<p>“If you want to go to America, you have to go to country to oblige to come to come to America. You cannot apply from your country. Oh, that’s why we go to Lebanon. They apply for America. My mom and dad’s cousin sponsor us. I have my brother almost ten years in America. And he can’t [sponsor us] because he was not a citizen yet” (Rosa Student Interview Protocol).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma:</i> applying for refugee status in the bordering country of Lebanon in order to come to America, which relates to the required government course needed for graduation.</p>
Earth Science: Agriculture	<p>“I (mom) am from Iraq in Mosel. Before we were farmers” (Student Interview of Parents Survey).</p> <p>Rosa expressed her love of nature, “I love butterfly because cute and I love all colors for butterfly, how they match together. I like how they fly.” (Getting to Know You Student Artifact).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma:</i> Earth science course and farming in Iraq. Rosa can also help her parents plant a garden in America.</p> <p><i>Secondary Knowledge needed to “do school”:</i> shows her love for nature which is beneficial for connecting to other students with the same interests.</p>

<p>All Courses: Technological Academic Support</p>	<p>“I look at YouTube and Snap Chat, Facebook, Instagram. I use computer and phone” (Student Interest Survey).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma: assignments, distance learning during COVID-19; Knowledge needed to “do school”:</i> social interactions with other students, support for completing assignments and homework.</p>
<p>World History and U.S. History: Religion</p>	<p>“My (mom) culture is Chaldean. Even my kids I want them to the way we are” (Student Interview of Parents Survey). “Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Kurdish, Yazidi, and others. Family prays to God to help them during war. Praise God for everything.” (Memoir).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma: 5.1.2 World Religions – Analyze the impact of the diffusion of world religions on social, political, cultural, and economic systems (Common Core State Standards).</i></p>
<p>Second Language: Arabic</p>	<p>“The language that we (mom and dad) spoke was Chaldean, but when we went to Lebanon we learn Arabic. I hope that my kids to learn more English. All my kids are old and Rosa is the only kid that is going to high school, the youngest kid” (Student Interview of Parents Survey).</p>	<p><i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma: Knowing Arabic will fulfil Rosa’s second language requirement because she attended school in Iraq and Lebanon. Two years of a second language is needed to graduate from high school in Michigan.</i></p>

Note: Adapted from Funds of Knowledge chart (Gonzalez, et al., 2005)

The final theme that arose from data analysis was Theme 2: *Funds of Knowledge for Academic Learning*, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6*Theme 2: Funds of Knowledge for Academic Learning*

Theme Described					
<i>Funds of knowledge for academic learning</i>					
Final Code Categorized		Final Code Categorized		Final Code Categorized	
<i>Knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain high school diploma</i>		<i>Knowledge needed for elective and life relevant courses</i>		<i>Knowledge needed to “do school”</i>	
Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied	Expanded Codes Applied
<i>Core content course knowledge</i>	<i>Assignment & assessment tasks</i>	<i>Work and trade school knowledge</i>	<i>Project-based and skills-based learning & assessment</i>	<i>Social norms of American high school</i>	<i>All resources and teaching materials for mediating classroom instruction</i>
Initial Codes Named			Initial Codes Named		
<i>Learning skills relevant for high school and post-secondary education (CALP-cognitive academic language proficiency)</i>			<i>Learnings skills relevant for employment and life-skills</i>		
			<i>Daily interactions from staff, teachers, counselors, and students (BICS-Basic interpersonal communication skills)</i>		

When evaluating for culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and critical literacy instruction, I began with creating CRP categories, definitions, when to use the code, when not to use the code, and an example of each category, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Literacy Thematic Coding

Final Code Categorized	Definition	When to use	When not to use	Examples from EL lesson plans from study*
<i>Development of English language ability to become full members of society (CRP: academic success)</i>	English language development and academic rigor needed for ELs to pass required courses for a high school diploma, under the Michigan Merit Curriculum Guidelines	Key instruction relevant for core academics	Remedial instruction	Identity Project (EL Lesson Plan)
<i>Validating cultural differences as assets (CRP: cultural competence)</i>	ELs connecting and expanding their cultures, traditions, and beliefs, along with recognizing other culture similarities and differences	Instruction and/or dialogue where there is an opportunity to validate the EL’s culture and/or learn new cultural information, such as critical literacy instruction.	Teaching a new concept without utilizing previous instruction or funds of knowledge.	Immigration and Racial Profile Journal Reflection (EL Lesson Plan)
<i>Breaking down stereotypes to develop a community of learners (CRP: Sociopolitical or Critical Consciousness)</i>	Critical reflection (written or verbal) where ELs feel validated or empowered as different than the dominant culture in society	Incorporation critical dialogue and reflection where ELs have a means of change or empowerment.	No interaction or choice for ELs within curriculum.	Journal Prompt: Never judge a book by its cover, the old saying goes. It's not always so easy to be as open-minded in judging people. The clothes someone wears, the color of their skin, their sex, their age—all these aspects of a person are like the cover of a book. If for some reason we don't like what we see when we first meet someone, it can be hard for us to see the real material inside. Write about a time when your first opinion about someone changed. (EL Lesson Plan)

*Detailed descriptions of EL lesson plans are found

The final theme that evaluated my teaching praxis was Theme 3: *CRP and Critical Literacy Instruction as a Means of Authentic Learning*, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8*Theme 3: CRP and Critical Literacy Instruction as a Means of Authentic Learning*

Theme Described					
<i>Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction as a means of authentic learning</i>					
Final Code Categorized <i>Development of English language ability to become full members of society (CRP: academic success)</i>		Final Code Categorized <i>Validating cultural differences as assets (CRP: cultural competence)</i>		Final Code Categorized <i>Breaking down stereotypes to develop a community of learners (CRP: Sociopolitical or Critical Consciousness)</i>	
Expanded Codes Applied <i>Comprehensive and inclusive instruction & reflections</i>	Expanded Codes Applied <i>Authentic and humanistic instruction & reflections</i>	Expanded Codes Applied <i>Validating culture and inclusive instruction & reflections</i>	Expanded Codes Applied <i>Multidimensional learning & reflections</i>	Expanded Codes Applied <i>Emancipatory instruction & reflections</i>	Expanded Codes Applied <i>Transformative instruction & reflections</i>
Initial Codes Named <i>Breaking down deficit narratives</i>		Initial Codes Named <i>Diversity of student population</i>		Initial Codes Named <i>Opportunities for empowerment</i>	

As a visual learner, myself, I found that pouring through the data repeatedly and creating visual representations gave me a sense of understanding my data as a whole, finding gaps or missing pieces for additional research, discovering areas that need clarification through member checking, and three summative themes relevant to this practitioner research.

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were the utilization of digital resources for teaching and data collection throughout the qualitative research project adds a layer of reflection to protect the autonomy of the research participants, minimize harm to the participants and maximize overall benefits to social research, and non-exploitative research procedures (Paulus et al., 2014).

Critical components to ethical measures involved the practice of transparency, secured

permissions for digital access of resources, anonymization of data, and ensuring that any software I use is passcode-protected and was securely stored. Additionally, I was reflective and responsive in securing the safety of the participant, her parents, classroom teachers, high school setting, and members involved.

When I evaluated ethical considerations of using digital tools throughout my qualitative research, I am not limited to thinking of what is expected of me through the Indiana University's Human Subjects and Institutional Review Boards (<https://research.iu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/index.html>) and the Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Policy (AoIR Staff, 2017), referenced in Appendix A IRB #11606. I had an ethical obligation, as a researcher, to protect the security and rights of the subjects that I was investigating, regardless of the purpose and/or outcome(s) of the study. I had to be critically conscious of my actions and my subjectivity within the surroundings of the research and all data collection.

Structure of the Findings Chapter

While Chapter 3 explained the data collection, analysis, and creation of themes, Chapter 4 will explain the findings of this practitioner research. Chapter 4 begins and ends with vignettes of my experiences where ELs questioned the dominant narrative of academic language and grading. Next, I will explain the issues and purpose of this practitioner research, semester two curriculum unit I created, reiterate the research questions and the participant Rosa. The largest component will be a thorough explanation of the data analysis results, including explanations and data creating each of the three themes. In conclusion, the data analysis provided a plethora of information relevant for my next steps and future research as a culturally reflective teacher. The

implications of my data and how I can utilize my practitioner research will be explained further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Research Analysis Results

A Vignette

Erik, an EL student, came to tell me that a counselor, Mrs. Smith, had scolded him for speaking Chaldean, his native language, with his friend when they were discussing which courses to take in the upcoming year during the yearly scheduling meeting. Erik was upset with how things transpired and sought my advice on what to do next. I knew that Mrs. Smith, who had immigrated to America from Greece when she was in elementary school, had herself been an EL student, so I explained to Erik that her generation had been forced to assimilate to American ways, and she was prohibited from using her native language or expressing her Greek culture and knowledge at school. I then encouraged Erik to have a private conversation with her about her insistence on “English only,” reflecting my belief that we seek understanding through questioning, listening, and reflecting in difficult conversations.

Significance of Qualitative Practitioner Inquiry

When I created this practitioner research project, I sought to understand sociocultural language development and authentic curriculum relevant to ELs, within and beyond the borders of the academic setting. A fundamental reality within the American educational system is that ELs are growing in population but are not keeping pace with institutionally defined standards for academic rigor (McFarland et al., 2019; United States Department of Planning, 2016). The student population that was not adequately represented in the research was the Middle Eastern refugees who may have interrupted learning, transient and inconsistent learning from countries bordering their own countries, limited first language proficiency, and possibly parents who have limited first language proficiency and did not graduate from high school in their native country.

Therefore, it is crucial to provide language and literacy pedagogy, locally and globally, for ELs to be successful beyond the expectations of college and university expectations after graduation.

Implications for evaluating the structure of academic courses taught in high school and EL students' funds of knowledge are two-fold. First, the results of this research are to propose change of the current curriculum standards and pedagogy within the EL classroom, towards utilizing ELs' funds of knowledge as assets for academic learning. Secondly, incorporating ELs' cultures into academic learning has the potential for me to engage multicultural students in authentic learning. Through gaining an understanding of the whole EL student and incorporating ELs' funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy, I had the ability to scaffold academic rigor utilizing authentic resources where EL refugees might have had interrupted learning.

The research revolved around multilingual students' academic disparities has been a topic of much debate through the decades, as seen in the literature review. We need to continue difficult conversations where all stakeholders critically evaluate and incorporate the benefits of ELs' funds of knowledge, in order to create change in education. Therefore, this practitioner research will provide areas where difficult conversations can start transformation of education, in lieu of the deficit narratives involving ELs.

The introduction of this chapter about the research findings began with a vignette and reasons why this practitioner researcher project was developed. The rest of the chapter was structured with an explanation of the semester two curriculum, research questions, description of focal student Rosa, research analysis of the three themes, conclusion, and vignette. The chapter will provide a thorough explanation of my coding, categories, and the three themes that came from the research, including data for explanation. I will walk you through the culturally relevant

pedagogy and critical literacy curriculum for semester two that provided the framework for analyzing Rosa's funds of knowledge and reflection of my teaching praxis.

Curriculum Structure of Critical Inquiry

Over the last four years of my pilot practitioner research, the semester of critical inquiry has evolved into my content literacy curriculum within the EL classroom. The goal of the semester long learning was to decrease the deficit narrative of multilingual students' academic failures and utilize ELs' funds of knowledge as assets in my classroom. Steps to achieving this began with researching academic expectations and content standards in the high school setting. Also, I sought to understand the whole child, primarily their funds of knowledge acquired within their home and community as assets in high school needed to obtain a high school diploma. Next, I utilized culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction to promote academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical or critical consciousness. Finally, I evaluated my teaching praxis as a culturally responsible teacher and created ways to empower ELs through the development of the senior critical migration memoir project. The semester long project starts in January and ends at the end of the school year, as the critical migration memoir is the summative senior project for graduating ELs.

Understanding Academic Expectations and Conducting a Whole Child Inquiry

I believe the first step of any educator is to understand the academic expectations and conduct a whole child inquiry to transcend the literal and figurative borders ELs face. I use the word border as the literal meaning of "boundary," to keep what is taught and learned within the confines of the academic setting (Webster's Third International Dictionary). The first border ELs

faced in school was the boundary of each classroom having its own set of rules and expectations. One example of an academic border in the high school where I teach were no cross-curricular collaborations between courses and educators. Therefore, I evaluated the academic standards of competency high school students are expected to learn in all courses, such as the Michigan Merit Curriculum/Graduation Requirements, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for college and career readiness, World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards, and core content standards of academic courses. I sought to identify and list power standards which could be bridged across courses and content I could scaffold into my content literacy course. My primary goal was to create a list of key concepts and vocabulary I useful for teaching, along with English language acquisition. Courses in which I have sought to bridge content and English language learning were American literature in 10th grade English, EL Content Literacy 3 which are ELs with English proficiency of grades sixth through eight, and the American history social studies 10th grade course. I purposefully met with the English 10 and American history teacher individually to ask questions as to what core standards, themes, and content I could incorporate into my Content Literacy 3 course to support instruction within their courses. When teaching and learning is trapped within the border of one classroom, ELs have struggled with transferring knowledge. Therefore, I sought to collaborate with other teachers and courses to clearly identify to ELs that learning is always transferrable to other classrooms and real-life situations.

Additionally, the academic setting has become a border which does not transcend ELs' funds of knowledge into the classroom or vice versa for relevant knowledge beyond the brick-and-mortar building. Therefore, I began with the creation of the student interest survey, parent multicultural survey, and discussions in class about their previous learning to gain an understanding of the whole child, Appendix C. Students were asked to complete questionnaires

about themselves and take home a multicultural survey to complete with their parents, so I could gain an understanding of them beyond the academic setting. The student interest survey questions revolved around students' culture, hobbies, sports, reading, writing, and career goals. Students were asked to complete the multicultural survey with their parents, where the answers could be recorded in their native language and translated later through the district's translator resources. At the beginning of semester two, I started with a second round of inquiry to gain an understanding of my ELs within and beyond the borders of the classroom. I collected a second round of data collection mid-year because I may have newcomer ELs from other countries, transfer ELs from bordering districts, and I want to reevaluate the current ELs in my class. After the surveys were returned, I began to take notes of how refugees could migrate to America and their previous learning through classroom conversations. Data collection began when I jotted down the year the EL came to America, if the EL's family went to a bordering country for safety, duration in the bordering country, education, or lack of in the host country, support in the host country from refugee companies or extended family members, and where the EL's older siblings settled around the world after fleeing from their home country. The preliminary data became a bigger piece to understanding the whole student.

The final piece of background data was standardized assessment scores required for each EL to take to connect their expectations and funds of knowledge to their actual academic proficiency. I created a spreadsheet of grades and standardized testing scores, such as their academic grades from seventh through their current grade, SAT score, WIDA score in reading, writing, listening, and speaking of English proficiency, and Michigan Student Test of Academic Progress (M-Step) of content proficiency. These scores provided a lens into the EL's academic performance based on grade, which gives me a baseline to increase academic performance and

not as a limitation of their abilities. Specifically, I evaluate the various assessments of reading, writing, listening, and speaking ELs will need to display for academic accountability measures which can result in retention and/or placement in remedial courses.

By understanding the whole child and their funds of knowledge, I become a learner along with the students to create culturally relevant curriculum tailored to the language abilities and multiple cultures of the diverse student population.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Literacy through Inquiry and Reflection

Next, I conducted an investigation of students' literacies within my EL classroom to build upon their funds of knowledge for culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction. It is not only valuable for students to utilize their literacies in the classroom, but also important for teachers to share their life experiences and build critical pedagogical practices that are pertinent to each child's social and academic needs beyond mastery of concepts. Therefore, as funds of knowledge and cultural literacies are integral for scaffolding home and school student learning (Moje et al., 2017), I investigated EL students' literacy practices beneficial in content and language learning through this practitioner research project, Appendix D.

