ADOLESCENT NEWCOMERS' LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH CRITICAL SEMIOTIC MEDIATION:

AN INTERACTIVE SYMBIOTIC MODEL

OF AGENCY AND SPACE

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Martha.

In memory of my Abo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

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The influx of immigrants has contributed significantly to the exponential diversification of culture and language represented in classrooms from preschool to high school (Ataiants et al., 2018). To ensure the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is essential to meet their unique curricular needs within these multicultural contexts. A crucial component of academic success in the United States is the acquisition of English. Yet the ways schools have narrowly attempted to address this need, through English-only practices that are void of encompassing students' full linguistic repertoires and cultural ways of knowing, continue to marginalize emergent bilinguals, particularly adolescent newcomers (Menken, 2013). This population faces more challenges compared to their younger counterparts because of their late entrance into U.S. schools, critical age in life, high academic demands, and limited time to acquire necessary credits for graduation (Fu & Graff, 2009).

This qualitative case study illustrates the ways cultural and linguistic semiotic mediators support adolescent newcomers' literacy development in school guided by a proposed conceptual framework, Critical Semiotic Mediation. The study took place in a North Texas high school

where selection of participants came from courses designated for newcomers. Open and analytical coding was used to analyze data, discuss findings and significance (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Two major findings in the ways that semiotic mediation supported students' literacy development in school were the concepts of semiotic mediation spaces and agency mobilizers. A model illustrated the symbiotic and interactive relationship of agency mobilizers within semiotic mediation spaces. In discussing the semiotic mediation spaces, the spaces that the students had contact with including home, school, and affinity spaces were identified. Then the agency mobilizers represented by gears that function within the spaces were discussed. Three gears; future self, school literacies, and social identity were identified. This study contributes to the literature of identity theories, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and the diversity of adolescent newcomers. The findings imply the need for a culturally sustaining approach to pedagogy, policy, and research.

Keywords: critical literacy, semiotic mediation, emergent bilingual, multilingual, adolescent newcomer, secondary

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The recent influx of immigrants has contributed significantly to the exponential

diversification of culture and language represented in classrooms from preschool to high school

(Ataiants et al., 2018). These students bring with them a diverse cultural and linguistic repertoire.

To ensure the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is essential to

meet their unique curricular needs within these multicultural contexts. A critical component of

academic success in the United States is the acquisition of English. Yet, the ways schools have

narrowly attempted to address this need through English-only practices that are void of

encompassing students' cultural ways of knowing continue to marginalize immigrant children

(Menken, 2013).

Moreover, the 2016 presidential election and subsequent administration has created a

discernible shift in the current political climate in the United States that is finding its way into

the classroom where students should feel protected regardless of their language and cultural

practices (Dunn et al., 2019; López & Pérez, 2018; Sondel et al., 2018). A key population

affected by these issues are adolescent newcomers. This population faces more challenges

compared to their younger counterparts because of their late entrance into U.S. schools, critical

age in life, high academic demands, and limited time for graduation (Fu & Graff, 2009).

Adolescent newcomers are defined by literatures as immigrants and children. Immigrant

children are considered to fit one or more of the following descriptions: 1) newly arrived

children with adequate formal schooling, 2) newly arrived children with limited formal schooling, 3) children with simultaneous exposure to two or more languages, and 4) children who are long-term English learners (Lenski et al., 2006). Adolescence can be generally described as the unique space of time between childhood and full adulthood that goes beyond chronological time or developmental stage and is highly variable among cultures (Christenbury et al., 2009). This time in life adds more facets to the already multifaceted identity of an immigrant child.

This qualitative case study sought to understand the ways cultural and linguistic semiotic mediators support adolescent newcomer' literacy development in school.

Context for Bilingual Students in Texas

Texas demographics steadily shifts with the growing ability for geographic mobility. The number of immigrants living in Texas is 17.2% in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). That is an increase from 9% in 1990 as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Texas Immigration Data Profile

Year	Demographics	Number	% Foreign born
2018	Foreign born	4,928,025	17.2
	U.S. born	23,773820	
2000	Foreign born	2,899,642	13.9
	U.S. born	17,952,178	
1990	Foreign born	1,524,436	9.0
	U.S. born	15,462,074	

Note. Adapted from *Texas* by Mitigation Policy Institute, 2018 (https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/TX). In the public domain.

   According to the United States Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), the number of non-English speaking household are growing. About 34% of homes speak a language other than English at home (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Languages Spoken at Home in Large Texas Counties

	English %	Spanish %	Other %
Statewide	65	29	5
Harris	57	34	8
Dallas	59	34	7
Tarrant	72	21	7
Bexar	58	38	4
Travis	69	24	7

Note. Adapted from *Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over: 2009-2013*, by U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 (https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html), and from *As Texas Population Grows, More Languages are Spoken at Home*, by A. Ura & J. McCullough, 26 November 2020 (https://www.texastribune.org/2015/11/26/languages-spoken-texas-homes/). In the public domain.

The diversity of languages spoken are also growing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). It is not just Spanish but other languages originating from Asia, Europe, and Africa (see Table 1.3)

Table 1.3

Top 10 Languages Other Than English Spoken in Texas Households

Language	Number of speakers
Spanish	6,983,380
Vietnamese	193,408
Chinese*	140,971
Tagalog	72,248
German	69,140
French	60,730
Hindi	59,602
Urdu	57,662
Korean	55,794
Arabic	55,304

Note: *Includes Cantonese, Mandarin other Chinese languages. Adapted from *Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over: 2009-2013*, by U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 (https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html), and from *As Texas Population Grows, More Languages are Spoken at Home*, by A. Ura & J. McCullough, 26 November 2020 (https://www.texastribune.org/2015/11/26/languages-spoken-texas-homes/). In the public domain.

As the languages and cultures in our classrooms diversify, so must our approach to teaching. Therefore, how we think and act upon language has important implications in our classrooms. Following, I will review language policy in Texas, oppressive language ideologies, bias in assessments, and disproportionate representation in special education.

Second Language Acquisition Policy in Texas

Similar to other federal educational policies for English learners (ELs) that privilege test-taking in English to the detriment of meaningful learning (Menken, 2008), policy in Texas often adopts a narrow view of the education of adolescent newcomers. Over 40 years ago, with the support of federal funding through the Bilingual Education Act, Texas began its journey in bilingual education, teaching English with the support of the native language. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program, where ELs are immersed in English-only contexts (Adaptations for Special Populations, 2018), existed prior to bilingual programs and is still the most commonly used learning method around the world in Anglophone countries. Both the bilingual program and ESL program focus on promoting English proficiency. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act significantly changed the Bilingual Education Act's purpose from promoting bilingualism to promoting English proficiency. With this change, some states did away with bilingual education completely; however, Texas has maintained it (Adaptations for Special Populations, 2018). Ultimately, the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) states that the purpose of bilingual and ESL programs is to acquire English, not biliteracy/bilingualism. More importantly, the code does not require bilingual education in secondary schools, regardless of the number of non-native English speakers, or ELs. Since the TAC intends to use bilingual and ESL programs for the development and competency of English, misconceptions about bilingualism and language acquisition negatively affect language instruction. Misconceptions can also lead to a deficit view of student knowledge (Shapiro, 2014), which manifests as oppressive language practices.

Oppressive Language Ideologies

As acts of xenophobia and racism are more openly displayed by top public figures, the general public has become emboldened in their actions (Bejarano & Shepherd, 2018) to disparage immigrant people. With the continuing rise of technology and digital media, there is no shortage of current examples of immigrant children being openly resented (Miller, 2019), told to learn English, and to go back home (Londberg, 2019). These acts are a reflection of misconceptions about language acquisition that can cause ineffective, and even oppressive, linguistic and cultural practices in the classroom. Even with policies in place, ELs are held to the same standards of native English speakers instead of being provided scaffolding to facilitate their English learning acquisition process, which leads to false deficit data results (Barrera, 2006; Menken, 2013). Language acquisition also does not occur in pre-set time frames for each stage. There is a misunderstanding that the pace of language acquisition happens in static time frames for each stage, but in fact, each student's learning pace is unique and dynamic (O. García, 2014). In bilingual situations, code-switching, or going back and forth between the two languages, is seen as a deficit practice when in fact it allows the student to use her full range of resources (O. García et al., 2017).

Language policy in Texas (TAC) requires that ELs receive instruction from at least one ESL certified teacher. It does not require a teacher to take any courses prior to taking the ESL supplemental certification exams once initially certified in a content area or as an elementary generalist. Certified teachers could be lacking tools in teaching and assessing ELs even though they hold an ESL or bilingual certification. The state also does not require ongoing ESL professional development, resulting in many uninformed teachers just trying to do the best with

what they have. Even if a district has had a great language and literacy program, it does not ensure that the campus will adequately train new teachers and that veteran teachers will not need refreshing. Understanding how to teach and assess ELs is an essential first step in meeting the needs of adolescent newcomers (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; H. H. Rivera et al., 2008).

Bias in Assessments

Many assessments misrepresent ELs by not accurately showing what they truly know because, unfortunately, traditional assessments fail to capture the knowledge that "culturally linguistic different student brings to content-area learning" (Herrera et al., 2012, p. 4). Intelligent and capable ELs may not have the academic vocabulary to understand the assessments (Gottlieb, 2016). Another issue is that achievement assessments have become increasingly standardized, norm-reference, and institutionalized according to Herrera et al. (2012). There are so many instances of cultural and linguistic bias in many curriculum-based assessments that are not always evident when looking only at scores. Although curriculum-based assessment models are a well-established component of special education practice, this approach has significant gaps in empirical testing and literature with limited English speakers, especially among secondary students (Barrera, 2006; Cartledge et al., 2016).