When I think of myself as a culturally responsive educator who incorporates culturally relevant pedagogy, I do not think of ELs having a cultural deficit. I would rather build upon the diversity each student brings to class and create teachable moments, where learning is more relevant and effective for them. I had utilized culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction to find a way to engage ELs in literature where they were engaged and could connect to the stories. The entire quarter three of semester two is exploring literacy pertaining to

segregation, religious persecution and ethnic cleansing, nativism, civil rights, peaceful protests, racism, racial profiling, and social justice. Some of the common themes were immigrant and refugee ELs have experienced some of these topics was where I began to research the literature resources. I work in the second largest district in Michigan where Middle Eastern refugees are the largest population and continues to grow each year. There has not been curriculum development and professional development for content teachers to support the growing EL population in the last five years.

Over the last decade, there has been an influx of Chaldean Christian refugees who have enrolled in the district where I teach, who faced religious persecution in their home country. Examples of this are the Middle Eastern ELs who flee Iraq, Jordan, and Syria because they are Christian, while the dominant religious practice in society and schools is Islamic. Therefore, I searched for articles where people were persecuted for their religious beliefs, historically and in current events in hopes of providing a means of sharing Els' personal stories and creating a place for critical dialogue.

Evaluating My Praxis and Development of the Critical Migration Memoir Senior Project

Building upon understanding the whole child and developing CRP and critical literacy lessons, I created the summative critical migration memoir senior project and evaluated my field notes about my praxis of being a culturally reflective teacher, Appendix D.

The last quarter of the school year, we read literature centered around autobiographies and memoirs. The writing structure was narrative writing, which we focused on since the beginning of the school year. We evaluated the author's craft of structure of writing a memoir,

through discussions of word choice, quotes, point of view, vignettes, bold and italic words, chapter structure, and ways that engaged the reader. Next, we talked extensively about the plot, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. When discussing the content, ELs were able to connect to the main characters and their shared stories. The critical migration memoir senior project was written in three phases, premigration, migration, and post-migration. Premigration discussed the EL's life in their home country, such as holidays, food, traditions, celebrations, schooling, housing, and family. Migration focused on steps the parents needed to complete in order to file the proper paperwork with their government to come to America. Post-migration was the last section of their writing and discusses their new life in America. Key to writing their memoir was deciding a theme that would resonate throughout the entire essay. Students discussed religious persecution, segregation, injustice, and corrupt governments. The memoir narratives were shared with the class at the end of the semester as their final exam. Also, the students created a video using their personal photos or Creative Commons free photos to tell their story based on their writing. Critical migration memoirs were a way for ELs to share their migration stories, culture, globally lived experiences, and future dreams in America.

It isn't enough to change the curriculum; more so, it is important to change myself into becoming a culturally reflective teacher who connects and cares about the students in my class. Therefore, I scoured over the student artifacts, fieldnotes, interviews, and classroom observations to evaluate for culturally reflective teaching attributes. Primarily the summative critical migration memoirs, which would provide rich detail my ability to create authentic teaching and voice for ELs. I utilized Gay's (2008) culturally reflective teacher attributes to evaluate if I had been a supportive educator who facilitated learning, developed a community within my

classroom, given choice and authenticity of learning for ELs to partner in their learning, enabled and empowered, provided my own personal story for interpersonal connections, and cultivated advocacy.

Therefore, the summative senior critical migration memoir provided a voice for ELs of their migration journey and a means for me to evaluate how I provided academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical or critical consciousness. The overarching goal of this practitioner research project was to utilize ELs' funds of knowledge as assets and decrease the deficit academic narratives.

Research Questions

The following questions guided qualitative inquiry for a change in my teaching praxis to understand the Middle Eastern refugee's funds of knowledge, previous academics, and possible interrupted learning in hopes to change my curriculum and teaching praxis for ELs.

- What funds of knowledge do students bring to class that are beneficial for academic success?
- How do I incorporate students' funds of knowledge into my curriculum and teaching praxis?

Introduction of Focal Student Rosa

I began to search for a research participant by with identifying seniors who would need to create their senior capstone project, the senior critical migration memoir. I was not concerned with the Content Literacy course in which they were placed, because the semester two lessons could be completed independently and scaffolded to the ELs' language proficiency. The only

criteria for selection were a senior EL student who had migrated to America. I choose Rosa because I connected to her sweet and kind demeanor. Rosa had been my EL student for her sophomore, junior, and senior years within my Content Literacy courses. I had developed a connection with her and her family during her sophomore year. Over the three years, Rosa and her family had welcomed me to their house during Christmas for dinner. I felt comfortable asking her to share her family history, Chaldean traditions, migration story, struggles, and student artifacts. I have shared my journey of creating curriculum relevant for the multicultural EL student in class, from the first year I attended Indiana Universities' Literacy, Culture, and Language Education doctoral program. Therefore, I chose Rosa because of our teacher-student connection, migration experiences as a refugee, and willingness to help me grow as an ESL educator.

Rosa's journey began in a small village in Iraq, then migration to Lebanon to file refugee paperwork with the United Nations and achieved asylum in America. Rosa's childhood years were Iraq from 2001 to 2012, where they had a family farm. She is the youngest of the six children and only daughter living in America. Rosa's sisters are in Iraq, while her brothers are in America. Rosa attended grades first through seventh in their small village within Iraq. The courses were similar to courses in America, such as math, reading, writing, science, social studies, and gym. Also, she took Arabic, Chaldean, and religion. Rosa's overall grade in first grade was 54%; therefore, she repeated first grade. In 2012, her father, mother, and youngest brother moved to Lebanon. Her father stated in the Parent Multicultural Survey that the only way to seek asylum in America was to file the proper paperwork in a bordering country to Iraq. Within the same survey, her mother explained the religious persecution for being Christians in Iraq and not converting to Muslim. In Lebanon and America, Rosa was assessed on language

ability of English. she was placed in fourth grade even though she passed seventh grade in Iraq. In America, she was placed in ninth grade based on her last grade in Lebanon. In Michigan, the two schools Rosa attended provided EL courses and content courses with the hopes of her graduating from high school. There was no assistance in core content courses at the high school where I teach, only English instruction based on her language proficiency. If an EL attempts to learn in core content courses, they will receive credit and work towards gaining a diploma. In order to attend the local colleges in Michigan, Rosa will need to take an English proficiency exam for course placement. If Rosa is proficient in English, based on her SAT score, she may attend a university or trade school. Rosa stated she was going to take more English courses at the local college, then pursue a degree in nursing or teaching.

Rosa was chosen as a case study to represent the refugees who fled from their home country to America for a better life. Her story mirrors the growing population of refugees who continue to enroll in the high school where I teach. I was grateful for her willingness to share her story and participate in my practitioner research.

Research Analysis Results

The research analysis results of the case study structure are based on an explanation of each theme and codes applicable to the learning, through critical inquiry curriculum framework and incorporation of culturally relevant pedagogy. The curriculum framework sections I used during semester two were understanding academic expectations and conducting a whole child inquiry, CRP and critical literacy through inquiry and reflection, and evaluating my praxis and development of the critical migration memoir senior project. The three themes that emerged were *Globally Lived Experiences Create the EL's Multicultural Identity, Funds of Knowledge for*

Academic Learning, and *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* and *Critical Literacy Instruction as a Means of Authentic Learning*. Within each theme, I provided the three final code categories and direct quotes, student artifacts, or explanation of reasoning for my coding. Lastly, the recursive thematic data analysis focused on answering my research questions concerning funds of knowledge for student academic success and relevant for development of my EL curriculum and teaching praxis. In conclusion, the following sections are arranged by themes and their respective three categories across data collection items.

Theme 1: Understanding the Whole Child Within and Beyond the Borders of the Classroom

Rosa's life story spans from Iraq, through Lebanon, and into America where she has had multiple encounters of different schooling, religious practices, cultures, and social norms based on where her family resided (Student Interview, Student Interview of Parents, Memoir). Therefore, initial codes to group data were *home country*, *migration and displacement*, and *new life and opportunities*. The final code categories explained who Rosa was, through lived experiences, as an EL student in my classroom. They are *generations of culture and traditions*, *adaptation during migration*, and *life is transient*.

Generations of Culture and Traditions

Rosa's migration journey was over 6,000 miles from her home country in Iraq to a high school in Michigan. Her family continued traditional cultural and Chaldean Christian religious practices passed down from generation to generation in America. (Student Interview, Student Interview of Parents, Memoir).

Rosa responded to questions about herself and her family within the Student Interest Survey. “My full name is <participant name>. My name have (*sic*) meaning it is notable the name of Mary the mother of Jesus. My mom and my dad they chose this name.” When responding to where her family was from and where she was born, “I born in Iraq. My family from Iraq.” She continued to explain her favorite food, “My favorite food is Arabic food. Because it is from my country. It is made of Arabic spicy.” Her responses to questions pertaining to her culture and religion, she wrote “My favorite holidays is Christmas and Easter, Thanksgiving. My religion is Christian Catholic.”

In Rosa’s memoir, she wrote about practicing their Chaldean faith in Iraq and America. “In America we have Chaldean Church. We got to Chaldean Church every Sunday with my family. They speak the same Arabic and Chaldean. We love to go to Church and we speak the same language we speak it back home.” The quote references her devotion to their faith across continents. Rosa’s Chaldean faith is rooted in her home village in Iraq where her parent’s families attended the same church for generations. In America, Rosa’s uncle introduced them to the Chaldean church he attends in America and now they attend together as an extended family. Rosa’s immediate and extended family migrated through the years. Eventually, they reunited in America and continued the same religious practices passed down for generations.

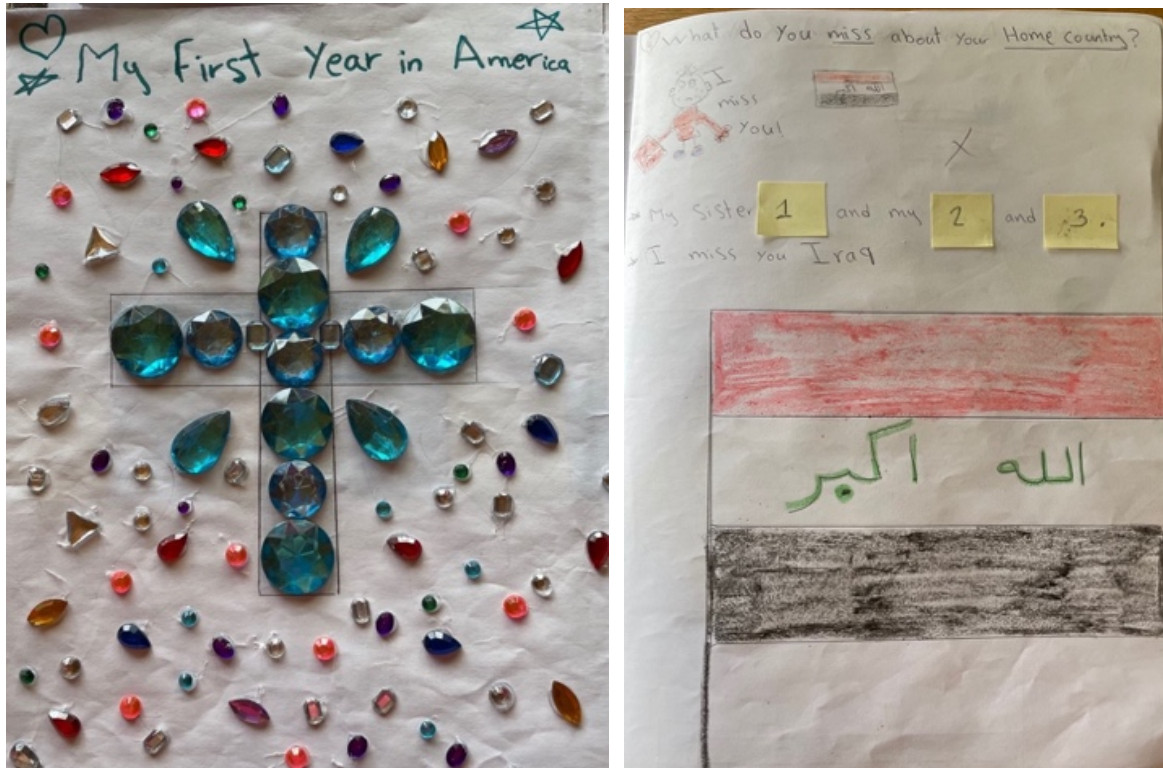
Rosa’s parents grew up on the family farm and raised their children on the same farm. “My mother raised us and runs the family’s affairs where she used to work in the house, agriculture and animal husbandry as well. So, we had one cow that we forgot and milk and several sheep used to live on the production of these animals” (Memoir). The family has passed

down generations of farming dairy cows and chickens and growing vegetables to sell as their financial income.

Within her student artifacts, Rosa created the Christian symbol of a cross on her jeweled cover of “My First Year in America” journal (Figure 2). Also, Rosa wrote “What do you miss about your home country?” within her journal. Her responses were “My sister 1, and my 2, and 3. I miss you Iraq” (Student Artifact). The numbers 1, 2, and 3 represent Rosa’s sisters’ names and are covered to protect their identity. Rosa’s family is spread across the world, but her family’s faith and strong connections continue where each member is situated. As previously stated, Rosa’s sister is a nun in Iraq who works with young children. In America and Iraq, Rosa and her sisters continue the Chaldean tradition of their family.

Figure 3

Student Artifact: My First Year in America Journal



Culture items of a Christian cross and an Iraqi flag.

Note: numbers 1, 2, and 3 symbolize Rosa's sisters' names.

Initial coding from data analysis also revolved around the oppression Rosa and her family faced as Chaldean Christians in Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Rosa's written and oral responses connected her experiences to the critical literacy stories. For example, Rosa wrote in a discussion chat about the Jewish people who were killed by the Nazis, during World War II. Her writing stated, "It is true that everything must be remembered, [even] if was sad or happy" (Student Artifact). In my fieldnotes, I referenced how Rosa discussed Chaldeans

being treated like Jews today. Rosa referenced school in Iraq where “I was always put with the Muslim prayer, not my prayer. I don’t like to read their book [Quran] too much, because I don’t care about that religion [Islamic]” (Student Interview). Rosa was expected to learn the Islamic faith at school in Iraq (Student Artifact). When I asked her about her Islamic courses from her elementary school transcript, “I just do my homework” (Student Interview). Rosa did not have the option to refuse the Islamic courses in Iraq, as they were required for all students in Iraq (Student Artifact).

Adaptation during Migration

Initial code names centered around *migration and displacement* and were identified as such. When asked in her student interview what steps her family took to bring her family to America, she responded that her father had to move to Lebanon in order to apply for American refugee status (Student Interview Protocol).

Rosa’s memoir explained the “collapse of the Iraqi currency, due to the economic blockade and torment from the Islamic militia, ceasing the family to flee to Lebanon for safety” (Memoir).

My cousins were kidnapped on <date>, in an armed attack on their home in Baghdad. It was a tragedy for us. The armed groups burned their house and destroyed it. The relatives of eighteen families all migrated from Iraq because they were persecuted by the Islamic militia. Terrorism was delivered to our small village where several people were kidnapped by armed veils. So my father decided to leave the country and we left a large house (Memoir).

Therefore, her father, mother, two older brothers, and Rosa migrated to Lebanon because “the country we were living over there is not good and is not safety for us” (Student Interview Protocol). Rather than continue living in Iraq, her father decided to migrate with Rosa, her mother, and two brothers to Lebanon for safety. Her family needed to find a place to live, school for Rosa, and employment for her father and brothers to survive in Lebanon. Therefore, the data was identified as *adaptation during migration* because they were not able to take anything with them and left all of their belongings at home.