Another problem not often addressed in assessment bias is the difference in cultural/ethnic backgrounds between educators and students. This difference presents a distinction that can have a potentially negative impact on how students from diverse backgrounds are perceived (Moreno & Gaytán, 2013). These biases in assessment can not only affect instructional goals, but they can also lead to inappropriate referrals to special education services.

Disproportionate Representation in Special Education

In the past, the mere fact that an immigrant did not understand a question in English when stepping onto Staten Island was a reason enough to be labeled slow or as having a low IQ (Flanagan et al., 2013, Chapter 5). While there continues to be studies that show a massive overrepresentation of ELs identified with learning disabilities in Special Education programs (C. J. Rivera et al., 2019; Sanatullova-Allison & Robinson-Young, 2016), representation numbers are now going in all directions. For example, recent studies dealing with early interventions show that minority children are underrepresented, and Black and Hispanic students are the most affected due to lack of early medical access and resources (Morgan et al., 2012, 2015). Further studies have shown that from kindergarten to eighth grade, minority children were less likely to be identified as having an academic impairment or disability, and language minority children were less likely to be identified as having a learning disability or language impairment when compared to white English-speaking children (Morgan et al., 2015). DeMatthews et al. (2014) had similar results in their research that showed minorities, specifically Hispanic ELs, were underrepresented in special education.

A major reason for the misrepresentation issues of ELs in special education is due to a lack of cultural and linguistic considerations. Assessments are sometimes normed with monolingual speakers or normed on outside Spanish speaking groups (Z. A. Yzquierdo et al., 2004). Flanagan et al. (2013) asserted that until norm samples in tests are built on stratification variables that matter to culturally and linguistically diverse individuals, results from existing tests, even when carefully modified, adapted, or translated, simply cannot be construed as valid.

But assessment data is not the only thing needed. Before assessing students, understanding students' home and school histories (e.g., health and social history, significant life events, mobility, program placement) is important when making special education eligibility determinations (Liu et al., 2008). The teacher's understanding of how to appropriately address linguistic and cultural needs of a student adds to that misrepresentation. General education teachers are hesitant to refer students because they are unsure if it is related to language acquisition or learning disability (Nguyen, 2012). Since the Response to Intervention (RtI) process begins with the teacher, an equipped teacher in understanding the language and cultural needs of their students makes a difference.

Promises and Shifts

The lack of a language policy that truly promotes bilingualism and biculturalism as described above reinforce these misconceptions and biases. However, it is still possible to promote biliteracy and develop biculturalism by drawing on the student's strengths, what they can do. Culturally responsive RtI, taking an asset stance to educating adolescent newcomers, and recognizing the unique strengths and needs of adolescent newcomers could achieve this. To support this asset stance, for the duration of this this study I refer to adolescents in the dynamic process of English language acquisition as emergent bilinguals (EBs), a term that does not suggest a limitation or a problem in comparison to those who speak English.

Culturally Responsive RtI

RtI offers a promising alternative for reducing the disproportionate representation of EBs in special education by identifying students at risk early and providing preventive instruction to accelerate progress (Linan-Thompson et al., 2007). Hernandez Finch (2012) called for a

culturally responsive RtI; if it is to succeed and be beneficial to all learners, RtI must strive to be more than a new form of a categorical mindset or a deficit model. It cannot be to just see what is wrong. A problem-solving approach to RtI, or a combination of problem-solving and standard-protocol approaches, is more appropriate for EBs, given the tremendous heterogeneity of the population (Ortiz et al., 2011).

The recommendations given by the RtI committee are also crucial to making instructional decisions. It is recommended than an ESL or bilingual teacher be a part of the RtI team, and parents should be empowered to advocate for their child (Scott et al., 2014). The more stakeholders in the committee, the more accurate the data and recommendation can be. Understanding students' home and school histories (e.g., health and social history, significant life events, mobility, program placement) is important when making special education eligibility determinations (Montalvo et al., 2014) and those who know the student best should be present. Additionally, disproportionally populated poor districts with large numbers of students benefit from RtI. Because interventions models, like RtI are expensive to implement it is unlikely that we will see the desired effects of reductions in special education and disproportionality (Cartledge et al., 2016).

A culturally responsive RtI process allows for a clearer picture to see if the student struggles due to a learning difference or language acquisition. It also requires a deep dive into the student's biopsychosocial history, "an adapted descriptor for the core aspects of human experience" (Herrera et al., 2012, p. 67), to find out if there are any other factors that could be affecting the student's academic progress. Sometimes it is a lack of educational opportunity. The student may have moved schools multiple times, which can mean moving through different types

of language acquisition programs. According to Herrera et al. (2012), teachers and others must begin by gathering a complete and detailed history. Putting those pieces of information together can help schools produce the right type of instruction to meet their needs.

Authentic assessments are tools that help teachers and students monitor learning and growth. They also allow teachers "to bring the entire picture of student learning into great contextual focus" (Herrera et al., 2012, p. 49). The assessments should be geared toward the state standards to ensure students are learning what the state expects them to know but in a way that minimizes bias or potential mix-ups (Herrera et al., 2012). There should be a balance between standardized and authentic assessments.

Asset Stance to Educating Adolescent Newcomers

Diversity exists in all classrooms, including learning diversity, so it would be inadvisable to use only one type of assessment for all students to determine progress or knowledge. In general, "using multiple sources of data for grading is appropriate for all students" (Gottlieb, 2016, p. 226). So, if there is a need for multiple sources of data for monolingual students, it should go without saying that bilingual students need the same or more sources of data. When a student's dominant language is not English, it is important to understand what strengths the student has in the primary language in order to use those strengths as a way to develop both languages (Gottlieb, 2016). Educators can see their phonemic and phonological ability, vocabulary bank, reasoning ability, receptive and expressive abilities, and literacy knowledge. If they have strong literacy skills in their native language, they will acquire English literacy faster than those without the prerequisite skills (Gottlieb, 2016). If a student is lacking in any or all areas, the teacher can adjust their instruction to strengthen those areas of need.

A student should not face penalization for their natural progression in English acquisition so recognition of their literacies and lived experiences as assets is essential. A student's lived experiences help to understand his or her academic and personal strengths. The use of those strengths can build up a student's confidence as well as ensure his academic success. Teachers may not always be aware of the unique immigrant experience each student goes through and the implications it has on his or her schooling (Moll et al., 1992). It is easy to assume that immigrants' experiences are similar, especially when they share demographics such as language and nationality, but, in reality, they may have vastly different experiences. Conversely, some students may not share any demographics but have relatable life experiences.

Unique Strengths and Needs of Adolescent Newcomers

Adolescent newcomers are resilient and tenacious. When adolescent newcomers arrive at school, they have very little time to adjust to try and be academically and socially successful in order to have a good start after high school (M. Yzquierdo, 2017). That means they must acquire enough English language and literacy quickly enough to meet all the curriculum requirements needed to receive a high school diploma that would allow them to secure a job or to continue their education. Teaching literacy and language in such a short time can pose many obstacles, especially when typical teacher preparation programs reinforce the belief that secondary students already know how to read by not preparing future secondary teachers in reading instruction skills (Parris & Block, 2007). Because of this, some teachers may feel that approaching adolescent newcomers with English-only pedagogy is the best way to help them meet English standards and diploma requirements while taking the time to develop language and literacy in both languages appear to be inefficient. Additionally, other educators may even possess an oppressive ideology

that any marginalized group must assimilate, or give up their linguistic and cultural identities, to fit in with the dominant culture (Babino & González-Carriedo, 2017). These approaches can unintentionally, or intentionally, create hostile settings (Menken & Sánchez, 2019) for adolescent newcomers where they cannot use their full linguistic repertoire or have their lived experiences honored while trying to negotiate their identity in a new country.

There are many researched-based approaches that can help adolescent newcomers be successful in high school (O. García et al., 2011). Adolescent newcomers come with a wealth of knowledge that is often overlooked because the focus is on language acquisition. However, tapping into an adolescent newcomer's lived experiences or funds of knowledge can show educators how knowledgeable they truly are (Moll et al., 1992). Funds of knowledge are the concepts that are developed outside of academic contexts; the skills and knowledge have been historically and culturally developed to enable an individual or household to function within a given culture (Moll et al., 1992). For students to be able to fully share their lived experiences and make meaningful connections across contexts, they should be provided a space to use their full linguistic repertoire or a translanguaging classroom (O. García & Li Wei, 2014), without fear of repercussion from faculty or students. Translanguaging is the integrated use of a student's full linguistic repertoire, or languages they know, instead of having a strictly separated use of language or oppression of the non-English languages (O. García, 2014). To be clear, while translanguaging can be used as a way to scaffold language, we should not forget that it is a transformative act and mindset (Flores, 2014; O. García et al., 2017; Menken & Sánchez, 2019). Culturally relevant texts can aid in the transformative classroom by giving students mirrors and windows of the experiences of minority cultures (Sims Bishop, 1990). Many texts in the

classroom reflect the lived experiences of the dominant English-speaking culture and neglect minority groups. A culturally relevant classroom library will have texts that positively and accurately portray minority groups and research shows the promise of using these text with EBs (Ebe, 2012; Ebe & Chapman-Santiago, 2016).

All these classroom approaches are asset-based and research-proven. However, when the focus is on a student or small group of students the opportunity for the use of targeted culturally and linguistic mediators open. When a more knowledgeable learner is able to show a child how to hold on to new sign operation, or language, by the use of what emerges from the interactions it is when the student does the most learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Later on, children extend the boundaries of their understanding by "integrating socially elaborated symbols (such as social values and beliefs, the cumulative knowledge of their culture, and the scientifically expanded concepts of reality) into their own consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 126). This may appear to be an impossible task when you think of all the responsibilities teachers already have, but small changes in providing mediators for the cultural and linguistic needs of adolescent newcomers can make a big difference in how ready they will be to face the world.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to explore how linguistic and cultural mediators intended to develop a second language affect adolescent newcomers whose first language is not English. The question that guided this study is: In what ways do cultural and linguistic semiotic mediation support students' literacy development in school?

Significance of the Study

There is emerging research on literacy development of immigrant children but there is limited research on literacy development in adolescent newcomers. One of the main obstacles to this kind of research is the limited amount of time they are in U.S. schools (Fu & Graff, 2009). The time frame in which there is an opportunity to work with adolescent newcomers before they leave high school is brief. The time the student has available in or out of school for observation is brief. The time to build a trusting relationship ship is far too brief. As an EB, second-generation immigrant and bilingual educator, I was uniquely positioned to develop the relationship needed to tell the story of an adolescent newcomer that will add knowledge to the field of adolescent literacy and newcomer literacy development.

EBs are a fast-growing population who are facing academic struggles from the moment they arrive at school. Secondary settings can position students to succeed or fail by their own efforts in meeting or not meeting the academic and language needs of adolescent newcomers. EBs are often expected to assimilate as quickly as possible and to adjust their culture for the convenience of the dominant culture (Menken & Sánchez, 2019). Finding ways for EBs to reach academic success through drawing from their cultural and linguistic strengths is possible.

Operational Definitions

For this study, I use the following relevant terms and definitions:

- Adolescent Newcomers: newly arrived (within 2 years) high school students

- Emergent Bilinguals (EBs): refers to the children's potential in developing their bilingualism; it does not suggest a limitation or a problem in comparison to those who speak English (O. García, 2009b). For this study, it will refer to adolescents in the

dynamic process of English language acquisition potential in developing their bi/multilingualism.

- L1/L2: L1 refers to the first language or native language of the bilingual student and L2 refers to the student's second language (Cummins, 1979). For this study, L1 refers to the students' home language which could actually be a group of home languages such as Kaqchikel and Spanish. L2 is the target language, in this case, English.

- Latinx: a gender-inclusive term for people from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, or South America who share a common bond of Latin American origin (Díaz & Deroo, 2020).

- Minoritized: the verb tense of the noun "minority" to signify the action that is being done to one instead of a noun of who one is (Flores, 2020)

Summary

In this chapter, I gave context for bilingual students in Texas and promises and shifts within this context. I presented the research question that was guided by the purpose and significance of this study. I provided operational terms used throughout this study. With the continued diversification of immigrants, it is important to understand who they are in order to be effective educators. I hope to add to the literature on adolescent newcomers. In the following chapter, I will discuss my theoretical framework and review of literature.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the needs of adolescent newcomers and the outlined theoretical implications, it is important to be aware of the implications of the presentation, perception and receptions of semiotic mediators. This study was guided by the lenses of sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory. Together, those lenses create a framework what I propose to call critical semiotic mediation which includes embedded language and cultural components (see Figure 2.1). The literature review expands on this premise and focuses on literature about adolescent immigrants and asset-based cultural, language, and literacy pedagogical practices.

Figure 2.1

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework
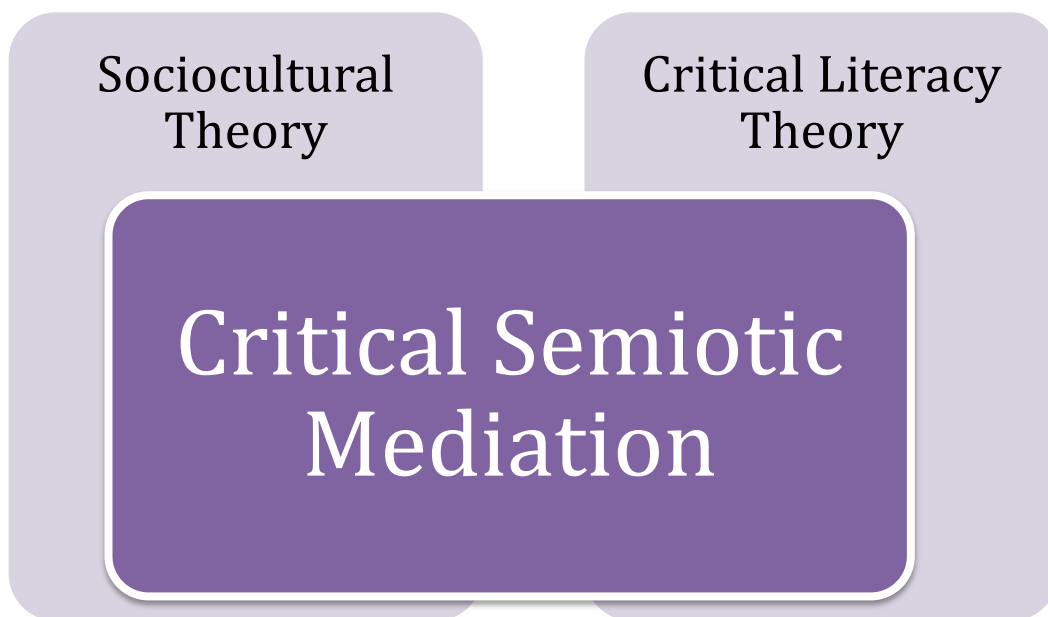
Theoretical Framework

The teacher/student dynamic when teaching literacy is critical. It is important that adolescent EBs learn quickly. To achieve this, the tutor can guide the learner through mediation to new learning. When working with adolescent EBs, who are a part of a marginalized group, it is also essential to understand the social power relations that are in play. Components of sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory, as outlined in Figure 2.2, influenced the study. Important points in socioculturalism pertinent to this study are Lev Vygotsky's (1978) key ideas of semiotic mediation, zone of proximal development, and the more knowledgeable other. To challenge social inequalities, present in educational settings, Paolo Freire (1972b) outlines opportunities for change including teachers and students as co-learners, *conscientização*, and transformative education through critical literacy.

Figure 2.2

Components of Sociocultural Theory and Critical Literacy Theory

Sociocultural Theory

- Semiotic Mediation
- Zone of Proximal Development
- More Knowledgeable Other

Critical Literacy Theory

- Co-learning
- Conscientização
- Transformative pedagogy
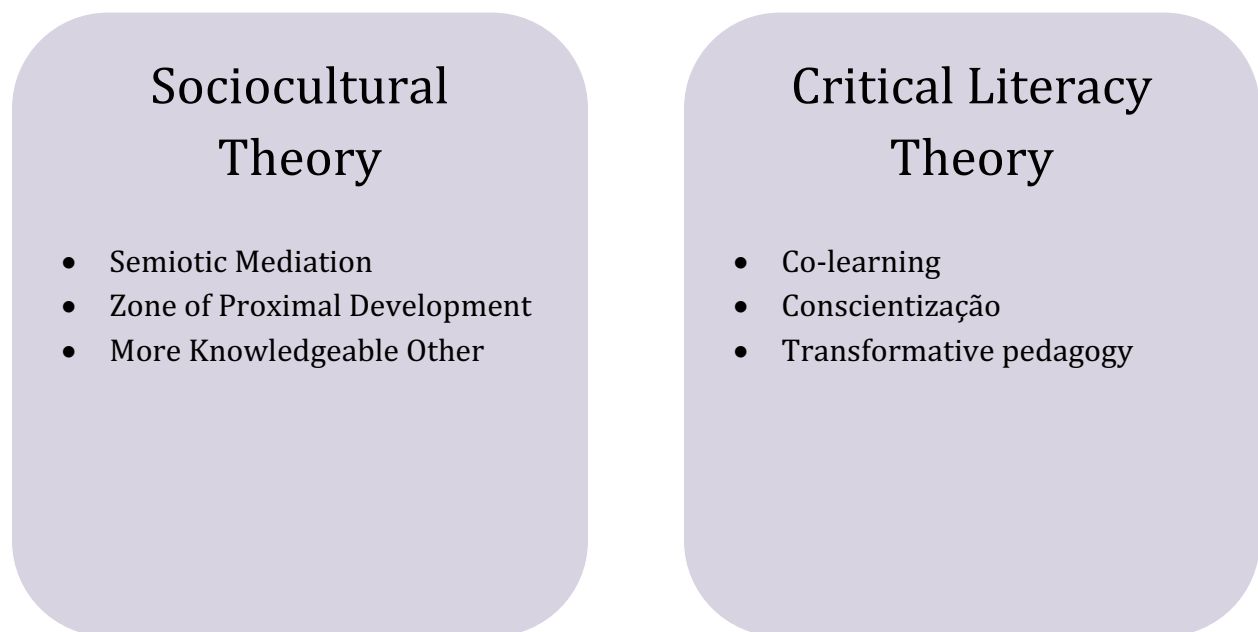
Sociocultural Theory

According to Vygotsky (1978), it is important to meet students where they are to guide them to the next as per the theory of assisted performance where the tutor continuously assists the student in the proximal zone through scaffolding as they internalize new knowledge. When a more knowledgeable other is able to show a child how to hold on to new sign operations, or language, by the use of what emerges from the interactions it is when the student does the most learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Later on, children extend the boundaries of their understanding by "integrating socially elaborated symbols (such as social values and beliefs, the cumulative knowledge of their culture, and the scientifically expanded concepts of reality) into their own consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 126). Semiotic mediators achieve this.