I needed to understand her schooling in Lebanon to gain an understanding of what she was taught. I did not have her transcript from Lebanon, as I did from her elementary school in Iraq. The four of them lived in Lebanon for almost five years, but she did not attend school for two years (Student Interview Protocol). After completing seventh grade in Iraq, the Lebanese public school tested her French and English language skills (Student Interview Protocol). There was no testing of Arabic language proficiency (Student Interview Protocol). Based on her assessment scores, she was placed in a fourth-grade class (Student Interview Protocol). Rosa referenced being happy, “I was walking and I feel like where I am? But it was like some people will love me. There was [Arabic] speaking and having company” (Rosa Student Interview Protocol). Rosa explained that she could talk easily to the younger children in Arabic and became a big sister to them (Student Interview Protocol). Rosa stated these children were refugees from the Middle East, as she was (Member Checking).

Rosa’s response during a class discussion about migration, “Life teaches you new things and we must learn them. The things that we used to hate and now you can be strong” (Classroom Observation).

Rosa's way of seeking acceptance and transitioning between Lebanese and American schools revolved around common languages in each setting. Rosa's comments about her about learning languages in Lebanon, "They teach almost two hours in a day French, English one hour a week, and Arabic one hour in a week. They do more French." When Rosa speaks to the Lebanese freshman student, she chooses to speak Arabic with her and not French (Classroom Observation).

Time spent in Lebanon was only to file immigration paperwork with the United Nations to come to America (Memoir). The five years in Lebanon were always a means of hope that someday they would be in America (Memoir). Rosa and her family found ways to adapt to the new environment in Lebanon and seek the correct path for immigration to America.

Life Is Transient

Initial code names were centered around her *new life and opportunities* connected to her immigration to America.

Rosa's "Getting to Know You" project had statements of her multilingual American identity,

I am a student at [an American high school]. I am from Iraq and I live in America with my family. I speak English and Arabic, Chaldean. I like to learn to read more books. All the kids they help me how I learn I like to learn new words and write a lot. I to speak with American people to learn English. (Student Artifact)

Rosa expressed she needs to study for the citizenship test when has been here for five years (Student Interview Protocol). Within her “First Year in America” journal, the question was: You are an American. What does this mean to you? Her response was, “have safety.” While Rosa is learning to speak English in America, she reflected “My learning in home [country] is Chaldean and Arabic” (Student Interest Survey). Rosa’s transient life in Lebanon and America is evident in their ability to seek safety in countries who provided refuge for individuals seeking safety from their home country.

Rosa found multiple ways to connect her migration experience to the individuals in the literature we read. One way that she showed her connection to refugees was in her journal writing,

Her grandparents were refugees at the time of Partition in India, from what is now Pakistan to present [day] India. They worked long and hard days doing blue collar jobs, so that her parents would have a better chance at life. (Student Artifact)

Her journal writing mimics Rosa’s story of her parents leaving their war-torn country in Iraq to become American refugees (Memoir). Their journey through Lebanon to seek asylum in America was for a safe environment and escape religious persecution (Student Interview, Student Parent Interview).

Lastly, Rosa wrote about how her entire family adapted during Covid-19 pandemic in her memoir.

At this time something happened in the world. Covid-19/Coronavirus is the originality of all the world in threat and the whole people is sitting in their house. People are afraid

until they get out of their house. I want to study at home because they are closing all the schools in America. I study every day at home and all my family is not working now. At this time I saw something new in my life.

Rosa's writing identifies another time in her life where her family had to go through a transition and change their way of living. I chose to label the data *life is transient* because she transitioned into home studies rather than physically in a classroom, during the pandemic.

Another component of Rosa's transition was a new school and new language. Rosa wrote about her English language struggles within her memoir. "I had a problem with school in language because sometimes I don't know what some words mean in English. The student and teachers used to tell me what the words mean" (Memoir). Her drive to learn English pointed her towards working where she could speak English, "I work at the fruit market. I stayed at work for a year. There, I learned more English and made new friends. I worked as a cashier there" (Student Interview). During her interview, Rosa explained that she quit a job where the employees only spoke Chaldean and Arabic. Rosa showed how she decided to transition to another job where the employees spoke English. She knew that she need to learn English for school and work, so made the transition to position herself in a work environment that provided English support.

These rich descriptions were summed up into code sub-categories as *generations of culture and traditions*, *adaptation is the key to survival*, and *life is transient*. Through her writing and interview, Rosa identified as a multicultural individual who changed when forced to migrate. As an educator, the reality of migration for ELs has created multicultural identities and multiple lived experiences which are important for understanding the whole student to create relevant

learning experiences in the classroom. By providing surveys, journal responses, and interviewing Rosa, I noticed that her identity is fluid and is influenced by the people and spaces she mediates.

Theme 2. Funds of Knowledge for Academic Learning

With new standards being created in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies content areas, over the last five years, academic rigor has focused on English language proficiency and content where students are prepared for college and university studies after high school graduation (United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2020). Therefore, I chose to use the Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix to evaluate home/community practices that were relevant for classroom application, as previously referenced in Chapter 3 in Table 5 (González, et al., 2005). The Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix provided codes and categories pertinent to home knowledge relevant to the mid-western American high school Rosa attended (González, et al., 2005). The three final categories that arose from the initial coding were *knowledge need in academic courses to obtain a high school diploma*, *knowledge needed for elective and life relevant courses*, and *knowledge needed to “do school.”*

Knowledge Needed in Core Academic Courses

Initial coding was identified as academic knowledge, also known as *cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)*, needed for passing academic courses for graduation. Utilizing the Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix, I sorted data of home knowledge and English language learning according to expectations within core academic courses for the Michigan Merit

Curriculum Graduation Guidelines (González et al., 2005). Initial coding was connected to academic courses, such as world history, U.S. government, citizenship, economics, earth science, and second language credits.

Rosa's funds of knowledge gained from numerous travels could be beneficial for her in mandatory social studies courses, such as United States (U.S.) history, world history, government, economics, and citizenship. Rosa's writing contained data from her globally lived experiences in Iraq, Lebanon, and America. Examples of social studies funds of knowledge was the instruction in her Iraqi and Lebanese history classes. She explained that in her Iraqi history class, "...you learned America wasn't a friend and they don't teach world history" (Student Interview). In Rosa's Lebanese history course, she studied the history of Lebanon (Student Interview). Her funds of knowledge could be useful in the world history and geography course, aligned with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) High School (HS) World History and Geography (WHG) Standard F1: World Historical and Geographical Inquiry and Literacy Practices (MDE, 2019b). Ways that Rosa could use her funds of knowledge in her history courses could be during classroom discussions of her personal experiences, complete assignments from her funds of knowledge and new knowledge gained in class and utilize her funds of knowledge to gain a depth of knowledge needed for quizzes and tests.

Possible world history and geography funds of knowledge which could be beneficial for learning came from her lived experiences and schooling in Iraq and Lebanon. Rosa described religious practices in Iraq and the war in the Middle East.

The people of the people are Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Kurdish, Yazidi, and others. They entered the country in a largely dark tunnel and a civil war began inside Iraq, and we

Christians have been targeted by militant Islamic militias. My cousins were kidnapped on May 31, 2007 in an armed attack on their home in Baghdad. We did not find any trace of it. It was a great tragedy for us. The rest of my uncle's workers headed to the village.

Those armed groups burned their house and destroyed it. Terrorism was delivered to our small village where several people were kidnapped by armed veils. (Memoir)

Rosa used vocabulary which could be useful in her world history class, such as “ransom, civil war, armed attack, fall of ruling regime in Iraq, no job, collapse of Iraq currency, economic blockade, civil war, militant Islamic militias, burned house, terrorism” (Memoir). Both of these data show Rosa's funds of knowledge aligned with the MDE HS.W7.WHG.Era 7 Standard: Global Crisis and Achievement, 1900-Present (MDE, 2019b), possibly beneficial in her world history course. With current events discussion of the war in the Middle East in core history courses, Rosa would be able to provide a first-hand account of her own experiences of life in war-torn Iraq.

Also, Rosa wrote about her family traditions of her brother getting married, previously explained about the Henna ritual, purchasing gold as gifts for the bride and groom, religious wedding ceremony structure, and traditional Chaldean wedding food (Memoir, Student Interview). These data align with the standard of MDE Foundations of World History and Geographical Inquiry: F2 World Historical and Geographical Inquiry and Literacy Practices (MDE, 2019b). Rosa's family tradition funds of knowledge could be used in the high school U.S. history and world history courses. I labeled the data *knowledge needed in core academic courses* because it aligned with the Social Studies standards as she explanation of her Middle Eastern culture and lived experience in Iraq. In her world history course, Rosa could identify key terms related to her religious practices in the geographical location of Iraq.

Rosa's U.S. government and U.S. citizenship funds of knowledge were shown in the Student Interview Protocol,

If you want to go to America, you have to go to country to oblige to come to come to America. You cannot apply from your country. Oh, that's why we go to Lebanon. They apply for America. My mom and dad's cousin sponsor us. I have my brother almost ten years in America. And he can't [sponsor us] because he was not a citizen yet.

Rosa's government funds of knowledge from her quote shows her understanding of applying for immigration to come to America. As a required course for graduation, Rosa could use her funds of knowledge in the government class aligned with MDE Civics Standard, C6: Citizenship and Civic Participation in the United States of America (MDE, 2019b).

Economics course funds of knowledge were shown through her work and knowledge of American currency as a cashier. Rosa explained how she recently changed jobs as a cashier during a casual conversation before her Student Interview. She stated, "I work at a fruit market." Rosa's experience with American currency has the potential to align with MDE HS Economics Standard, E2: The National Economy (MDE, 2019b). Rosa summarized her knowledge of world economics through her knowledge of income in Iraq, Lebanon, and America. These economic funds of knowledge are beneficial for Rosa during economics class where she will be taught additional content about the American economy.

Rosa's family and relatives lived on a farm where the family business was supplying food for the Iraqi citizens, which has the potential to be useful in her high school science course. Rosa gave a thorough detail of her family farm in Iraq, which consisted of three cows and 80 chickens

(Student Interview). Rosa's immediate and extended families worked on the farm. Every three days, they would go into the larger town to sell eggs, milk, and cheeses (Student Interview). Rosa's funds of knowledge of living from farming could be applied in the high school earth science course within the Human Sustainability Standards HS-ESS3-1 through HS-ESS3-6 (MDE, 2015). The small village in Iraq, Rosa's family grew "wheat, barley and legumes, as well as watermelons" (Memoir). Rosa's gardening knowledge could be applied to the MDE science standards of Matter and Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems, HS-LS1-5 through HS-LS2-4 (MDE, 2015). Rosa was required to take three years of science in high school, per MDE Michigan Merit Curriculum. The data shows Rosa's funds of knowledge that could be utilized during her core science courses to scaffold new learning, aide in participation in class, and complete assignments relating to the content of farming.

For students to receive a high school diploma, students are mandated to take two years of second language instruction during grades eight through twelve. Per the district policy of Rosa's high school, if she can provide transcripts of second language instruction from grades third or higher, she will receive up to two credits of a second language. Rosa was able to provide Arabic instruction from grades 1st-7th in Iraq (Student Artifact). Therefore, she was given 2.0 credits of a second language on her high school transcript. Further explanation of the languages Rosa learned came from data, "The language that we (mom and dad) spoke was Chaldean, but when we went to Lebanon we learn Arabic. I hope that my kids to learn more English" (Student Parent Interview). Rosa's transcripts of language instruction aligned with the MDE 5Cs of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (MDE, nd).

These funds of knowledge in core academic courses provided a lens into the information that immigrant students may possess where educators could scaffold new knowledge.

Knowledge Needed for Elective and Relevant Life Courses

Rosa played an important role in her family, due to her academic English instruction and ability to speak English. Rosa's family primarily spoke Chaldean and Arabic at home. Both of her parents worked in jobs where other employees spoke Arabic and could translate for them (Student Interview of Parents). Rosa provided financial support, through her work at the local market. She also translated during medical visits, phone calls to the house, school papers and documents in the mail, and shopping for food and items needed at home (Student Interview).

I began initial coding of courses in high school that connected *learning skills relevant for employment and life-skills* in America. Analysis of funds of knowledge expanded codes were *work and trade school knowledge*, and *project-based and skills-based learning*. The data analysis expanded the funds of knowledge Rosa needed to gain a high school diploma into real-life application courses in school known as electives. Many of these elective courses follow the MDE Career and College Ready Skills and Career Technical Education (CTE) Standards by Career Clusters (Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, 2021).

Rosa enrolled in the marketing course her senior year as an elective. The following data analysis linked academic instruction in marketing and real-life application in her employment. She stated, "I like to study about business" (Student Artifact). In the fruit market, Rosa served people in the deli department. When asked if she talked to customers, Rosa responded, "Yeah, what they need, which kind of ham or which kind of turkey" (Interview Question). Another

possible example of her marketing funds of knowledge was her ability to explain one of her first experiences in an American store, compared to Iraq.

Sometimes, I like to go to [the] market or something. I don't know how to say [to] the cashier or something because in Iraq we don't have like [a] cashier or something. Like [you] just have to have people (cashiers). I'll tell them like I take this much. He will count them, not like a register or the computer. When I saw that, I was like how I was [to] go shopping or taking something. It was so bad for me. (Interview Question)

I chose to label these data as knowledge needed for elective and life-relevant courses because, they may link the MDE Marketing Standard: Marketing Communications Pathway (Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, 2021) to her job. Within the marketing course, Rosa was expected to create presentations about promoting the key components of a business. Her work funds of knowledge provided a background of lived experiences of working in a market that she could reference for the assigned project.

In the end, learning in her marketing course and working in a deli was a way for her to use her funds of knowledge and develop additional marketing funds of knowledge in a reciprocal manner.

Rosa learned how to make rosaries from her dad, which these funds of knowledge could be useful in marketing class, economics, and amongst her Chaldean Christian community as a real-life application to support others through the sale of her merchandise.

I learned from my dad how to make a rosary. It was so hard to make a rosary. I learned how to make a rosary from thread and iron. I love this job right now. I help my dad on rosary. He made for poor people and for his family and friends. (Student Interview)

Rosa explained that the rosaries they made were sold at local churches. The money they collected was sent to the city in Lebanon where they lived for the Chaldean refugees (Student Interview). Her understanding of selling goods could apply to the MDE Marketing Standard: Professional Sales Pathway (Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, 2021). Additionally, the sales of the rosary and supporting other countries could be applied to the MDE HS Economics Standard, E3: International Economy (MDE, 2019b). The rosary building, selling the rosaries in America, and sending funds to a Lebanese church who aides Middle Eastern refugees shows her funds of knowledge of income from a product and financial donation connected to lessons taught in the economics course.

An example of Rosa's funds of knowledge relevant in her life and leisure elective course was within her student artifact of an assignment of life-learning at home. Rosa had posted a picture of her, her mother, and her brother around a table of food. The photo was Rosa hugging her mother with the caption, "I make to my mom biryani" (Student Artifact). Rosa's ability to use technology, cook an entire meal, and post it to the school's assignment board would be relevant in the life and leisure course. The possible use of these funds of knowledge could be within the MDE Human Services Career Cluster: Family & Community Services Pathway (Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, 2021). At the high school Rosa attends there is a life skills course in which I connected her funds of knowledge to. Rosa took the life skills course in her junior year (Student Artifact). Her cooking funds of knowledge, including

measuring and baking, could have be referenced in class when they cook in the high school kitchen.

These data showed the funds of knowledge Rosa had relevant for academic courses pertaining to life-skills needed to provide support for her family, outside of the academic setting.