Semiotic Mediators

Semiotic mediators are physical or internal tools and signs that aid the learner in achieving independence, or agency, and higher-order function in a particular task. An example given by Vygotsky is the use of a spade, or shovel. The shovel is a physical tool that can help one in the garden. When one stops for a break, the placement of the spade is an internally developed sign of where one should start upon return to the task.

Social semiotics has evolved from the study of life signs in society (Saussure, 1959) to the use of semiotic resources to produce and receive communication (van Leeuwen, 2005). Semiotic resources are what help us become socially literate. It goes beyond just sign reading to knowing how to act or look in certain situations much like Bourdieu's (1989) habitus, or Foucault's (1970) discourse of knowledge and power and Bakhtin's and Holquist's (1981) heteroglossia. Habitus refers to socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions that can be

physical, such a stance, or mental, such as how people perceive the world around them and react to it. Discourse are ways of constructing knowledge, informed by the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations that controlled knowledge systems at different point in time. Heteroglossia brings all the various languages acquired together within a single *linguistic code*, where language reflects varying ways of evaluating, conceptualizing and experiencing the world.

Gestures can mean dramatically different things in different cultures. The way clothes are worn can have different meanings and perceptions within different social circles. Multimodalities adds a layer to looking at social semiotics. Kress' (2015) multimodalities is a theory of communication and social semiotics. The modes of communication will vary depending on the culture but include images, video, movement, sound, etc. the medium will also vary, so pencil, paint, weaving, rocks, or obscure objects can create an image. Magazine ads and commercials provide sources for interesting analyses of the choice of modes and mediums.

Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's work focused on the development of language in children. However, much of this work can be applied to various learning instances and ages, such as teacher training (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) where one is learning with the support of the environment, of others, or of the self. The process of going from assisted performance to unassisted performance is what creates the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

> […] an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens in a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are

internalized, they become a part of the child's independent developmental

achievement. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90)

The skills and behaviors in the ZPD are dynamic, therefore the level and focus of assistance should always changing. It is important to know where the student's ZPD is as to not provide material that is too easy or too hard otherwise, learning does not happen. A key element in the ZPD is the caretaker, or more knowledgeable other.

More Knowledgeable Other

A more knowledgeable other (MKO) is a person that can be an adult, peer, or even student, that has the knowledge that the learning is trying to master. In most educational cases, the MKO is the teacher. The role of the MKO is important in that they need to be intentional in meeting the students where they are at developmentally and knowing the level of assistance needed until the learner internalizes the information.

In addition to knowing the learning well enough to be able to appropriate teach them through the ZPD, the MKO should also be aware of how their own background affects their teaching and how the background of the student affects their reception of new information. The social and historical background of the MKOs who assist and teach students will be intentionally or unintentionally represented to the student as a way of being in certain spaces. This necessitates a critical lens to analyze the space and people that the students interact with daily.

Critical Literacy Theory

Critical literacy theory provides a lens that challenges the belief that education is politically neutral. This encourages the examination of power relationships inherent in language use. This is important for all marginalized and minoritized groups existing in within hegemonic

spaces. For the purpose of this study, it is pertinent for the teaching of newcomer adolescent EBs. Freire heavily contributed to critical literacy theory working with peasants who could not use print literacy and workers in the Brazilian amazon. Although his work was mainly with adults, they key concepts are generalizable to K-12 contexts. Key points in this theory include teachers and students working together as co-learners, conscientização, and transformative pedagogy.

Co-learning

Freire began teaching literacy to peasant groups by first learning words that were important to them. This was, in essence, a way of re-evaluating his realities and understanding the realities, thus the needs, of the people he was working with. He understood that "reality is never simply the 'objective datum' but is also people's perception of it" in the act of knowing (Freire, 1972a, p. 31). He did not walk into the Brazilian peasant's village as the bearer of all relevant knowledge or as their savior but instead, he came as a learner.

The traditional method of teaching, which Freire describes as the "banking" concept of education, see students as "containers or receptacles to be filled by the teacher" (Freire, 1972b, p. 72). This method puts the teacher in an authoritarian position and there is a lack of dialogue between the teacher and students. The solution for this when teacher and students dialogue then the relationship changes to co-learning. In this situation, there is growth potential for both the teacher and the student as "People teach each other, mediated by the word, by the cognizable objects which in baking education are 'owned' by the teacher" (Freire, 1972b, p. 80).

Our position as educators in the United States makes us part of a system of oppression because of its sociopolitical origins. We must evaluate how and why we teach literacy. When we

recognize our role in oppression we can use that knowledge to reposition ourselves to work together with our students (Freire, 1972b). Teachers and students should exist as co-learners who can investigate and analyze the power relationships inherent in language use. That can be achieved when students and teachers learn together about each other and proceed to achieve goals together.

Conscientização

Conscientização, or conscientization, is the process of becoming aware of the oppressive elements of our sociopolitical environments. Freire gave rich context to the term conscientization as "the awakening" or "critical consciousness" of one's reality. A major obstacle is the lack of awareness of one's internalized, therefore unconscious, oppression and agency. This is what happens when one is socialized in an oppressive system such as patriarchy or capitalism. That conscientization may only be applicable to those we deem oppressed is a misconstruction. Conscientization is applicable to anyone who is part of the oppressing system. However, knowing is not enough.

Reflection and action, or praxis, must take place. Freire proposes *problem-posing* education as a way to engage in praxis. This method rejects the "banking" model of education and embodies dialogue. "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 1972b, p. 88). When students become critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher, there is an emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality (Freire, 1972b). Here, students become aware of oppressive systems and realize their agency. This is key to begin making cultural change, or praxis, in the classroom. This will lead to transformative pedagogy.

Transformative pedagogy

Praxis is the "action and reflection of men and women upon their word in order to transform it" (Freire, 1972b, p. 79). The goal of transformative education is liberation. To achieve this, there needs to be change in the perception of the world to unveil the word of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. Freire needed to teach his students how to read and write; however, he also needed to them to realize they were human beings who had agency. To clarify, oppression does not equate a literal slave. Oppression comes in many forms, even in places that afford rights to its citizens. Oppression is when we behave the way the oppressive system has told us to believe and behave. The act of oppression is violent, even if it lacks physical violence, because it does not allow one to be fully human (Freire, 1972b).

Freire's teaching was purposeful in that he taught literacy through liberating pedagogies. He engaged in dialogue with his student to understand their desires and gave them a space to for reflection and action, or praxis. Freire argues that truth was at the core of praxis "thus to speak a true word is to transform the world" (Freire, 1972b, p. 86).

Critical Semiotic Mediation

EBs, especially newcomer adolescent EBs, have a well-developed primary, or home culture as well as a secondary culture, most likely school or work, in their home country. They are literate citizens who know how to navigate the striations of society with what Bourdieu calls cultural capital (1986). Cultural capital refers to the resources one has related to their ways of knowing and being in specific sociocultural environments. Part of helping EBs gain more cultural capital is through addressing language and cultural needs with critical semiotic

mediation (see Figure 2.3). For this study, I define critical semiotic mediation as a praxis based semiotic mediation. The action and reflection are grounded in the linguistic and cultural makeup of the environment and those who participate in it. It strives to balance power by questioning and resisting the causes of imbalance. The following review of literature supports the major components of critical semiotic mediation.

Figure 2.3

Embedded Components of Critical Semiotic Mediation
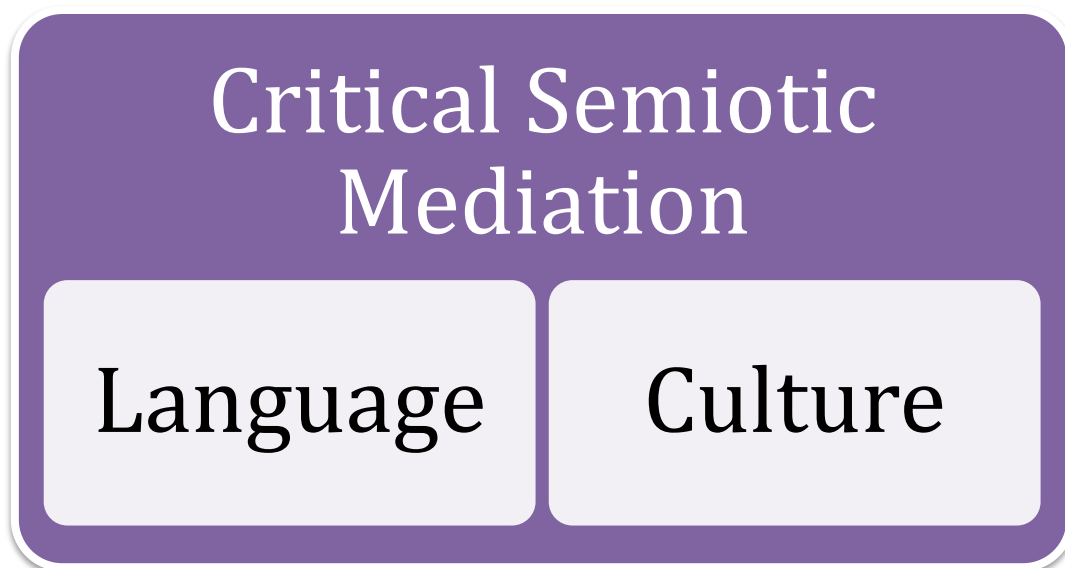
The way to do school is different across the globe. Many students who come to the United States from a different schooling system can appear as incompetent to their teachers. Immigrant EBs are not only dealing with learning a new language but also learning how to do school. Too often the focus is just on teaching English without the sociocultural aspect. This causes deficit views of minoritized students and a skewed view of what should be valued (Heath, 1983). It is important for students to learn how to do school and how to be a literate citizen, but it should be an additive approach, not a replacement. This way their "cultural capital" grows and

they do not have to make any exchanges to gain it. Similarly, Gee (2015), influenced by Foucault's work on power relations in society through language and practice, discusses how power imbalances determine what way one becomes successful in society. Our culture shapes everything about us from the way we dress, to the way we walk, and the way we use language. All of the aspects that make us part of a group is what Gee describes as big "D" discourse because it goes beyond the literal meaning of discourse (Gee, 2015). Those with good cultural currency, or the ability to be literate in different societies, possess two more Discourses, which allow them to be successful in a variety of social settings.

The dominant culture decides what is valued and what is the "right" way of doing things that causes an imbalance in power in society. This has long been studied and pondered as far back as Plato (1921). Marx et al. (2012) called the class struggle a result of the mode of production, in this case, the capitalist economy. It created an imbalance where a minority group, the bourgeoisie, were in power making the calls for social norms, leaving the proletariat stuck in a system that would keep them poor laborers forever. Freire (1972a) saw a similar imbalance in the school systems in Brazil. The education system was a source of social oppression for the poor worker. Parallel to this, in Heath's (1983) ethnographic work, she showed us how each community and its members were highly literate and rich in cultures, as opposed to what had been thought of them due to how they performed at school. School, in fact, was oppressive to members of certain communities that it did not value their culture. A current issue with power imbalance is the view of bilingualism in the United States. While bilingualism itself is seen as an asset, it can be seen as a lack of allegiance to the nation and a desire to remain isolated (Ruíz,

1984). It is important to teach students to value all aspects of their identity and should not be a cause for oppression.

The solution proposed by many of these theorists is the provision of safe spaces where funds of knowledge are honored, and critical mediation can take place. Here critical conversations can take place to form new ideas and identities. Li Wei (2011) proposed a translanguaging space where students can use language to negotiate their identities and personal histories to create a transformative dialogue. Freire created a learning space where he and his students held equal footing in their learning as co-learners in order to critically approach the social imbalances in their society. In this situation, thinking critically about their place in society and negotiating their identities through a critical lens and not through what society says they should be is occurring while content is being. Furthering the ideas of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, Holland et al. (1998) proposed culturally figured worlds where people can form or be formed in collectively realized "as if" realms where they can explore possibilities. Here, "people's identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 49). This idea emerged from Vygotsky observing children in role-play, taking on the identities of the places they had figured for themselves. When applied to youths, these figured worlds can be things like work experiences, friendships, schooling, and so forth that contributes to their identity.

Vygotsky and Foucault were influential in the development of Bhabha's (1994) third space theory that emphasizes the historical identity of cultures. Third space theory suggests that when a person interacts with a different culture, then that person becomes a hybrid of their unique set of identity factors, or affinities. Gee defines an affinity space as a social semiotic

space where groups of people are drawn together because of a shared, strong interest or engagement in a common activity (2005). Other third space theories extend this idea to secondary literacy (Moje et al., 2004) and sociocritical literacy (Gutiérrez, 2008).

Language and cultures are inextricably bound; however, exploring its components in order to intentionally inform our teaching practices is beneficial. Mediators need to be specific to the critical needs of the student and the goal. Small changes in providing critical semiotic mediators for the cultural and linguistic needs of adolescent newcomers can make a big difference in how ready they will be to face the world.

Language as a Mediator

One of the first challenges that newcomers will face upon arriving to the United States is learning a new language. There has been various deficit based approaches to teaching immigrants and EBs that ignore the student's assets or capabilities in their L1. There is a need for asset-based literacy approaches not only for student academic success, but for their identity affirmation. Taking an asset-based stance on bilingualism and valuing full linguistic repertoires provides opportunities for critical linguistic and self-growth. This makes up the components of language as a mediator (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4

Components of Language as Mediators
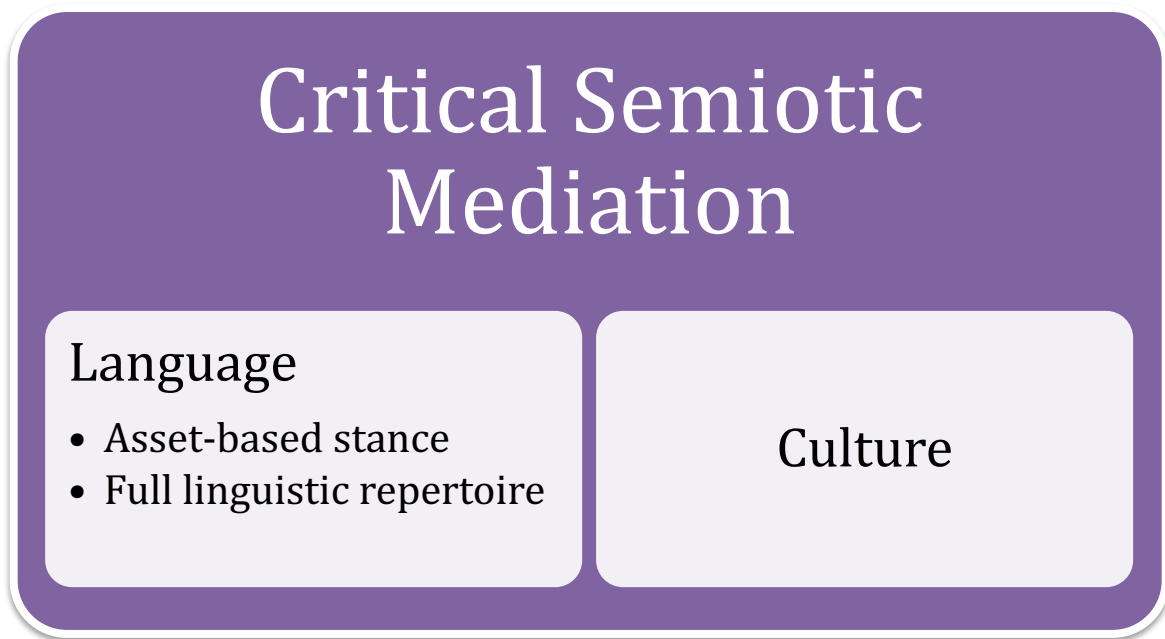
Asset-Based Stance

Though EBs face limitations in being able to express their ideas, it is detrimental to assume they lack knowledge. As Stewart (2017) stated, "when educators view multilingual youth from a deficit perspective, framing them primarily with the EL label, students will be less likely to view themselves as competent readers and writers in the academic setting" (p. 2). In a study examining high school services to Latino EBs, Monroy Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan (2004) found that while the school district had the and personnel to provide pedagogically sound programs to this population, the district was lacking the commitment, consistency, and academic rigor to provide equal educational access. Monroy Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan (2004) suggested the need for a language policy that is supportive of additive language programs that have multiliteracy as an educational standard and address the core curricular needs of EBs.

In addition to viewing multilingual youth as having a deficit for not meeting certain standards of English, there can also be a deficit view of the students L1. In a study by Allard, Mortimer, Gallo, Link and Wortham (2014), teachers' ideologies of their students' L1 and its influence on educational decisions and practices were explored. Allard et al. (2014) found that the ideologies of the teachers, whether monoglossic and deficit-based or heteroglossic and asset-based caused a mirroring of their students' ideologies. Monoglossic ideologies were problematic whether the view was that only English should be used or the devaluing of "Tex-Mex" as an illegitimate hybrid language practice. When this was the case, the students showed the same attitudes toward Latino teachers whose L1 was not Spanish in a possible self-protective response. Furthering an asset-based stance, Escamilla et al. (2014) and Wright (2019) help us understand multilingual practices by defining children's linguistic development as simultaneous and sequential bilinguals. Simultaneous bilingual children are exposed to two or more languages before the age of five and may not have a clearly dominant language. Sequential bilinguals are exposed to a second language after age 5 and has a clear L1.

Where there was an asset-based stance and encouraged heteroglossic practices, students were more inclined to value both languages and use them regardless of perceived mastery of either language. Unlike monoglossic language ideologies that normalize monolingualism, heteroglossic language ideologies position multilingualism as the norm and analyze the linguistic practices of language minoritized students from this multilingual perspective (Flores & Rosa, 2015; O. García, 2009a).

Full Linguistic Repertoire

Translanguaging was originally coined by Welsh educator Cen Williams (1996). The early use of translanguaging began in Wales when instead of using each language in separate times and spaces, Williams had students use Welsh and English in the same space and time. For Williams "there was a single bilingual Welsh identity made up of linguistic features that socially, from an external perspective, were seen as Welsh or English" (O. García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 15).That meant that for him and his students, speaking Welsh and English was a part of what being Welsh is. The importance of possessing the ability to communicate using academic English is understandable, but not valuing what a student comes with is devaluing the student's identity. Students must feel safe to be themselves and to learn whatever they need to reach their academic goals. A translanguaging classroom allows for that because it promotes "a high sense of self-efficacy" as students self-regulate their learning" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 81). Translanguaging is one way to honor students and to make a local impact on our educational system because we cannot forget that it is a political act (Flores, 2014). The translanguaging classroom is a philosophical orientation that informs all aspects of the classroom from the way we view students as individuals to the way we plan for instruction and assessment.