Knowledge Needed to “Do School”

As with any new setting, the understanding of how to “do school” comes with great challenges for ELs. Therefore, initial coding was labeled according to *basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)* Rosa needed to work with teachers and students. Social language learning is essential for immigrants to navigate in the settings in which they navigate daily. As the use of technology has increased in the 21st century, it has also been an asset in the academic setting for multilingual students where ELs can gain instant translation and support via their phones or computers.

Technological funds of knowledge Rosa described would be beneficial for social interactions with her peers. Rosa referenced key social networking resources, “I look at YouTube and Snap Chat, Facebook, Instagram. I use computer and phone” (Student Interest Survey). Social networking is important for high school students to feel accepted and to interact using videos and visuals when language can be a barrier.

Another example of Rosa’s technological funds of knowledge was evident when she was able to navigate the school’s online software program during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rosa had shown the use of technology through learning by meetings on Teams, posting assignments digitally, and use of online technology for learning (Classroom Observation, Fieldnotes). We had

not practiced how to learn online in class, before the COVID-19 outbreak. Rosa's technological funds of knowledge was evident when she navigated face-to-face school through the use of phone applications to help her translate in class for comprehension and in virtual learning through navigating the school software learning program where lessons were taught on Teams.

Additionally, Rosa was able to adapt to different school settings through her multilingual funds of knowledge. While attending school in Lebanon, Rosa could connect to other students who knew Arabic and Chaldean language because she built Arabic and Chaldean funds of knowledge. At first, Rosa questioned her placement into fourth grade in Lebanon because she had finished seventh grade in Iraq (Interview Question). She explained her frustration with the Lebanese school that placed her lower because of her English proficiency, not Arabic (Interview Question). Over time in fourth grade, she began to utilize her Arabic and Chaldean academic funds of knowledge. During the interview she stated, "It was like some people with me. They were speaking Arabic and Chaldean. I was not by myself." When I clarified this statement through member checking, she stated she could connect to other refugee students in Lebanon Chaldean and had similar experiences in their home country with war. Lastly, I noticed Rosa seek-out students who spoke Arabic and Chaldean (Fieldnotes; Classroom Observation). The students who could explain how to "do school" in America had at least two years in the American educational system (Fieldnotes, Classroom Observation). They were an asset for her during the school day for understanding how the American educational system works, such as homework in content courses (Fieldnotes, Classroom Observation).

Rosa had funds of knowledge from her family, work, and previous schooling which was influential in her success in the American high school. Her ability to utilize her funds of

knowledge bridged the educational gap she faced when held back in Lebanon (Classroom Observation). Rosa had shown her ability to “do school” in Iraq, Lebanon, and America through her migration experiences and attending schools in different countries.

These data sets provided funds of knowledge for academic achievement for Rosa, as she graduated with her high school diploma. Inquiry began with me understanding how to bridge Rosa’s home, work, and community funds of knowledge to the academic setting. An explanation of how educators can uncover ELs funds of knowledge relevant for learning will be explained more in chapter 5.

Theme 3. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Literacy Instruction as a Means of Authentic Learning

The next steps in data analysis were to evaluate my use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and critical literacy within the EL classroom. The three key CRP components significant for ELs’ academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Gay, 2008). Early data analysis targeted my teaching praxis and Rosa’s student artifacts to develop initial and expanded codes. The three categories that emerged were *development of English ability to become full members of society*, *validating cultural differences as assets*, and *breaking down stereotypes to develop a community of learners*.

Development of English Language Ability to Become a Full Member of Society

Initial coding was labeled as *breaking down deficit narratives* surrounding ELs in academics causing marginalization and remedial courses. Through expanded coding, I was able to group initial codes into ways that Rosa was learning from my CRP praxis. Therefore, I labeled

the final category as *development of English language ability to become full members of society* because the data showed the significance Rosa placed on the ability to learn English, pass courses in high school, and ultimately gain a high school diploma.

The first set of data analysis pertained to Rosa's English proficiency and my English language instruction in my classroom. There were many assessments given to provide a clear picture of her English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These included the World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) test given annually, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in 11th grade, and the Reading Level Gains Test for Lexile reading level. As CRP promotes academic rigor, I wanted to make sure that I was also providing opportunities for authentic learning and critical literacy instruction relevant for Rosa. Therefore, I evaluated my lesson plans and Rosa's student artifacts to create authentic learning in the EL classroom.

Critical to receiving a high school diploma was passing academic courses which are only taught in English. Rosa had exposure to academic language courses in Arabic, Chaldean, and English in Iraq for eight years, along with repeating first grade (Student Artifact). Additionally, she was taught French, Arabic, and English in Lebanon (Student Interview). Therefore, Rosa's language instruction was key for me to understanding English language acquisition for English only classrooms in America.

While interviewing Rosa, I asked about her first few months in America. She expressed the struggles with learning English and the deep desire to, in order to help her family.

I can't say good morning to somebody. That was hard for me. I always will not finish my homework. I can't do my homework because I don't know nothing. I started crying every

day, every day, every day. So my mom asked me why am I crying. I am getting better than the first year here. Right now, I'm getting very good. I still have an accent. I have to study more. (Student Interview)

Rosa's comment showed her struggles with learning English because it was important to finish homework, which is vital to passing the course. While she had assistance in school, completing homework was a struggle because her mom could not help her and saw Rosa struggle.

Rosa tries to please her parents by learning English and supporting the family. Evidence was found in her writing about a happy memory in a journal prompt,

I want to learn more English. I said to my mom, "I have to make how to speak good English. I have to make how to speak with people and to be my family happy for me. I have to try very hard. I need to go to college. I be happy and my family to be happy for me." (Student Artifact)

While Rosa explains the importance of learning English to support her family, she referenced it again as her family bought a house and she changed schools.

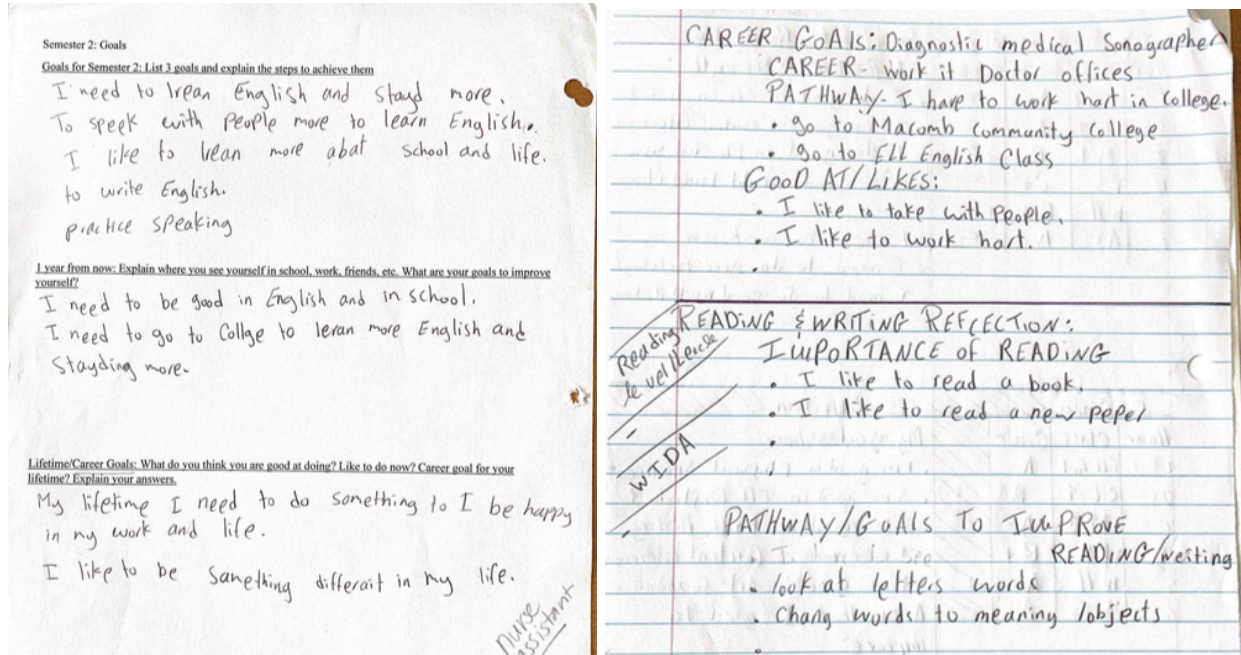
My father decided to buy a house. We bought a house in Macomb Michigan. It is our beautiful house that he bought and we were happy in the house. I changed my school. In this school I learned English. I was so happy in my new school and I had many friends. I spoke English with them. A lot of teachers helped me in everything. (Memoir)

Evaluating my CRP praxis and lessons that promoted reflection for Rosa of her learning, the two assignments that prompted student analysis were Semester 2 Goals, Career Goals, and

Reading and Writing Reflection, see Figure 3. The three semester 2 goals were, “I need to [learn] English and [study] more. To [speak] with people more to learn English. I like to [learn] more [about] school life to write English” (Student Artifact). Also, she reflected on her reading level/Lexile and WIDA score through her Reading and Writing Reflection writing. The importance of reading, “I like to read a book. I like to read a [newspaper]” (Student Artifact). The pathways/goals to improve reading/writing were, “look at letters words and change words to meaning/objects” (Student Artifact). Rosa identified the need to learn English for academic achievement in order to read the local newspaper and reading for entertainment. Reading for pleasure and knowledge of community events is an important life skill.

Figure 4

Student Artifacts: Semester 2 Goals, Career Goals, and Reading and Writing Reflection



Note: Reading and Writing Reflection pertained to Rosa's reading level/Lexile and WIDA score.

During Covid-19, Rosa and her family were forced to stay at home. Rosa found a way to continue learning and study courses online at home.

I want to study at home because they are closing all the schools in America. I study every day at home and all my family is not working now. It is a real tragedy in life. We clean the house everyday with me and my mother. Every day my family prays for God to do something with Covid-19. Thank God for everything (Memoir).

Her ability to continue learning virtually without classroom support from teachers, identified the importance of learning English until society returns to normal and she would need to use English at work.

Rosa's parents were interested in her learning in America, as shown in her Student Interest Survey when answering the question about explaining her mom and dad.

My mom she need to know everything about me, like who's my friend and school. My dad, he like to see I'm in school, do my homework in school, or how the teacher is with me. (Student Artifact)

Rosa's mother encouraged learning and graduating from high school because she did not achieve her high school diploma in Iraq. Rosa's mother expressed,

I love my kids to graduate and I love my kids to have diploma. I finished just freshman year [in Iraq]. I love to know everything and I was smart and my grades were all A in school. I don't have a diploma" (Student Parent Interview).

Rosa reflected what she would like to do one year from now on her semester 2 goals sheet, Figure 3. She stated, "I need to be good in English and in school. I need to go to college to [learn] more English and [studying] more" (Student Artifact).

Rosa had a love for learning, as referenced in her Student Interest Survey. "I like to read. I [read] each day half a page. My short-term goals is graduation from high school. I like to do for the rest of my life to go to college and find good job."

The career goals Rosa listed on Figure 3 were, "Diagnostic medical sonographer and work in doctor offices" (Student Artifact). She reflected on the pathway to get to these careers was, "I have to work [hard] in college, got to Macomb Community College, go to ELL English class" (Student Artifact).

The data clips showed a wealth of knowledge yet to be utilized in the classroom setting to counter the deficit narrative of ELs' failing to achieve in the academic setting. I identified data aligned with the content standards where Rosa could build new content, scaffold new vocabulary, and participate in classroom discussions from her funds of knowledge developed in her lived experiences. Through my in-depth collection of surveys, interviews, reading evaluation, writing samples, and observations I was able to evaluate the Rosa's funds of knowledge, previous learning experiences, learning abilities of English language and literacy, and discuss future goals.

Not only did Rosa care about learning English as shown in Figure 3, but she also continually focused on passing academic classes. Rosa's academic transcripts provided passing grades and the ultimate reward of graduating in America with her high school diploma (Student Artifacts).

Validating Cultural Differences as Assets

Initial coding was labeled *diversity of student populations* to from data analysis related validating Rosa's culture. As Rosa and her parents previously stated in the data, they identify as Chaldean's and Chaldean Christians from Iraq. Important to understand is that Chaldean is the culture, Aramaic is the ancient language, Sourath is the modern-day Aramaic, and Chaldean Christian is their religion (Abraham & Shryock, 2000, Student Interview, Student Interview of Parents). I focused on Rosa's Chaldean culture as assets. Examples were her Chaldean Christian religious beliefs, family values, and traditions which could be incorporated into the EL classroom as assets.

Rosa's Chaldean culture and Chaldean Christian religious beliefs were beneficial funds of knowledge for learning in the EL classroom with daily writing about her family and her critical migration memoir assignments. Rosa's mom stated the need to continue practicing their culture in America, "My culture is Chaldean. Even my kids I want them to be the way I am and my husband" (Student Interview of Parents). Rosa's family currently attends a Chaldean Catholic church located closed to their home in Michigan (Student Interview). The church offers Mass in Arabic, Aramaic, Sourath, English, and other languages (Student Interview). Rosa wrote extensively in her memoir about her church.

In America we have Chaldean Church. We got to Chaldean Church every Sunday with my family. They speak the same language Arabic and Chaldean. We love to go to Church and we speak the same language we speak it back home. They have all things in Church. They do school for children [that] don't know Arabic and Chaldean. They [teach]class for Math and English for people who don't know English. They can learn in Church. They help people who are new in America.

Rosa was able to use her Chaldean culture and lived experiences as assets and points of reference for writing in the EL classroom. The cultural assets were built in Iraq when her immediate and extended family lived on the farm. Through her migration experiences, she has continued to cultivate her culture in new lands.

Rosa's knowledge of other cultures was found in her memoir, "The people of Iraq are Sunni Shiite, Christian, Kurdish, Yazidi, and others" (Memoir). Also, her other sister is a Christian nun in a monastery in Iraq helping children (Memoir). Rosa has a depth of religious

understanding, which could be beneficial for learning in the social studies courses and interacting with the diverse American student population.

Rosa's mother explained the importance of her Chaldean Christian religious beliefs in the Student Interview of Parents. The choice of changing religion practices to Islamic, move, or be killed were their choices.

The Isis ask a Christian to be a Muslim and we say no. They kill people who don't want to be Muslim. They force us to leave our village. We went to Lebanon. We had a lot of hard time. (Student Interview of Parents)

In order to incorporate ELs' cultures into the classroom, I needed to gain an understanding of the Chaldean Christian population as they are the largest EL population in our district. In a classroom of multicultural and different religious practices, it is important to validate the multiple religious practices that create an ELs' identity and utilize their funds of knowledge in the EL classroom.

Another component of culture was their value of a tight-knit Chaldean Christian family. Rosa's family values one another, even though miles apart. Her two sisters are in Iraq, while her brothers and parents are in America. Her older sister is a Christian nun in Iraq and provides support for young Iraqi children (Memoir). Her brother-in-law is an Iraqi soldier and married to her sister. They have three children and reside in Iraq (Memoir). Because Rosa's brother-in-law works for the Iraqi military, her sister only sees her husband four days a month (Memoir). Rosa's two sisters are not able to immigrate to America, but she speaks to them daily through

technology. The assets that I labeled here were her ability to validate her Chaldean culture, while understanding that her family unit expanded across the world.

While the war was still ongoing in the Middle East, Rosa's immediate and extended families were torn apart. Rosa referenced forced migration due to armed groups burning the village and houses (Memoir). "We were the relatives of 18 families who all migrated from Iraq because they were persecuted by the Islamic militia" (Memoir). Rosa's personal connection to a war-torn country could be more valuable in social studies course, than reading about it in the American press or a textbook.

Near or far, Rosa's extended family continues to reconnect. Rosa's Uncle was the family's sponsor for immigration to America. He immigrated to America over ten years before Rosa's family (Student Interview). When they arrived, he helped her with her homework, learning to drive, getting a driver's license, and filling out an application for employment (Student Interview). Rosa's mother was excited to see him, because the last time she saw him was in the Iraqi village over a decade ago (Student Interview). The asset of familial support was evident in this data for me when I coded this section of the student interview. The familial support was provided for Rosa and her family from the moment they were sponsored and even now living in America.