In a study of translanguaging youth, Przymus (2016) challenged English-only programs and bilingual programs with strict language separation by implementing a space for translanguaging by bringing plurilinguistic home practices to the classroom. In the 9 weeks he had, students produced more work and expressed an appreciation for having their identities valued. Martin-Beltran (2014) had similar findings with a study using translanguaging as a cultural cognitive tool to mediate learning. Students drew upon translanguaging practices to

engage in sophisticated literacy work and grapple with linguistic problems, Daniel and Pacheco (2016) ask educators to be aware of ideological constraints on the use of translanguaging in schools such as attitude towards language and practical constraints such as how to include multiple language instruction when the teacher might not speak the languages of the students they are teaching. In attempting to understand how multilingual student draws from linguistic resources to make sense of their world and their perception of their language across contents, Daniel and Pacheco (2016) found that students translanguaging practices were productive in connecting student to "larger goals and communities that extend beyond the classroom" (p. 660) but still adhered to the dominant ideology that English is of primary importance. The student felt the safest translanguaging in their ESL classroom. Most recently, a study with EB newcomers and monolingual high school teachers by Hansen-Thomas et al. (2020) found that enacting translanguaging pedagogy was most efficient when the students were the primary resource. In this case, teachers held a preexisting co-learners stance "that guided them to make these instructional decisions despite not speaking the students' L1, or being bilingual themselves" (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2020, p. 7).

Culture as a Mediator

In addition to facing challenges learning a new language, adolescent newcomers must also learn a new culture. Educators need to ensure that their asset-based pedagogies do not solely focus on language. School culture and curriculum can discredit or diminish newcomers' cultural roots. This will have detrimental effects on their identity and academic. Students' lived experiences should be affirmed and valued in their new surroundings. Some approaches to

achieve this are by the use of culturally relevant texts and implementing culturally sustaining

pedagogy, or CSP (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5

Components of Culture as Mediators
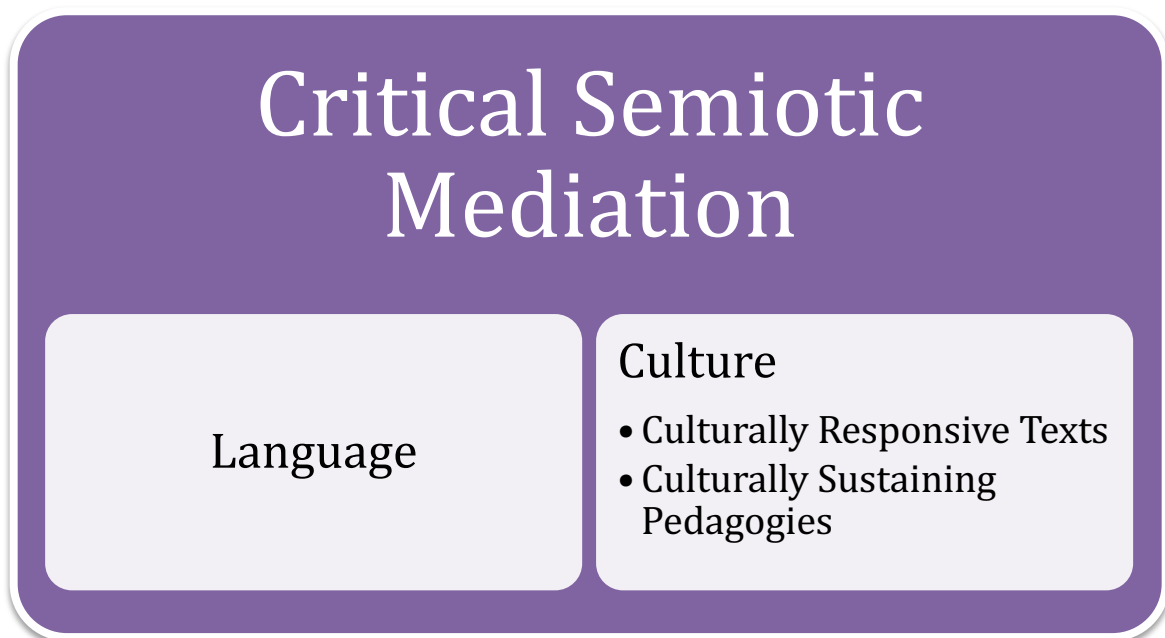
Culturally Responsive Texts

Through our lived experiences we form an identity. Those lived experiences come from

the culture and communities we come in contact with. Culturally relevant texts provide a tool, or

scaffold, to negotiating new identities or examining one's own identity and its place in society.

Often, when there are two or more cultures in negotiation, transculturation occurs, or the

merging of cultures across sites and spaces (O. García et al., 2013; Honeyford, 2014). People are

always negotiating their identity but there is added complexity for youth from marginalized

groups living in a hegemonic society. When the majority of practices and texts are from the

ruling class or culture, students may question their place in society. Using texts that have cultural

widows and mirrors and providing opportunities to respond to those texts are critical to helping students negotiate their identities.

When White preservice teachers avoided discussing racism in a text, W. M. Brooks et al. (2018) used the same text with African American girls who felt heard. Racism is something real that is part of the lived experiences of many marginalized groups and having an outlet where it can reflect and validate is essential to negotiating identities. Similarly, Sutherland (2005) used culturally relevant texts to explore expectations society places on African American girls and how it affects them. There are many known but unspoken expectations placed on marginalized groups, but it is not often questioned who is places those expectations and what happens if they are not met. These texts allowed the girls to question the origins of expectations, empowering them to negotiate the boundaries of the identities placed on them. Sometimes, culturally relevant texts are used simply to build relationships and interest in reading. This interest in reading is essential to literacy development in any reader but especially to newcomer EBs. Stewart's (2017) single case study showed that a wide variety of books, not just those that mirror an EBs culture, are essential to nurturing identity development as well as literacy and language development.

Scaffolding does not need to require an overhaul of the existing curriculum. Medina (2010) used text dealing with border crossing for transient EBs to respond to. She opened up the responses to be oral or written and the language they wanted and saw the development of languages. Medina argues that "students are conscious of how texts are often only *locally* meaningful and valuable" and therefore helps develop biliteracy (p. 56). Honeyford (2014) moved from using books to multimodal literacy practices to develop biliteracy. Students created a photo essay of their lived experiences where the images and captions brought together the

sites/sights of the student's diasporic identities. Whether text or image, there are many avenues to scaffold for literacy development. These studies reported an increased interest in reading. Developing reading and writing are as important as negotiating identities, therefore, it is important to have those texts that encourage language production.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

In an effort to extend on asset pedagogies such as culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Gay, 2000), Paris (2012) proposed CSP. CSP "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). CSP requires that we understand that the acts of measuring ourselves and the young people in our communities against White middle class norms of knowing and being, continue to dominate the notions of educational achievement (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Connecting students' previous experiences to their current experiences is a validating and affirming experiences for newcomer as Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2018) found at an international high school. Teachers were engaging in culturally sustaining pedagogies by drawing on students' transnational experiences is important because "it affirms and validates who they are, their cultures and gives them time to explore their evolving identities and articulate who they are/were in a point in time" (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018, p. 273). Educators should also be aware that student internalization or resistance to the hegemonic norms of the curriculum are important to address as opportunities for culturally sustaining stances. Caraballo (2017) suggested that students found ways to carve out spaces in which to "construct and reconstruct versions of themselves amid the literacy events in which they engaged, contributing to the multiplicity of

ELA as assemblage" (p. 596). These students constructed identities-in-practice within and beyond the classroom that reflected the multiple literacies and lived experiences. In another case, Irizarry (2017) found that Latinx students who had faced academic neglect and marginalization within the school curriculum became engaged when there was a shift in text that reflected their culture. Students left that year hopeful about their future personal and communal transformation.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the theoretical lenses guiding this study and reviewed the pertinent literature that supported the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.6). The lenses guiding this study are sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory. The key point in sociocultural theory was to understand semiotic mediation, teaching in the zone of proximal development, and the role of the more knowledgeable other. Critical literacy theory outlines liberating education by having teachers and students as co-learners, leading conscientização, or conscientization, and that the goal must be transformative pedagogy.