Rosa explained a visit to Canada, after living in America for two years, to visit her aunt from Iraq. Even after being separated from her aunt for many years, crossing another border (Canada) to see her was not a bother at all.

Me and my family go to Canada because my aunt come from Jordan to Canada. I was happy for her because she saw her children. We did not see her for a long time. I was so happy for her and her family. My family was happy for her. I saw Canada for the first time in my life. I loved Canada a lot. They have sweet things. Canada is so beautiful and pretty. (Student Interview)

Working through trials and turmoil of war, Rosa's immediate and extended family sought to connect across continents. The assets of family living in new lands and reconnecting to celebrate their triumph over oppressive forces in their country could be used for multidimensional and reflective learning.

Traditions from Iraq were evident in America for Rosa's family. Rosa is learning gardening, baking bread, and rosary making from her parents. Each of these data sets could be assets in written reflection and validating her culture, which is used by many teachers to gain an understanding of their student population at the beginning of the semester.

Rosa's family in Iraq grew grains, fruit, and vegetables as an income and fed the immediate and extended family, as previously stated. Rosa brought me tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini to school for my family (Fieldnotes). Even though her family's house was on a small lot, her parents continue to garden in America (Student Interview). The data was labeled *validating cultural differences as assets* because the practice of farming in Iraq was transferred to America in their city home. Rosa's family turned their small city backyard into a garden to grow fruits and vegetables (Student Interview). In Michigan, the city backyards are extremely small with not many gardens. Also, there is a plethora of grocery stores and fruit markets available to purchase fruits and vegetables at a reasonable cost.

One example of Rosa continuing her family tradition was making Iraqi bread. “My mom makes bread for people who can’t make bread. I like to learn this job. She loves her job so much” (Memoir). Rosa has brought me in the homemade Iraqi bread to school that they made.

As previously stated, their Chaldean Christian religious practices are close to their heart. One prayer that Chaldean Christians perform is praying to Jesus’s mother, Mary, through the use of a beaded necklace called a rosary. Rosa reflected on making rosaries in her memoir.

I learned from my dad how to make a rosary. It was so hard to make a rosary. I learned how I can make a rosary from thread and iron. I love this job right now. I help my dad on rosary. He made for poor people and for his family and his friends. (Memoir)

Rosa gave me a beautiful green rosary that her father had made (Fieldnotes). I was extremely humbled that they thought I was worthy to receive such a precious gift.

In conclusion, Rosa’s Chaldean Christian religious practices, family values, and traditions continue locally and globally with her immediate and extended family members. The funds of knowledge from her home country continue in America. I chose to identify these data sets as assets that could be utilized for EL learning and teacher reflection for lesson planning relevant for ELs.

Breaking Down Stereotypes to Develop a Community of Learners

The initial codes were labeled as *opportunities for empowerment* to identify how ethnically diverse ELs might relate to other cultural groups in class. While the largest population of ELs in my classroom was Iraqi Chaldeans, there was a growing population of Middle Eastern

Muslim students coming into the school district. Coding revolved around understanding Rosa's understanding of other cultures and religious beliefs. The expanded codes revolved around emancipatory and transformative instruction with critical reflections. The three key codes related to shared personal experiences, questioning dominant ideologies, and critical reflection of oppression.

While the EL classroom is diverse, there is a vulnerability with sharing their personal beliefs and experiences in life. There were ELs who identified as Muslims who practice Islamic religious practices in her classroom. Therefore, we developed a community of learners who listened and respected one another (Fieldnotes). I would mediate and provide opportunities for educating, learning, and reflection. I was transparent that I did not know everything, and research would always be done by myself if confusion arose.

One shared experience was Rosa's reflection of treatment of dominant Muslim religious practices in her school (Student Artifact) and her village (Memoir). As previously stated, Rosa was taught Muslim religion in elementary school, even though she was a practicing Chaldean Catholic (Student Artifact). She also explained the reason her family left Iraq during her student interview.

When the Isis asks a Christian to be a Muslim and we say no. They kill people who don't want to be Muslim. They force us to leave our village and we went to Lebanon. We had a lot of hard time. (Student Interview)

The data was labeled as *breaking down stereotypes to build a community of learners* because when Rosa explained that she is from Iraq in the content literacy course, students assumed she

was Muslim. In reality, her identity is Chaldean Christian and she had to explain the oppression her family faced in Iraq (Fieldnotes).

Students wrote about their immigration journey as an assignment on the school's classroom website for assignments. Rosa responded to another immigrant's story about coming to America for a better life for her. She wrote, "This is good for them and you can learn new language. You can see the life new country and new people and friends" (Student Artifact).

While immigration stories and life experiences may be similar, they are not the same. It is beneficial to share life stories to make connections and learn from others.

While I have created a culture in our EL classroom of respect and learning, I also promote ELs to question dominant ideologies in their home country, around the world, and in America.

During class one day, Rosa asked why we always talk about Hitler and World War II (Fieldnotes). I had to think for a moment and then I went back to her interview to find out what her previous history instruction focused on in Iraq and Lebanon. In Iraq, "Yeah. Over there they don't teach you the world history. They teach you the Muslim history" (Student Interview). She referenced Lebanon's history instruction "They teach their history over there. Their country's history" (Student Interview). Both data clips were important to me when selecting literature to read in class. Many topics Rosa had no formal academic instruction in, pertaining to world history. Therefore, I would think it would be beneficial to create a way to understand the students' prior knowledge in any subject before introducing a new concept.

Through the years of teaching ELs, I have found that critical reflection of oppression is important for critical dialogue and learning.

When discussing current events in class, I mediated the different ELs' religious orientations from my knowledge in comparative religious coursework and experiences when I taught ELs. A critical reflection piece in class referenced the Jewish oppression during World War II (Lesson Plans). Critical reflection from Rosa stated, "Many innocents Jews were being killed because of their culture and their belief. We have to remember everything [that] happened with us in life. If it sad and happy, it strengthens us" (Student Artifact). Also, Rosa reflected about Elie Wiesel's *Night* memoir in a journal post, "He writes in books what happed in his time in the world. We have to remember everything that happened with us in life. It is sad. It strengthens us" (Student Artifact). Rosa felt comfortable to write her personal feelings. The data had Rosa questioning the constant teaching of World War II and the persecution of the Jewish people (Student Artifact and Fieldnotes). She questioned why the American schools only talk about the Anti-Semitism and not the persecution of the Chaldean Christians currently going on in the Middle East (Fieldnotes). Many of the assignments and discussions within the content literacy course are geared towards breaking down stereotypes and questioning the dominant ideologies. Rosa's data showed her ability to connect learning in class to her lived experiences of religious persecution.

I was interested in Rosa's knowledge of the Islamic religious text known as the Quran. Her knowledge broke down barriers of religious persecution, even though her family was forced from their village in Iraq. While interviewing about how she was treated in a school that was predominantly Muslim, she spoke of not being different in the same country. Rosa explained that

Iraqis look the same and were taught the same language and courses. Her comments, “We have to help each other. We are all Arabic or Chaldean. We have same country and same name of the country” (Student Interview). She continued to express that her Catholic book (Catholic Bible) was not different than the Islamic book (Quran) (Student Interview). Her comments were, “Their book don’t say [to] kill the Christian or others. They have to read their book and understand it first. They say we have to kill people” (Student Interview). Rosa felt comfortable discussing the oppression she received in Iraq and questioning why humans can’t respect one another. The data, therefore, was labeled *breaking down stereotypes to build a community of learners*.

While other questions were answered in short or simple responses, when discussing her home country and Isis’ influence, she talked for minutes explaining life in Iraq (Student Interview). Additionally, Rosa wrote about the new life in America in comparison to the life she left in Iraq.

We are capturing the affairs of my family in the language, and we thank God that we are in a country where safety and law prevail, and there is no distinction between people in terms of social, national, and resonance, and work is available in all fields and freedom. (Memoir)

As an EL teacher, these pieces of data would be critical and important to develop CRP and critical literacy instruction where Rosa would be able to express her emotions. There is a possibility of emancipatory dialogue and critical reflection amongst the students. I needed to create a classroom where all students celebrated their cultures and could express their beliefs in the EL class. As Rosa stated, she identifies as a Chaldean Christian and sitting next to a Muslim has moments of tension that I need to mediate. I promote the notion that we are always learning

and need to develop a level of respect and understanding for others. Until we developed a cultural competence amongst the learners, I would not pair Chaldeans and Muslim students, even though they both speak Arabic.

In conclusion, I reflected on theme three *culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy as a means of authentic learning* through data analysis of my ethnically diverse EL classroom. The CRP final codes that came from the data were cultural differences as assets (CRP: cultural competence), developing a community of multicultural learners (CRP: sociopolitical or critical consciousness), and developing English proficiency (CRP: academic success). Therefore, data collection of CRP and critical literacy instruction guided reading resources that students could read independently and connect to other ELs. If I was teaching content on segregation, I would use various Lexile levels for all students to understand the story (Fieldnotes). Therefore, understanding the whole student, beyond standardized assessments, gave me an opportunity to provide thought provoking literature relevant for ELs.

Conclusion and Discussion

The most significant disconnect from the data analysis and my reflection as an educational practitioner was the reality that I had fallen under the spell of the standardized data and strict pacing guides, even after completing my degree in education and receiving certification in K-12 English as Second Language endorsement. While ELs have a knowledge base that is globally expansive and linguistically diverse, I never realized how the educational system had compartmentalized these children without scaffolding their knowledge into mainstream classes and pedagogy. Rosa's determination to continue learning was evident in her ability to overcome her frustration with the language barrier by never giving up.

Therefore, during this participatory research project I evaluated data of Rosa's life beyond the borders of the classroom into the community and families she mediates. Rosa developed rich language and cognitive knowledge, beneficial in the academic setting but not utilized. A hurdle I had to overcome was reaching out and crossing borders, as I need to gain an understanding of Rosa's and evaluate their language and literacy practices. Gaining trust and acceptance was crucial for this practitioner research, through collaborative means of Rosa and me. I utilized recursive reflective methods throughout the entire project to member check with Rosa that I was accurate in my writing. Chapter five discusses the importance of the three themes in relation to ELs' funds of knowledge, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical literacy praxis in the EL classroom.

A Vignette

While helping a student translate their report card from their home country, the EL was struggling with remembering how to read Arabic. I started probing with questions around what I knew about the composition of a report card in any country or language. I started asking what parts of the report card grades and year in school was, because numbers are easy to remember. So, the student started writing down all of the items that contained numbers. The similarity revolved around their grades being classified as first, second, etc. and their grades were percentages ranging from 1-100. Both of these attributes are the same for the American report card. Next, I asked what courses they took when they were young, and I connected my funds of knowledge as a first-grade teacher for four years. I asked if they had reading, writing, math, history, gym, art, etc. A lightbulb came on in their head and they connected their classes with the ones I was listing. The student translated courses from Arabic to English for math, gym, art,

science, and history. Finally, I stated we need to know what language courses or additional courses you took in your home country. The student had to think back and remember their classroom experiences for this portion. The final pieces to be translated were Arabic, Chaldean, English, social behavior, and religion. I was so excited to connect their funds of knowledge to their current learning in high school in America. The feeling of empowerment was overwhelming for the both of us and we chuckled. I reminded the student that distance and locations do not change the fundamentals of learning. All school systems have the same basic structure, but we need to help American teachers understand that your first learning is still important here in class every day.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative practitioner research was to identify ELs' funds of knowledge beneficial for academic learning and evaluate my use of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction in the EL classroom to decrease the deficit narrative ELs face in America. Focusing on the case study of a Middle Eastern refugee, Rosa, I identified the funds of knowledge and assets she could utilize for academic achievement in order to gain a high school diploma. In this chapter I discuss my interpretations of three major themes, the connections of this study to my semester-two curriculum, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and conclusion.

The research questions that I sought to answer as a practitioner-researcher were:

- What funds of knowledge do students bring to class that are beneficial for academic success?
- How do I incorporate students' funds of knowledge into my curriculum and teaching praxis?

The three themes that evolved from thematic data analysis were: (1) understanding the whole child within and beyond the borders of the classroom, (2) funds of knowledge for academic learning, and (3) culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction as a means of promoting authentic learning. Themes one and two were related to learning in the American educational high school setting, where identification and utilization of ELs' funds of knowledge could be a means of understanding the whole child and possibly reducing academic disparities. The third theme was related to evaluation of my use of culturally relevant pedagogy

and critical literacy in the EL classroom in terms of promoting academic rigor, cultural competence, and sociopolitical or critical consciousness. Throughout the semester, there were opportunities for Rosa and I to discuss her perceptions of lessons, reflect on what she learned, and create additional authentic learning opportunities in the EL classroom.

Interpretation of Findings

The three themes of this practitioner research offer lenses through which to understand the whole EL student, identify possible benefits of students' funds of knowledge to their academic learning, and develop authentic culturally relevant pedagogy for ELs in order to increase their academic achievement and decrease the deficit narrative often attributed to them.

Understanding the Whole Child Within and Beyond the Borders of the Classroom

Understanding the whole child requires going beyond standardized testing scores and academic reporting in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of ELs' lived experiences, funds of knowledge, cultures, families, identities, religious practices, and any other information that might be relevant for their learning in school. Through an in-depth case study of Rosa, I gained an understanding of her life in Iraq and cultural identity, categorized as *generations of culture and traditions*; forced migration to Lebanon for safety, categorized as *adaptation during migration*; and immigration with her family to the United States to build a new life, categorized as *life is transient*. From 2014-18, 23 % of U.S. parents of children ages 0 to 4 and 25 % of parents of children ages 5-10 were immigrants to the US (Hofstetter & McHugh, 2021). To grasp a better understanding of the growing population of ELs within and beyond the classroom, teachers need to become ethnographers and gain relevant knowledge of modeling and scaffolding to support ELs' (Rodriguez, 2013). To close the achievement gaps of

underperforming ELs, educators need a depth of knowledge about and understanding of them in order to modify instructional practices to be relevant to their learning.

With up to 25 percent of the student population in American schools having immigrant parents, the Michigan Department of Education expands the vision of our founding fathers by striving to provide an equal education for all students (O'Brien & Woodrum, 2004). The resources used in Michigan's K-12 schools begins with the home language survey which identifies languages other than English spoken at home. The WIDA W-Apt screener is given to newcomers to test their English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The WIDA W-Apt screener is used for placement in English classes, but it did not give me enough information to adequately teach Rosa. While testing for English proficiency functions as a way to identify struggling students who need remedial instruction (Wiley & Wright, 2004; Ovando, 2003), it often serves to marginalize ELs while failing to adequately support their learning. Therefore, I sought to understand Rosa and other ELs beyond just their English language proficiency in order to create lessons relevant and interesting to this culturally diverse population. For this purpose, I created the Student Interest Survey and Multicultural Parent Survey shown in Appendix B. The data from these instruments provided a depth of understanding of students' previous schooling, possible interrupted learning for refugees, parents' expectations for their education, parents' own schooling, differences between home and school cultural norms, and ELs' funds of knowledge. My goal in this study was to collect as much information as possible about my students and particularly Rosa to increase my depth of knowledge relevant to appropriate instructional planning for them.

The data helped me understand Rosa's culture, traditions, and previous learning (*generations of culture and traditions*). It was important for me to understand her lived

experiences with family, community, and school. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory situated language and cognitive development within the cultural-historical context of the learner's daily life. Rosa was able to explain her cultural and religious traditions, oppression of Christians in a fundamentalist Muslim society, lived terrorism experiences, loss of safety in her home country, and the constancy of fear. These life lessons show that learning does not happen only within the academic setting. I needed to identify the areas of culture, traditions, and lived experiences relevant for scaffolding new knowledge in the classroom.

Rosa's *adaptation during migration* was evident when she negotiated the requirements of the curriculum without ever mentioning that she had missed years of school and had taken remedial courses in Lebanon. Her interrupted learning in Lebanon was also not noted on her high school enrollment paperwork. She was placed in high school math having completed only seventh grade math in Iraq and then remedial fourth through seventh grade math in Lebanon. Had this gap been identified, there would have been additional supports in place, but she was left to deal with it on her own. Also, in my course, Rosa gave explicit details of her educational experiences and how schools were structured in Iraq and Lebanon, which would have been important for her other teachers to know. Nevertheless, throughout her transitions, Rosa continuously challenged herself to do well in school to please her parents, who stated they wanted to support her as much as possible in order to have her graduate. Moreover, Rosa developed a Chaldean identity but adapted to various societies and schools in Iraq, Lebanon, in the course of which she learned to speak Chaldean, Arabic, English, and French. The final leg of her K-12 academic journey ended in America, where she earned a high school diploma. Data related to her constant references to adapting and working hard in order to continue to learn were

classified under *life is transient*. Rosa was able to connect her migration story to the class readings such those about refugees from India.

To please her family, Rosa showed her persistence and eagerness to learn, even though she shed many tears of frustration. Her smile and positive behavior were visible daily, which hid her lack of understanding and continuous struggles while adapting to life and schooling in the United States. Her ability to work towards success despite obstacles indicated that remedial work would be not appropriate for Rosa, but rather she should be provided with mediated materials at a level that challenged her (Wertsch, 1994; Zuengler & Miller, 2006).

The goal of K-12 education is to produce well-educated students who are ready for life and the workforce or higher education after high school (Bush, 1989). For this goal to be realized for all students, the reality is that pedagogy needs to adjust to the increasingly diverse populations in U.S. schools (Gay, 2018) and support learning beyond conventional academic literacy proficiency begins with whole language approaches (Harmon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Funds of Knowledge for Academic Learning

The cultural deficit paradigm concerning ELs flourished because the plethora of resources in ELs' funds of knowledge relevant to classroom for learning were not explored. Rosa's funds of knowledge stemmed from her family and the various societies in which the family had lived in throughout their migration. Theme two, funds of knowledge for academic learning, evolved from the final three codes of *knowledge needed in academic courses to obtain a high school diploma*, *knowledge needed for elective and life relevant courses*, and *knowledge needed to "do school."* Data revealed Rosa's funds of knowledge that were correlated with academic instruction in her Michigan high school as an EL student. Relles (2017) explains that a

fundamental premise of the funds of knowledge framework is that achievement disparities aren't a deficit of "student of high school knowledge, but rather a deficit of institutional appreciation for knowledge diversity" (p. 284).

The data category labeled *knowledge needed in core academic courses* was aligned with the MI Merit Curriculum and high school requirements for graduation pertaining to the required eighteen core subject area credits. Except for the sheltered EL English courses that fulfilled literacy requirements, these subject areas are not modified for ELs regardless of whether their previous schooling had been interrupted as was often the case for refugees. Therefore, identifying Rosa's funds of knowledge relevant for high school and post-secondary education was important. Sociocultural theories emphasize that learning is socially developed and scaffolding new knowledge through interactions is important (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, et al, 1992). Also, learning occurs not only in school through the reception of teachers' instruction but rather is mediated and interconnected by experiences and relationships with peers, family, and society in school, home, and work (Bruning et al., 2011; Shabani et al., 2010; Street, 2012; Wertsch, 1994). Therefore, the Funds of Knowledge Inventory Matrix (Chapter 2) included the alignment of Rosa's funds of knowledge with the content of her academic courses (González, et al., 2005) as shown in Table 5 in Chapter 3 on . Much of Rosa's funds of knowledge was relevant to social studies courses, such as world history and geography, U.S. government and citizenship and civics standards, and economics. Additionally, her farm life in Iraq provided funds of knowledge relevant to science instruction. Lastly, Rosa was awarded two required second language credits for providing her report cards in Iraq, where she had formal instruction of Arabic for two years. These funds of knowledge acquired in schools in Iraq and Lebanon

along with those derived from her lived experiences and home language were directly connected to learning in core content courses.

In addition to the MDE MI Merit curriculum, four elective courses were required for high school graduation. Data connected to these elective courses were categorized into the final theme, *knowledge needed for elective and life relevant courses*. The EL literacy courses, which I taught, were considered elective courses that could be applied to graduation requirements. ELs who had limited English proficiency were required to take EL content literacy until they passed the WIDA Access Spring Assessment and could show capabilities of passing courses without EL support. Additionally, counselors encouraged students to take courses that interested them. Rosa took marketing, in which she utilized her knowledge of making and marketing rosaries as a home industry operated by her family to raise funds for Iraqi refugees in Lebanon. Rosa also took food and nutrition, where she could scaffold her knowledge of cooking at home to learn cooking a different cuisine in school. Elective courses tend to be a gateway for students to build and explore new knowledge, as students have the opportunities to choose the courses that interest them.

The final code categorization was based on Rosa's daily interactions with staff, teachers, and counselors, labeled *knowledge needed to "do school."* Research indicates that ELs who struggle in school due to their inability to express their knowledge and questions in the native language routinely isolate themselves (Street, 2005b). When co-teaching content courses I have observed that many ELs do not speak a word in their classes. The EL English and EL content literacy courses were composed ELs with similar English proficiency, not grade level. Therefore, Rosa, who had interrupted learning and from the fifth to eighth grade in Lebanon was not in classes with students her age, at first relied on students who spoke Arabic or Chaldean to ask for

assistance for help with her content courses in my EL literacy course. Also, technology was a resource that Rose utilized to translate, learn English with the high school's prescription-based instruction, and submit assignments through its online learning management system. Rosa friended ELs who spoke her native languages of Arabic and Chaldean and utilized technological programs which translated automatically for comprehension of assignments and as a support for writing. Her skills using these resources aided Rosa in her studies.

After Rosa's funds of knowledge were identified, the next steps were to bridge what she knew to what was taught in school. The transitional support Rosa received in my EL content literacy class provided a means for her to achieve a high school diploma, even though she did not score proficient on the WIDA Access assessment prior to graduating.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Literacy Instruction as a Means of Authentic Learning

While the nation's educational goals in the 20th Century were to prepare students for the workforce and to have a workforce that could compete in the global economy, the assessment data focused on students' academic failures while the curriculum did not incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction to close achievement (Bush 1989; Harmon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). The three final categories of theme three, which relate to EL academic achievement, are *development of English language ability to become full members of society, validating cultural difference as assets, and breaking down stereotypes to develop a community of learners*. These final categories aligned with the three key components of culturally relevant pedagogy, which are academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical and critical consciousness of social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Research suggest CRP for ELs and marginalized minority populations in lieu of the "one-size-

fits-all” CCSS and standardized academic accountability measures for adequate support (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

As English is the dominant language of the United States, ELs’ *development of English language ability to become full members of society* has the potential to break down the deficit narratives in schools and provide communication skills for daily life. Standardized testing identifies gaps in knowledge but does not follow up with pedagogical interventions to scaffold needed learning. Therefore, although ELs may have never been instructed in the content on which they are assessed, they are placed in remedial courses. Rosa was adamant that she needed to learn English because she knew it was a gatekeeper to academic success and jobs in the U.S. as well as because her parents wanted her to graduate from high school, which she would do if she passed all her classes regardless of whether she was proficient enough in English to understand the content. There was no scaffolding or language interventions in the content courses. Rosa had to continuously use technology resources to translate and seek assistance, which she reported finding emotionally exhausting, causing her to often end her day crying. Even though she had missed three years of school in Lebanon, Rosa did not qualify for additional support other than the sheltered EL English and EL content literacy. That is, the district did not provide support except for limited English proficiency, which was not integrated into other courses, so Rosa took Algebra I and II, Geometry, Chemistry, Physical Science, Biology, U.S. History, World History, U. S. Government, and Economics on her own. This negligence of her legitimate needs indicates an educational culture that does not seek to understand the appropriate circumstances of multilingual ELs and provide appropriate support.

Given the increasing diversity of the U.S. student population, the K-12 curriculum should shift towards *validating cultural differences as assets* (Gay, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994;

McFarland et al., 2019). Many of Rosa's experiences and much of her identity stem from her culture and traditions, which could be beneficial for learning. In lieu of being viewed mainly as irrelevant to the curriculum, the cultural assets that Rosa possessed should have been considered relevant as scaffolding for new material, providing a means for Rosa to participate in class discussions, and complete assignments. One way to use culture as asset for learning would be to provide assignments that were not scripted in a district pacing guide (Campano, 2007). In the EL content literacy course, Rosa's cultural assets were revealed in the various writing assignments she completed. Familial stories provided a framework for Rosa to build her English language skills by writing about what she knew, including her culture, heritage, and traditions, which she could reference in social studies courses. Through writing assignments in the EL English and EL content literacy courses, she grew in academic English, as shown in her performance on the annual WIDA Access exam. Thus, Rosa's cultural assets provided a means for authentic learning and provided English language gains.

The final category for theme three was *breaking down stereotypes to develop a community of learners* through the development of critical consciousness. The EL content literacy student population comprised a diverse set of learners, who created a community of learners through shared personal beliefs and experiences in life. There were long-term ELs, who were born in the United States but had never gained English proficiency on the WIDA Access annual test; refugees, the majority of whom, like Rosa, had migrated from war-torn countries in the Middle East, often having had their learning interrupted in the process; documented and undocumented immigrants from countries south of the United States who might also have had interrupted learning due to unsafe environments; and immigrants whose parents were in Michigan for the automotive industry or who had university visas and were bilingual, often

holding university degrees. Finally, there were immigrants from all over the world who had migrated through the traditional process of sponsorship. Thus, I create EL content literacy curriculum based on understanding the whole student and developing a community of diverse learners. I consider the various cultures and immigration experiences of each group to scaffold their personal life stories and relevant current events to content to be learned. For example, as war in the Middle East was ongoing, Rosa was able to learn English reading, writing, speaking, and listening, while connecting to material she knew from lived experiences.

Rosa's data provided a lens into her critical consciousness in the EL classroom. She was able to connect the treatment of Christians in the Middle East to the freedom to practice religion in the United States. When discussing historical content in a reading passage, she questioned the continuous focus on World War II and Hitler while there were many wars that never were discussed in any of her classes. These instances led me to question who creates the curriculum, what gets left out of the historical context, why some voices are silenced when our country is founded on immigration, and how students could contribute to instruction that was relevant to them. Such reflection on my teaching praxis and the current curriculum mandated for graduation was the basis of my culturally responsive teaching (Campano, 2007; Gay, 2018). It is through the questioning of the dominant ideologies by both teacher and students that the classroom evolves into a community of learners (Campano, 2007). While the WIDA ELD standards and CCSSs provide a framework for such critical analysis, the high school has a scripted district pacing guide with required readings and assignments for all subject areas and grade levels. In order to foster critical consciousness in themselves as well as their students, teachers would need to incorporate diverse cultures into the pacing guides, as I had. As a result, Rosa displayed her critical consciousness as we created a community within the EL content literacy classroom. This

inquiry and additional curriculum work on the part of the teacher is also possible in content courses.

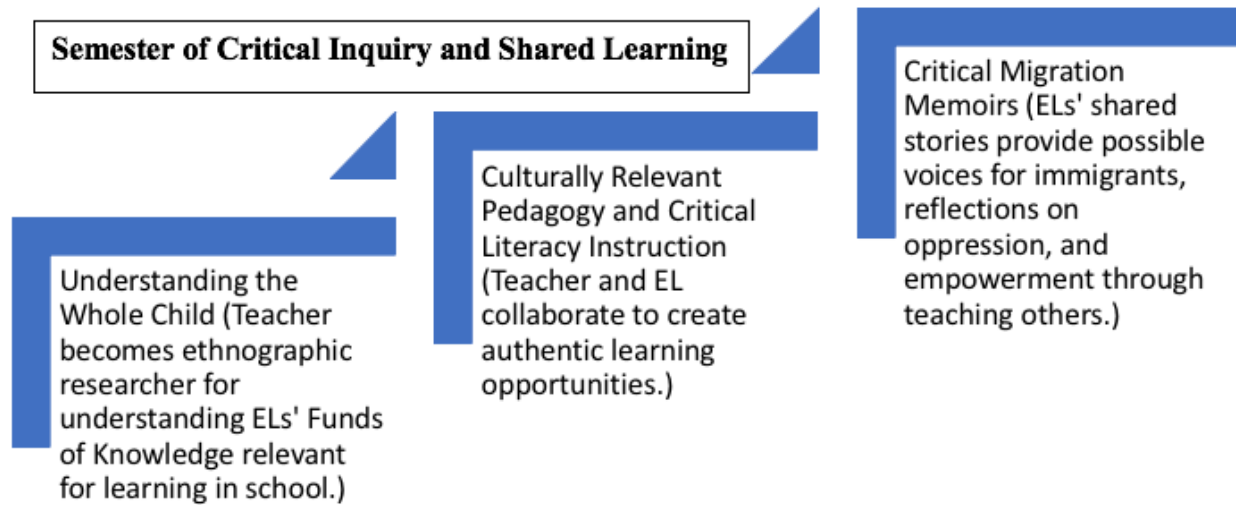
Again, the data validate the need for culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction to foster ELs' language development, utilize the assets of different cultures, and break down stereotypes. Next, I discuss the implications for practical application of these constructs to a semester-long curriculum unit in EL content literacy.

Implications for Practice

President Lyndon Johnson passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, which is the foundation of today's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). National goals of these key educational policies directly related to ELs are supported by Title I grants for programs to provide a fair, equitable and high-quality education for all students, Title II grants for training high-quality teachers, administrators, and staff, and Title III grants for high-quality language education for ELs and immigrant students (International Literacy Association, 2016). As a Title III EL teacher I designed the following curriculum as a semester long unit for the EL content literacy class utilizing culturally relevant praxis and critical literacy, by which I aimed to close ELs' achievement gaps and deflect the deficit narrative that looms over them in school. I became a learner along with the students through culturally reflexive actions involving keeping fieldnotes and journaling (Gonzalez, et al., 2005). As shown in Figure 4, A Semester of Critical Inquiry and Shared Learning, I began with understanding the whole student through various modes, created culturally relevant and critical literacy lessons with the ELs' collaboration, and used the summative critical migration memoir as a means of promoting sociopolitical consciousness and educating others about the challenges immigrants and refugees face.

Figure 5

Semester of Critical Inquiry and Shared Learning



Understanding the Whole Child Inquiry

At the start of each school year, I become an ethnographer, collecting as much data as I could to understand the whole student. The data begin with primary information about students, including their enrollment paperwork, WIDA W-Apt Screener results, writing samples, Lexile reading testing scores, speaking and listening evaluations, and informal conversations to gain a depth of knowledge about each EL. The enrollment paperwork includes information about the student's place of birth, immigration year of entry, first date entered in USA schools, primary language, and primary language spoken at home. With this information as a foundation, I begin the long process of understanding the whole child, which is takes the first few weeks of school. The first step is to assess English language proficiency through the WIDA W-apt Screener. If the student qualifies for EL services due to low a English proficiency score, I place the student in EL English and EL content literacy courses. Rosa was placed into EL English 1 and EL Content

Literacy 1. Next, I start an inquiry to learn the student's previous academic learning, coursework, grades, attendance, etc. by reviewing previous report cards. There is nothing in any of the registration documents to suggest refugee status or interrupted learning, so it is my responsibility to uncover these items through my own inquiry methods. Rosa did not have her report cards from Lebanon, which indicated that her learning may have been interrupted. Regardless of their English language abilities, all ELs are placed into courses which are aligned with the MDE Merit Curriculum and high school requirements for graduation. Unfortunately, the reality is that students' lack of comprehension and language ability are discovered through failing grades in content courses. There are no content course interventions or language support in the content courses. I continue the process of determining the ELs' written abilities through writing prompts that connect to them personally. These personal narrative writings give me access to the funds of knowledge that ELs may have for completing the assignments in my EL content literacy course. Next, I continue data collection through a Lexile reading measure test and fieldnotes on speaking and listening. These informal assessments provide a plethora of knowledge to use in lesson planning appropriate for ELs in my course. It is the content teacher's responsibility to evaluate each student's comprehension of the content they are teaching and to scaffold instruction. With an average case load of around 120 students, it is highly unlikely that the content teacher will make modifications for or provide support for individual students in their courses. The hope is that the content teacher will reach out to me if an EL is struggling, as there is a world icon in our school grading that labels them as an EL student.