Figure 2.6

Summary of Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework
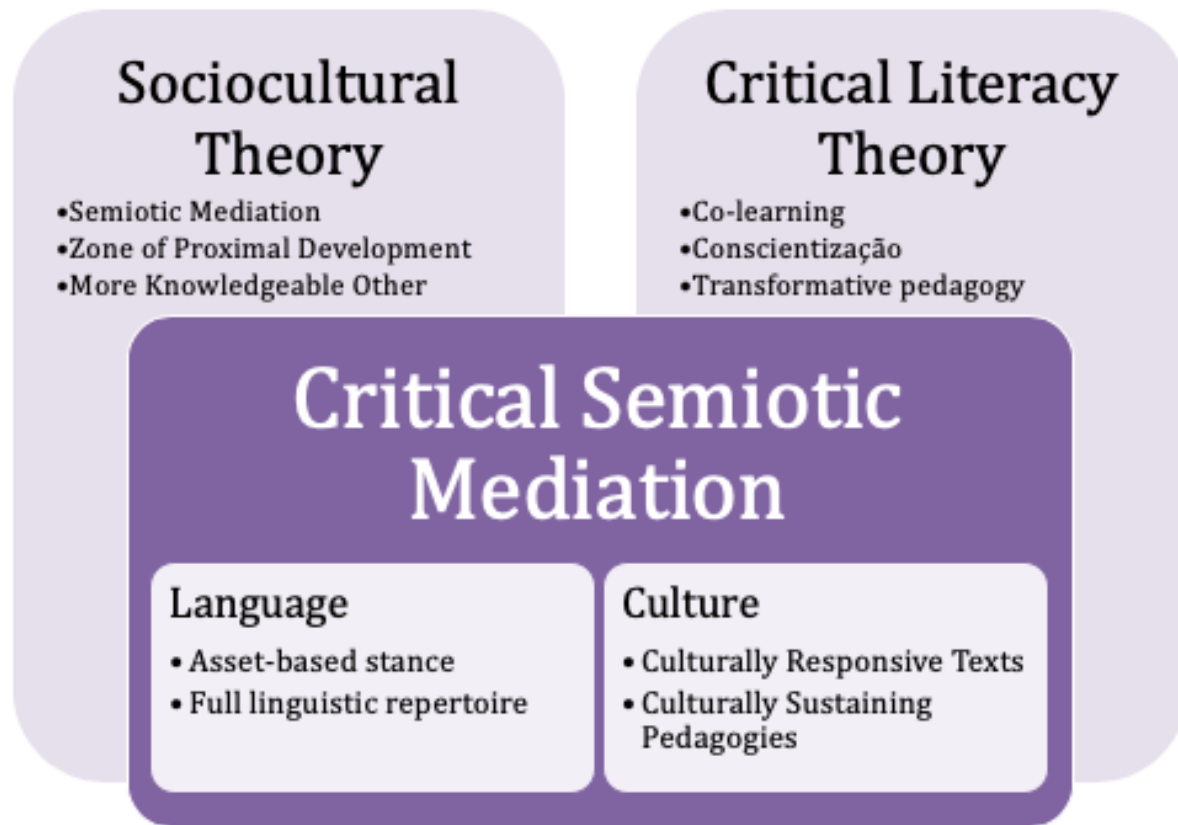
The review of literature proposed the concept of critical semiotic mediation. For this study, I defined critical semiotic mediation as a praxis based semiotic mediation. The action and reflection are grounded in the linguistic and cultural makeup of the environment and those who participate in it. It strives to balance power by questioning and resisting the causes of imbalance. Critical semiotic mediation has two components, language and culture, that inextricably bound. The review pertained to literature that target language and culture in asset-based critical pedagogies. Contributions included bilingual asset-based stance, the use of full linguistic repertoire, culturally responsive texts, and CSP.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study is to explore how linguistic and cultural mediators intended to develop a second language affect adolescent newcomers whose first language is not English. This section explains the methodology chosen to answer the question: In what ways do cultural and linguistic semiotic mediation support students' literacy development in school?

In this chapter, I describe a pilot study that influenced this study, my personal experiences that have led to the specific lens through which I view this study, and the proposed methodological approach for this study.

Pilot Study

This case study was inspired by the experience and results of a pilot study that was conducted at the same site as the proposed study with similar participant parameters. The pilot study relied on the translanguaging framework to explore newcomer EBs literacy experiences in secondary academics. The question that guided this pilot study was: In what ways does translanguaging affect a secondary newcomer's literacy development in a second language?

I designed this qualitative case study (Silverman, 2010) to extend a translanguaging framework; therefore, findings could be meaningful beyond this particular case to classes and schools with students in similar contexts. To address the research question, I (a) observed the student Isidro participating in two 45-minute classes, (b) collected eight writing/work samples,

(c) interviewed Isidro, and (d) wrote reflective researcher memos. To analyze the data sets, I used open coding and axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Implications for the Current Study

The primary finding was the use of translanguaging as a mediator. The student was often allowed, even encouraged, to speak to his teachers in whichever language he had access to at the moment. His teachers encouraged him to write and read in whichever language he needed to in order to produce the expected work. To facilitate the use of English independently, the student used a translating application on his phone. The student showed that he was comfortable approaching the teachers to ask for help or information regarding his academics.

Another finding was the significant role of culturally relevant texts in transculturation. The inclusion of the book *Caminar* was a catalyst in the promotion of bicultural and multilingual identities by giving the student a way to reflect on his own experiences. Initially, Isidro was dismissive of the thought of Spanish being any help at school. However, he very openly used whatever language he felt comfortable accessing at the moment in the translanguaging classrooms. Conversely, Isidro did not seem to see how English played a role outside of school. Isidro saw Spanish was a home only language with family. He also never brought up his Indigenous heritage on his own. This book helped Isidro to value his different cultures and experiences of where he came from, which allowed him to be proud of his own culture and feel confident in developing his identity. At the same time, this security helped him to have a greater interest in expressing himself in English, Spanish, and Kaqchikel at school. He was able to write and talk about his daily experiences in his country. He practiced writing creative narratives and poems that were significant to him and his experiences.

These results piqued my interest in the use of mediators used during the lesson and how he internalized and acted on messages from home and school. The use of culturally relevant texts was especially useful in providing opportunities and spaces for the student to highlight his multiple identities as strengths. Through this study, I determined the importance of understanding how cultural and linguistic mediators support literacy development in a second language.

Researcher Positionality

The design of this qualitative case study was guided by Dyson and Genishi's (2005) approach to language and literacy research. They posit that the ways people represent and interact with experiences depend on the contexts that people bring to those experiences. Therefore, the positionality of the researcher is important to know in addition to the participants. I became a teacher 10 years ago in response to a call to close the achievement gap and to support equity for all learners. Growing up as a child of Peruvian immigrants, I understand the challenges that come with learning English as a second language and negotiating cultural identities. As a child in a single-parent home on government welfare, I understand the socio-economic challenges that many EBs face. In college, I majored in French and had two opportunities to study and work in France. While there, I met passionate teachers who showed interest in the cultures of their second language learners. It inspired me to be to begin my career in teaching. Because of all of my experiences, my 9 years of teaching have been working in Title 1 schools with bilingual or ESL programs in various capacities focused on EBs. I believe that my life experiences, language knowledge, and teaching experiences position me to gain access to a unique population in order to share their stories to a wide audience.

Research Design

This qualitative case study took place in a fast-growing North Texas school district. The purpose of this study was to see what cultural and linguistic mediators mean as they are enacted within this academic setting, not to establish relationships between variables or to "identify cures for language and literacy ills" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 11). I selected the participants based on their length of time in the United States, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status, and English proficiency. I planned to conduct the study over a school semester spanning from January 2020 to May 2020. The students were primarily observed in their English Language Arts classroom once a week and interviewed bi-weekly. I collected data including interviews, observations, and artifacts. I analyzed these data sources through open and axial coding to find relationships and patterns.

County High School

In 1884, this county established its first high school in the county seat town. It moved a couple of times before settling in the current building in 1957. Racial integration took place in the town's public schools from 1963 through 1967. Prior to 1963, African American students attended Carver High School. Beginning in 1963, Carver High School students had the option of attending CCHS. In 1991, a second high school opened in County Town. Currently, County ISD includes four comprehensive high schools, eight middle schools, 24 elementary schools, two early childhood centers, an alternative high school, an advanced technology complex and other specialized schools and centers.

Like most southern states, racism is at the forefront of the history of this town. The statues and monuments that remain in the old town square as well as photographs memorialized

in the surrounding establishments depicting such events as hangings remain as evidence. Until about 10 years prior, many of the town residents could trace back their lineage to settlers of the town or very close to those times. Businesses were family-run for decades and city officials also seemed to stay within the same circles.

The growths of the universities in the town as well as being the primary residence to the overflow of people from a nearby large city prompted a sudden growth in population that the town needed to accommodate quickly. With this growth came a change in demographics thanks to the diversity in residents. Schools popped up every year for 10 years increasing the need for teachers to where you no longer needed to know an established townsperson to get a job. There have also been economic and environmental developments to accommodate the different wants and needs of this new population. Of interest, the Latinx population also saw significant growth in the last 15 years, likely due to the proximity to the US-Mexico border as more immigrants travel further north and southern cities become denser in population.

Even with all this progress, there remains evidence of racial tensions in public places. The Klan marched in the town square 2 years ago. Last year two administrators in the school district, one being from Country High School, were dismissed for getting caught on a recording using derogatory racial slurs and images. Discoveries of artifacts and locations that evidenced racial injustices seemingly hidden to be forgotten are resurfacing such as a burial ground near a black community that mysteriously disappeared in the 1930s.

Most significantly, County High School, which once educated all the white affluent children of the town, now has the most economically disadvantaged population, the most multilingual students housed inside of the oldest, and the most outdated building in the county.

In a few years, a new building will afford these students the same upgrades as the other new schools have afforded their communities.

The following demographics reflect the student population at this high school: 42% free or reduced-price lunch, 54% minoritized students, and 9.5% LEP students. This campus is also participating in a federally funded grant that provides teachers advanced university courses on how to teach adolescent EBs. Many of those teachers instruct courses designed specifically for newcomers or those who are struggling to progress in their English proficiency as reported by Texas state assessments including the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English End-of-Course tests, and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). Per federal protocol, newcomers must also take a state-approved English proficiency assessment to determine LEP statuses such as the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey, IDEA Proficiency Test and the Iowa Assessment. Placements of students in newcomer or ESL, or regular courses are based on their language proficiency determined by these assessments.