I now have a basic set of data on each student's standard English proficiency compared that of to his/her peers, but that does not provide the depth of knowledge I require to personalize curriculum for the diverse EL population. Next, I administer surveys, as shown in Appendix B,

which directly relate to the students' interests and the parents' input on culture and academic expectations. Through these I begin to acquire important personal details about the ELs' culture relevant for teaching and learning.

At this point, my suggestion for inquiry of this depth would be to share the funds of knowledge data that I have acquired with content teachers through a one-page handout. Also, I would like to include students' future career goals and their parents' backgrounds to inform other teachers of the ELs' aspirations for the future, which could be connected to learning in school, and the level of parental support at home. I would also like to place these data in each EL's academic folder, known as a CA60, which travels with them until they graduate. My hope would be for the content teacher to voluntarily utilize the data.

Based on my in-depth knowledge about each student and the community of learners in our classroom, I have the data that I need for incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy in my teaching in hopes of scaffolding students' content instruction, bridging their previous to current their learning, helping students develop English language proficiency, and creating opportunities for critical dialogue.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Literacy Instruction

I utilize Common Core State Standards (CCSSs) for English, math, and social studies at the secondary level to inform my instruction. Also, I reference the WIDA English language development (ELD) standards for language acquisition. The teaching materials I use are primarily nonfiction, such as primary documents, world historical events, current events, and content taught in the students' core classes. If a novel is used, we focus on its nonfiction components and expand on them through project-based learning. Because I create my curriculum, I chose to assess my students with summative projects in which they demonstrate

their proficiency in the four domains of English, such as reading through doing research, writing through composing text for a project they will present, speaking through giving the presentation in class, and listening through taking notes on and responding to what they hear from their peers' presentations. The cultural and critical components come from my research into events that directly relate to the ELs in a class. As we have built a community of respect and understanding, I consider it imperative to give voice to the often-marginalized ELs in my classroom. Many times, I may give suggestions on the upcoming units and then they decide as individuals or as a whole class the topic to investigate.

During the last semester of the study, we were together partially in class and partially online due to Covid-19. Each week the ELs completed assignments pertaining to journaling, reading, discussing (oral and written), writing, and a life skill they performed at home (Appendix D). We met every day, whether online or in-person, to check in and go through the assignments. Rosa was able to use technology to interact during online learning. She connected her lived experiences including those related to being a refugee to each of the critical topics we addressed in class, identified with the stories of other refugees in the literature, scaffolded her previous content instruction to her current content learning, and revealed resources common to immigrants that I had never known of. As the student population changes each year, so do my lesson plans. Therefore, the standards and students together drive my instruction, in which with the summative critical migration project, which students complete in the last quarter of the year, is the most important part. Through this project, the ELs and I learn about each other and ourselves as they build English language and critical dialogue skills, and together we learn to appreciate various cultural and religious traditions that connect us for years to come.

Critical Migration Memoir Project

In the last quarter of the school year, we read autobiographies and memoirs relevant to experiences of migration. The students practice narrative writing, which we have focused on since the beginning of the school year. First, we evaluate each author's craft, including the structure of the memoir, chapters, point of view, word choice, typographical features such as boldface and italics, and ways in which the writer engages the reader. Next, we talk extensively about the plot, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. When discussing the readings, ELs connect with the main characters and their stories. The critical migration memoir project is organized in three phases, pre-migration, migration, and post-migration. Under pre-migration EL discuss life in their home countries, such as holidays, food, traditions, celebrations, schooling, housing, and family. Under migration they focus on steps their parents needed to complete the bureaucratic requirements and make the journey to come to the U.S. Post-migration is the last section of their writing, in which they discuss their new life. The key to writing their memoir is deciding on a theme that resonates throughout the entire essay. In the course of completing this project, students have discussed religious persecution, segregation, injustice, and corrupt governments. At the end of the semester, they share their memoir narratives with the class as their final exam. Also, the students create a video using their photos or Creative Commons free photos to tell their stories visually based on their writing. Critical migration memoirs are thus a way for ELs to share their migration stories, culture globally lived experiences and future dreams in America. In sum, this project highlights the outcomes of using culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy instruction to promote authentic learning, as seen in Appendix C.

Rosa's critical migration memoir, in its entirety, showed me the multiple fluent identities that she has developed and will continue to develop, and I would like to pursue more research to uncover her funds of knowledge and further develop my culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy curriculum. The central message in her memoir was that no matter what we go through, we should never forget the past and always work hard to create a new future. I ponder the possibility of working with her on extending and refining her critical migration memoir as she continues to develop her English proficiency and overcomes the language barrier to her full expression of her story.

The hopes that I had for creating the semester-long culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy unit stemmed from my years of teaching at the same high school where the students created a senior project in their senior English course. My curriculum also developed from my years in the Indiana University's Literacy, Culture, and Language Education Program, where I learned how to give voice to the marginalized ELs. My role as the EL teacher in my district has evolved into the position of system wide secondary EL curriculum department chair and high school improvement chair in my building. I believe my primary role is to advocate for the ELs by stressing their access to an equitable education through my words and actions.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In this section, I will address the limitations I encountered with this case study. After, I will discuss areas of future research that may provide additional insight for teaching ELs. Identifying the limitations and future research sparks a fire within me to continue uncovering ways to create CRP and critical literacy instruction relevant for ELs.

Limitations

Limitations I experienced in this case study research were deciding to conduct a single or multiple case studies and establish a rationale for the selecting the case. First, I evaluated Creswell and Poth's (2016) resource limitations, case selection, and cross-case analysis when two Middle Eastern refugees had agreed to participate in my research. To begin, case study selection is limited as there are only a handful of refugee immigrants graduating each year that still require my EL content literacy course. I reached out to both Middle Eastern refugee seniors who would be graduating and creating the critical migration memoir. Beginning data collection came from both students, but the second student did not continue participation after she graduated. I tried to contact her several times, but she had not responded. In the beginning, cross-case study analysis of the two participants identified similarities for coding and developing a generalization of themes. When the second participant was unreachable, I chose to complete a single case study inquiry. Establishing a rationale was challenging for me as I had to narrow down my case study participants who were seniors and provide justification. Of the five seniors who created the critical migration memoir, there were two female and one male Middle Eastern refugees, one male immigrant from India, and one male immigrant from Albania. Of the five who were asked to participate, only the two female Middle Eastern refugees agreed to participate. Therefore, I developed a case study with one participant where I concentrated on collecting enough data for analysis to provide themes relevant to develop CRP and critical literacy to decrease academic disparities for ELs.

Future Research

One area of future research I hope to accomplish is to visit the ELs' homes and interview the family members to gain a better understanding of their funds of knowledge. While I have visited the homes of the students and shared family meals in the past, my hope is to video and take field notes on free-flowing conversations with questions on such topics as migration, language, and culture, both locally and globally.

Creating a single case study has its limits, but I believe that there is much more to uncover when educators can understand the whole student within and beyond the classroom. So, my work is not finished rather just beginning.

Conclusion

This practitioner research helped me gain a better understanding of my practice as an EL teacher in a Michigan high school as I learned about my ELs' funds of knowledge and incorporated them into my curriculum and teaching praxis. I feel that there is much more to explore, and my passion for developing CRP and critical literacy is now even stronger than when I began this study. Therefore, it will generate many more proposals for improvements in our educational system that I plan to explore in future projects. One area that calls for more exploration is professional development for content teachers concerning language and literacy development in the content classroom, such as incorporating English language development standards along with content standards. Additionally, research is needed to find ways of redefining academic evaluation measures beyond standardized testing for post-secondary achievement levels, so they are more aligned with the needs of society. An entire community is needed to create lifelong learners, and I am eager to research ways to build the community

within and beyond the borders of my classroom. I consider my dissertation as just the beginning of my research and writing to advocate for ELs.

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Appendix A – IRB Approval

PROTOCOLS



Koehler, Michelle

#11606 - Breaking through "Borders": Reconceptualizing Language and Literacy Pedagogy for English Learners

Protocol Information

Review Type Exempt	Status Exempt	Approval Date Jun 08, 2021	Continuing Review Date Jun 08, 2022
Expiration Date --	Initial Approval Date Jun 08, 2021	Initial Review Type Exempt	

Feedback

Approval Comment

This research is exempt under the following categories: - Category 1 - Category 2(i)

Appendix B – Student Interview Questions

Student Interview Protocol

Topic Domain One: Migratory Experience

Lead-off question:

“As you wrote about how you and your family migrated to America, could you retell me the story of your experience, as you can remember it? Describe as much as you can for me so that I can picture your life as if it were a movie.”

Covert Categories: Student’s perception/definition of their home country: demographics, culture, religion, food, school, etc. Student’s experience of traveling and getting the proper papers to come to America: feelings of leaving their life in the home country; family in America that they are going to reconnecting with; reasons for leaving their country. Student’s experiences in America: new culture, new school, new life, compare/contrast to home country, struggles with language.

Possible Follow-Up Questions:

“What was your family’s reasons for coming to America?”

“How do keep your traditions living in America?”

“What was it like learning English, struggles and strengths?”

“What were the positive things about your home country and what were the reasons you left?”

“What steps did your family have to take in order to bring your family to America?”

“Explain your first day in America.”

“Compare your first day in America to today, positives and negatives.”

Topic Domain Two: Social Justice

Lead-off question:

“Remember back to the lessons and journal writing about social justice issues, such as religious persecution, sexual discrimination, and the impact of war. Tell me about how you would define social justice, using examples in your life, media, or in class.”

Covert Categories: Student’s perception of persecution in their home country: religious, educational, sexual. Treatment in America being from the Middle East. Treatment in America not speaking English and being called a foreigner.

Possible Follow-Up Questions:

“Explain to me how this issue has affected you throughout your life. “

“How do you feel when someone is treated different because of their skin color, language, sex, or religion?”

“What do you do when you are treated unfairly?”

“Where can you do to help others who are treated unfairly?”

“How can we teach others to treat others with respect?”

“How can you teach others about social justice issues?”

“What social justice issue do you feel is personally important to you?”

“Think of times where you were treated unfairly, person/people who were responsible, and why?”

Topic Domain Three: Cosmopolitan and Global Citizenship

Lead-off question:

“A citizen of the world, or cosmopolitan, is someone who values the equality of all people regardless of where they’re born (Burke, 2014). How do you explain your identity, as a global citizen, through your life experiences and the need to connect to people around the world to make the world a better place to live?”

Covert Categories: Cultural identity, freedom of religion, human rights, equal rights, equal education, equal pay, respect, cultural empowerment, service, connection to others.

Possible Follow-Up Questions:

“How do you view yourself, create your identity, for everyone who sees you?”

“How can you empower others who are treated unfairly?”

“How can you connect to others, through technology, to learn about them?”

“How can you teach others, around the globe, about what it means to be _____?”

“Why is it important to respect others and connect to them?”

“What ways are you able to help others who are less fortunate than you?”

Appendix C – Understanding the Whole Student Resources

Student Interest Survey

Student Interest Survey

Name: What is your full name? Does your name have meaning? Were you named after anyone special?

Home Country: Where were you born/where is your family from? What country do you identify with? You must explain mom and dad

Immediate Family: How many people are in your family (names & ages). Where are you in the family line?

Culture & Religion: What are your cultural practices? What holidays do you celebrate? What is your favorite holiday?

Do you have a religious preference? If yes, what is it? Where do you go to celebrate your faith? Do you have special items that relate to your religion? If yes, please explain.

Food: What is your favorite food? Why is it your favorite food? What is it made of?

Activities/Sports/Art: What do you like to do for fun? You must explain it entirely. Where you do it. Are you alone, with friends, a group, or strangers?

Education: Explain your learning in your home country, America, other countries. What were your grades, courses, teachers, uniforms, discipline, etc.

Learning: What type of learner are you? Explain why you think this.

- Visual (*see*), Auditory (*hear*), Reading & Writing, Kinesthetic (movement/doing)
- If you do not know, take this test: <https://www.how-to-study.com/learning-style-assessment/>

Reading: How much do you read each day? Do you like to read? What genres would you prefer to read (fiction: science fiction, historical fiction, novels, chapter books, love stories; nonfiction: science, history, geography, real life)? Do you like reading a book or a digital resource? What are your strengths in reading? What are your weaknesses?

Writing: Do you like to write? Do you journal? What do you like to write about? Do you prefer handwriting or typing on electronics? What are your strengths in writing? What are your weaknesses in writing?

Technology: Are you comfortable with technology other than your phone? How much are you on your phone each day (percentage)? What type of items do you look at (YouTube, Snap Chat, Insta, etc.)?

What do you use for learning (computer, phone, tablet)?

Dream Job: What is your dream job? What would you like to do for the rest of your life?

Goals: What are some personal short-term goals? (less than 1 year)

Multicultural Parent Survey

Parents Name: _____

Child (ren) name(s): _____

Dear Sponsor/Guardian,

As part of our efforts to improve the quality of our multi-cultural educational program we are collecting information from each family. Please take your time in filling out this survey and answering all the questions completely.

PARENTING

- Describe a typical family meal in your home (foods served, how served, etc.):
- What are your child's favorite activities?
- How do you discipline your child?
- Who does your child play with at home?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your child?

FAMILY CULTURE

- What is your ethnic background/culture?
- How do you identify yourself?
- How comfortable are you speaking and reading English?
- Is English the primary language in your home?
- What languages are spoken in your home? With extended family?
- What traditions objects or foods symbolize your family?
- What is your church affiliation or religious background?
- What values are important for your children to learn while here?
- Does your family celebrate holidays? If so which ones and how?
- Would you be willing to come and chare your families' ways of celebrating holidays with your child's class?

Thank you for your time and support. As always, we are striving to improve our program and your assistance is appreciated.

Appendix D – EL Content Literacy Semester 2 Lesson Plans

“Build the Wall” Critical Evaluation

Goal for the day:

- Read for comprehension (understanding) of the “Border Wall” controversy
- Create notes so that you can use them for a writing assignment next week
- Gain a sense of the participants in the “Border Wall:” President Trump, President Biden, Citizens (USA today), Mexican views (book)

Steps	Resource	Activity	Mrs. Koehler’s Purpose
1	Note-taking: A Research Roundup LINK	Read and understand notetaking: I want to see better notes for steps 2-7	Your notes need to be improved and this article gives the suggestions and reasoning for better notes
2	Prewrite: Personal knowledge and reflection about the “Border Wars” and the Wall separating the United States from Mexico	Write a half page reflection of what you know about the border war	Getting an understanding of your basic knowledge of immigration politics of US and Mexico
3	A Day Without Immigrants Book, Chapter 6 “The Raging Debate”	Read and take notes	Needed for summative project on the book
4	Watch these videos from Trump Trump pledges to build a wall Trump: We’re building a wall in Colorado Building Trump’s Wall	Watch and take notes. Whose views are in the videos??	Trump’s platform on the WALL
5	The Wall by USA Today	Read newspaper article and take notes	
6	Constitutional fight over Trump border wall begins	Read the US Constitution writing and take notes	Congress blocks the “Border Wall”
7	Proclamation on the Termination Of Emergency With Respect To The Southern Border Of The United States And Redirection Of Funds Diverted To Border Wall Construction	Read and take notes	Biden’s view on the Border Wall

Journal Prompts

Personal Connections to Inequalities or Times of Discrimination	
	Prompt: If you are like most people, you probably have had experiences in which you have been treated in a way you consider unfair. Write about a time when you feel you were treated unfairly.
	Prompt: Never judge a book by its cover, the old saying goes. It's not always so easy to be as open-minded in judging people. The clothes someone wears, the color of their skin, their sex, their age—all of these aspects of a person are like the cover of a book. If for some reason we don't like what we see when we first meet someone, it can be hard for us to see the real material inside. Write about a time when your first opinion about someone changed.
	Prompt: Communication involves expressing feelings and thoughts not only through what we say but also what we do. What are some different ways that people communicate without talking?
	Prompt: Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your race, your religion, the way you look, or just because you are "different"? Unfortunately, many of us have. Tell about a time you were treated unfairly. How did you react? How did it make you feel?
	Prompt: It is a common theme in literature that the worst of times brings out not only the worst but also the best in people. Individuals faced with overwhelming odds, unbearable pressure, and monstrous evil are capable of extraordinary acts of courage and kindness. Who do you think is truly courageous? Why?
Discussion: Ethnic Cleansing	
	Prompt: Define Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing. Personal reflection: How do you feel about it?, Why do you think this happened/is happening?, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.usmmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007043
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the following topics and write about them; factual evidence only; 1 topic sentence and 9 supporting details
	Prompt: Cambodia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-cambodian-genocide/ • http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/pol-pot.htm
	Prompt: Holocaust
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g_holocaust.html • http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/holocaust.htm
	Prompt: Rwanda
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide • https://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994
	Prompt: Kosovo
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.softschools.com/timelines/kosovo_genocide_timeline/329/ • http://www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide
Nativism	
	Nativism Tensions between newly arriving immigrants and native-born citizens sometimes gives rise to nativism — a school of thought that deems native-born Americans inherently superior and specific immigrant groups inferior, "unfit" for residence or citizenry in the United States.
	Contemporary Nativism More recently, nativism has arisen along the U.S.-Mexico border, where American vigilante groups are taking increasingly hostile actions to keep undocumented Mexican immigrants out of the country. These "nativist groups" don't limit their focus to undocumented workers, however, nor are they present only in border states.
	The nativist movement is fueled by a raging debate at all levels of government about what our national immigration policy should be, and the groups enjoy the support of sympathizers within mainstream media and the government. Further, in at least one instance in 2006, a federal agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), rounded up and detained Latinos in masse, regardless of their immigration status.

<i>Immigration and Racial Profiling</i>	
	Ten Myths About Immigration: http://www.tolerance.org/immigration-myths
	Pick 2-3 and connect them to you and your personal experience
	Latino Civil Rights Timeline, 1903-2006 http://www.tolerance.org/latino-civil-rights-timeline
	Summarize the timeline (1 topic sentence and 9 supporting details. Use your own words and DO NOT COPY).
	Arizona Legalizes Racial Profiling: http://www.tolerance.org/blog/arizona-legalizes-racial-profiling
	Define racial profiling
	Explain its impact on society, especially young children
	Do you think you are racially profiled due to how you look? (give specific examples)
	Living on the Border: A Wound that Will not Heal http://smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/bord/live.html
	Read about the conflict (literally and figuratively) at the U.S.-Mexico border
	How do you feel about these conflicts and why?
	How can you change things here in Michigan to accept the Chicano/Chicana population?
<i>Partner Sharing/Critical Dialogue</i>	
	Partner with someone and discuss the impact of government on the Latino/a population
	List 10 ways to change education to help students from other countries be successful (Your list must be different than another pair)
	Discussion: 1 topic sentence, citations, connections (T2T, T2S, T2W), 1 concluding sentence
	Summarize immigration: different types (refugees, documented and undocumented), different cultures, different languages, different education, etc.
	Summarize your writings on Women's Rights and Equality
	Summarize your writings on Ethnic Cleansing & Genocide
	Summarize your writings on Nativism and Contemporary Nativism: Latino-Americans
	Explain your view on education through the lens of social justice.

Identity Summative Project

Identity Project

Name: _____ Date: _____

Country (can add America): _____

Research of Art Identity Projects Around the World:

1. Adolescent Identity Development Article
 - Annotate
 - Questions pg. 6-7
 - Summary
2. DIA photos related to your country or connected to you in some way
 - Reflection Worksheet-Identity Organizer
3. Holocaust photos related to your country or connect to you in some way
4. Notes from class
5. Ireland & Turkey Worksheet
 - History summaries
 - Art project summaries
6. Personal Identity Worksheet
 - Definitions (self and dictionary)
 - Graphic organizer
 - Research of 3 historical art forms from your country

Name of Your Project: _____

- Trifold with pictures or drawings (must be color)
- Actual art project (multi-dimension): clay, canvas, structure, etc.

Written Reflection:

- Format: Typed, Times New Roman, Font 12 point, single spaced, 1/2-1 page long
- Content: Explain your identity project and how it relates to you

Critical Migration Memoir

Part I: Pre-Migration

- Life in-home Country
- Food
- Traditions
- Culture
- Clothing
- Temperature
- Housing
- Setting
- Family
- Home
- Religion
- Reasons to come to America

Part II: Migration

- What was the deciding factor that caused your family to move to America?
- Was it an event or events? Explain them in detail. They may have happened over many years.
- Who decided to move and around what date/year?
- What are the steps for immigration, migration, refugee status to coming to America from YOUR country?
- Who is your sponsor in America that helped you come to America?
- Explain the process and paperwork.
- Explain if there is a cost or if you had to pay someone “under the table.” (immigration lawyers, Mexican coyotes, people trying to make money on immigration)
- Explain if you went to other countries. How long were you there? What did you do there? What school or actions did you do there? Did you have to stay inside or were you able to get jobs and live freely?
- Coming to America: Explain the flight, cost, what you brought, what you left behind, who took you to the airport, feelings/emotions, people you encountered along the route to America, etc.
- Landing in America: Explain the immigration process. What was the greeting like (good and bad)?, Who did you meet (immigration officers)?, What were your feelings? Compare what you saw in America to your home country (setting, buildings, weather, etc.). Explain your emotions, feelings, anxiety, excitement, etc. Who greeted you here?

Did you have any family in America? Did you have to go to another city before Michigan?

- Explain your first few months in America. How were you treated? Language barriers, travel barriers, working barriers for your family, signing up for school the first time, who helped with the transitions, was there a company or an individual that helped you?

Part III: Post-Migration

- What was running through your mind (parents) when you moved to America? Feelings, emotion, etc.
- How have you changed as an individual and family? How you are a new person. Identity.
- What traditions and celebrations do you still hold from your culture, and what new American traditions have you started? Beliefs. Culture and how it is part of your life in America
- Education in America (structure, compare to your previous learning, tests, materials, teachers, books, etc.)
- Learning English
- Other people/children, you came in contact with: how did they treat you? Did they want to learn about your culture?
- How did you learn to “survive” in America? Watching, notes, videos, tv, etc.
- Religious practices. Accepted or rejected
- Support from other families.
- Silent time: first few months-2 years in America. Observing. Progression of life in America.

Curriculum Vitae

Michelle R. Robison-Koehler Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL & CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Michelle R. Robison-Koehler
Gender: Female
E-mail: michellekoehler@sbcglobal.net

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

<p><u>Doctorate of Education (December, 2021)</u></p> <p><i>Indiana University</i>, Bloomington, Indiana. <u>School of Education</u> <u>Department of Curriculum & Instruction</u></p> <p>Major: Literacy, Culture and Language Education Minor: Learning and Developmental Sciences</p>	<p><u>Continuing Education Course (2020)</u></p> <p><i>Viterbo University</i>, LaCrosse, Wisconsin</p> <p><u>Online Teaching Best Practices</u></p>
<p><u>National Writing Project Teacher Consultant (2018)</u></p> <p><i>Michigan State University</i>, E. Lansing, Michigan Red Cedar Writing Project Summer Institute</p>	<p>Continuing Education Courses (2015)</p> <p><i>UC San Diego Extension</i>, LaJolla, CA</p> <p>Secondary Reading Intervention Test Taking Strategies SDAIE Theory</p>
<p><u>Master of Arts (2006)</u></p> <p><i>University of Michigan</i>, Ann Arbor, Michigan</p> <p>Major: Integrated Science Minor: Language Arts</p> <p><u>License:</u> <u>State of Michigan Permanent Teaching Certificate (2006)</u> Elementary K-5 All Subj (K-8 Self CC) English as a Sec Lang (NS) K-12 Language Arts (BX) 6-8 Integrated Science (DI) 6-8</p>	<p><u>Bachelor of Science (1994)</u></p> <p><i>University of Michigan</i>, Ann Arbor, Michigan</p> <p>Major: Science Minor: Language Arts</p> <p>License: Registered Dental Hygienist with Anesthesiology</p>
<p><u>Associate in Arts (1991)</u></p> <p><i>Macomb Community College</i>, Warren, Michigan</p> <p>Major: Language Arts</p>	

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 09/12-Current *Utica Community Schools*, Sterling Heights, Michigan
Henry Ford II High School
Secondary EL teacher: Beginning, Intermediate & Advanced (self-contained EL classroom)
System-Wide Chair for Secondary ELA/EL, Utica Community Schools
Henry Ford II High School Improvement Team Member
Mentor Teacher for New EL Educator (multiple teachers and years)
- Development of EL curriculum at the secondary level
 - Co-taught US Government, Science, Social Studies, English
 - Naviance Curriculum, College and Career Readiness
 - Calm Classroom Instructor
- 09/20-Current *Viterbo University*, LaCrosse, WI
Adjunct Professor, Masters of Education Courses
- EDUC 610: Teaching, Learning, and Leadership in Online Environments
 - EDUC 622: New Information Literacies: The Truth Still Matters
 - EDUC 609: Culture and Language Acquisition
 - Curriculum development for educators, master level courses
- 09/11-5/13 *Chippewa Valley School District*, Clinton Township, Michigan
Adult EL teacher: beginner, intermediate, advanced
- Instituted new technology in the classroom: Updated Rosetta Stone (Version 3), CASAS Online Testing, Smart Slate, Smart Board, Smart Clickers
 - Worked in small and large group adult learners to achieve maximum learning in the English language (reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar), community and life skills, peer teaching, American traditions & holidays
 - Created an Advanced EL/Citizenship Curriculum
- 09/07-06/11 *St. Mary/McCormick Catholic Academy*, Port Huron, Michigan
First grade teacher
Through teaching first grade I was able to: 1) build rapport with staff, parents and most importantly students, 2) worked very hard at helping each student reach their short term goals while reaching for their long term aspirations, and 3) used a variety of methods, such as whole group instruction, small group lessons and individual tutoring, to help each student understand the materials covered.
- Integrated technology into all content areas of learning: United Streaming, Internet, Smart Board, ELMO Projectors, IMovie, Digital Cameras, Microsoft Expressions
 - Assessments: DiBels, Running Records, Words Their Way, Daily 5, Sight Words, MLPP, RTI, Read Naturally
 - Worked with bi-lingual students and their parents
 - Integrated small group literacy into every day lessons
 - Served on Formative Assessment Team
 - Served on Accreditation Team through Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools (MANS) Accreditation
- 09/06-06/07 *SUBSTITUTE TEACHER* – including special education, P.E., Music, Art
Marysville Public Schools (K-12) Armada Community Schools (K-12)
Yale Community Schools (K-12) Richmond Community Schools (K-12)
East China Community Schools (K-12)

Student Teaching Experience:

- 05/06-06/06 *Scarlett Middle School*, Ann Arbor, Michigan
English Learner (EL) Classroom
- Small group and large group instruction for multi-lingual children (6-8)

- Create lessons and assessments following the State of Michigan EL Curriculum Guidelines

01/06-04/06 *Miller Elementary School, Canton, Michigan*
Talented and Gifted (TAG) 5th Grade Classroom

- Created & implemented a science unit on matter and energy
- Taught Four-Block Model for the language arts program
- Taught Everyday Mathematics for the mathematics program
- Developed a science newsletter: Koehler's Kronicle
- Attended professional develop & staff meetings

08/05-12/05 *Academy of the Americas School, Detroit, Michigan*
Bi-lingual Emersion 4th Grade Classroom

- Taught Open Court for the language arts program
- Created and implemented Earth science lessons
- Taught "Math" by Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley for the math program
- Implemented a book club during the lunch period

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Holocaust Memorial Center Teacher Advisory Group

- Work with the Holocaust Memorial Center (HMC) brainstorm and recommend new educational programs and resources that teachers need or want.
- Assess educator's need and wants for *Night* and *The Diary of a Young Girl: Anne Frank* within the secondary curriculum
- Evaluate current and proposed programming to ensure it meets the teacher, school and/or district curricular goals and standards
- Inform the HMC of educational trends, to evaluate programming resources
- Advocate for HMC educational programming and resources

Conference Presentations

Coalition Across Difference: Conceptualizing Possibilities through Cosmopolitan Inquiry.
New Directions in Humanities, The World 4.0: Convergences of Knowledges and Machines. July 3-5, 2019. University of Granada in Granada, Spain.

Delighting in Difference, Cultivating the Cosmopolitan: Valuing the Voices of Other(s).
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTEAR). Breaking the Silence: Literacy Research for Disruption, Inclusion, and Equity for All Students. February 8-10, 2019. University of Alabama in Birmingham, United States of America.

Decreasing Disparities for English Learner Academic Achievement through Critical and Cosmopolitan Literacy Pedagogy.

International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, 2018: May 17-19, 2018. University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, United States of America.

Critical Pedagogy for the Marginalized English Language Learner.
Addressing Inequalities Mobility and Dislocation: Insights from Domestic and International Research and Practice. June 12-13, 2017. Michigan State University in East Lansing, United States of America.

Peer Review Experience

- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTEAR) review of presentation proposals, 2019.

Professional & Curriculum Development

- Develop EL curriculum to align with CCSS Standards across content (ELA, SS, Science, Math), Michigan ELP Standards, Habits of Mind Framework, and NCTE/IRA Standards for ELA
- Tier general education curriculum with the English department to meet the needs of the EL student
- Designed a curriculum for Advanced EL/Citizenship (secondary and post-secondary)
- Designed a curriculum based on whole group learning while still tailored to suit everyone's individual needs
- Multimodal teaching, including digital memoirs
- Incorporated The Scientific Method in preparation for the Science Fair
- Developed power standards from the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) to coordinate with the IOWA Testing

Team Building/Communication Skills

- Provide professional development for teachers regarding the EL population, cultural norms, tiered curriculum
- Worked as a mentor for a seasoned teacher to raise their teaching expertise
- Used Creative Partnerships with other grade levels to keep learning fun
- Constantly "In-Touch" with parents to collaboratively help the EL student succeed within the school setting
- Worked with other grades/classrooms to plan and execute multiple, successful field trips that combine classroom learning and personal experiences

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

American Education and Research Association (AERA)

Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools (MANS) Accreditation Team Member for Immaculate Conception Catholic Elementary School

Michigan Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language (MiTESOL) Membership

National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research (NCTEAR)

Lexile Level Assessments (PreK through Post-Secondary):

Running Records, DiBels Assessment, Words Their Way, Reading Level Gains, English Language Gains, CASAS

Utica Community Schools Mentor Teacher

Utica Community Schools School Improvement Team

Utica Community Schools Secondary System-Wide EL Curriculum

CPR & First Aide Certification