Participants

The social unit (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), or population that was considered for this study consists of newly immigrated, or newcomers, adolescents whose first language is not English. There has been a recent influx in newcomer Latinx EBs at the participating campus, possibly attributed to the release of unaccompanied minors from detainment centers in Texas. However, the participants were not restricted to only Latinx students. I was not able to access to student information from the campus records, so I depended on teacher knowledge of the student's

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arrival to the United States and time spent in U.S. schools and class placement. I considered students who had less than two full years of U.S. school experience.

I selected the participants from the courses designated for newcomers since there are requirements for identification as LEP and have a "beginner" level of English proficiency for that class placement. The classes were referred to as Newcomer English Language Arts (ELA), ESL ELA I, and Newcomer Study Hall. The Newcomer ELA and ESL ELA courses, taught by Mr. Ready, are designed so that LEP students can receive English Language Arts credit while still acquiring English. The Newcomer Study Hall was a course designated for Newcomers to receive extra help with an ESL certified teacher, Ms. Hart. Students are assigned to this course but often content teacher would send students there off schedule.

For this study, I aimed to have two to four adolescent newcomers who had been in the US for less than one school year and had little to no English language proficiency. I was able to recruit and maintain three students who met the criterion stated for the duration of the study.

Critical Semiotic Mediation Design

The primary data sources are observations and interviews focused on the ways that the students interact with language and cultural mediators that manifest in their English Language Arts classroom. I ensured that the students had access to their full linguistic repertoire and cultural repertoire. I also provided a variety of culturally relevant texts in both English and their first language(s) to help contextualize learning (Ebe, 2012; García et al., 2011; Stewart, 2017) based on the need of each student. As a trilingual, I ensured that the students knew that they could access any language they chose in communicating with me. Since some students were not familiar with me, I spent 2 months volunteering as a tutor during their study hall time helping

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with a variety of content assignments. This served as valuable time to build rapport and observe their schooling experiences with minimal prompting that would then inform me on deciding on mediators around observations and interests (Assaf & Lopez, 2012; Brookfield, 2015).

It is important to note that many of the teachers and the librarian had had extensive training on teaching EBs from a multilingual stance. Thus, they were very inclined to have books available for the students in different languages and create a translanguaging environment in their classes.

Data Collection

This study relied on field notes, interviews, observations, and artifacts (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Merriam & Tisdel, 2016). To assist in maintaining anonymity, students and teachers have pseudonyms. I began meeting with the student to build rapport in November and December and continued data collection from January to mid-March.

Interviews

I interviewed students during their Study Hall class a total of two times with a duration of 20 to 45 minutes each. Interviews took place in a classroom, the library, or a hallway, depending on the availably of a quiet space. I recorded the interviews on a handheld digital recorder and then transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document. The languages used in the interviews were French, Spanish, and some English.

At the beginning of the study, I asked about their literacy and language practices and preferences at home and school. I used a semi-structured interview to gain insight into the literacy and language practices and preferences of the students as well as their bicultural development (see Appendix A). In the second interview, they were asked general questions

pertaining to their thoughts on the text they were reading and follow up questions on literacy and

language practices at home and school (see Appendix B). Semi-structures interviews are an

open-ended and less structured format that allow "individual respondents to define the world in

unique ways" (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016, p. 110).

Observations

I observed each student three times over a period of 7 weeks in their ELA class for an

hour per observation. Figure 3.1 shows a diagram of the classroom space for the entirety of the

study. I made observations in Microsoft OneNote so that I could access and update them on my

phone or laptop with notes, figures and pictures.

Figure 3.1

Diagram of Observed Classroom
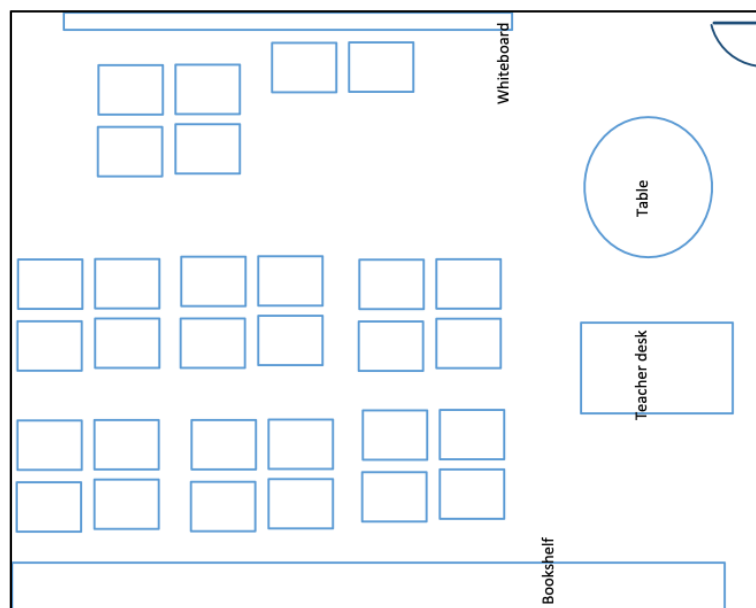
Note. All observations took place in this classroom.

During observations, I looked at instances of language and culture in use using the Observation Guide (see Appendix C). The focus was on the student and their actions when reacting to teacher instruction and expectations. Questions that guided the observation were: What does the student do when instructions are difficult to understand? How does the student react to their surroundings during instructions? How does the student attempt to meet teacher expectations? Teacher actions were important to note; however, student actions were the focus of the observations (see Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.2

Notes and Diagram Excerpt from an Observation
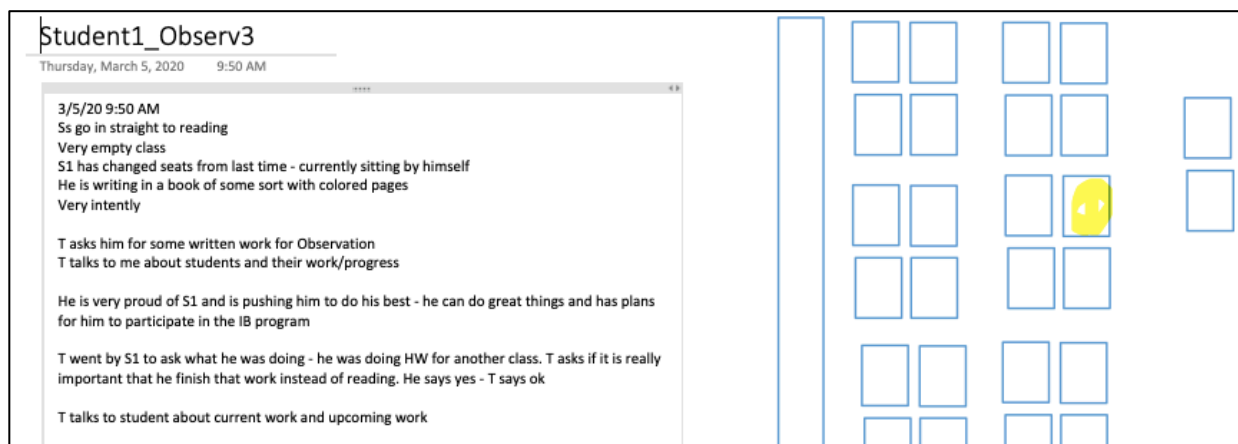
Note. This platform allowed the use of note taking with automatic time-stamps, drawing, uploading pictures and files, and recording memos.

Artifacts

There were several sources of artifacts for this study. I photographed students' book choices. I collected their written work for the class digitally. There were at least 3 writing samples per student. When students pointed out personal items, I photographed them. I photographed any intentional semiotic mediators created by the teacher or noted them in

observation notes. I kept an anecdotal journal and updated it on Microsoft OneNote with thoughts, connections, and any event or conversation that happened outside of the interviews as well as informal communication with the teachers.

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the data sets, I used open coding and analytical coding to "figure out the conceptual importance of the human actions and reactions that have been inscribed in the data set" (Dyson & Genishi, 2015, p. 84). To best analyze the data, I used the qualitative data analysis methods outlined by Ose (2016) and Swallow et al. (2003) as a guideline in using Microsoft Excel to code my data sets. I initially began my data analysis on Microsoft Excel but soon ran into issues with the program due to the limited capabilities of the Mac version. As soon as it was apparent that it would not be possible to resolve the issue on the Mac, I quickly moved the data to Google Sheets and was successful in adapting the Excel methods there.

Google Sheets Analysis

To begin, I transferred the data from OneNote and Word by copy pasting each data point into its own tab. Transcripts and observations auto populated each return, or new paragraph, to its own row and each tab to its own column. I added an ID column that auto populated a unit ID number for each row. I also added two additional rows to the left indicating two open coding options that I designated to culture and language instances. Figure 3.3 shows how the rows and columns were auto populated and the additional columns I inserted as well as the headings. All data sheets had the same number of rows and headings format.

Figure 3.3

Interview Transcript Sample of Case 2 on Google Sheets Sample

ID	Speaker	Student2_Interview2_3marz2020	Open Code 1	Open Code 2
311	Student 2	Non, au Congo.	Sociocultural home perspective	
312	Interviewer	D'accord. D'accord. Mais ici il y a mais c'est pas évident, C'est une lutte qui on dialogue. Qui on parle avec les politiques […] So yeah there is a lot of talk now abou de-colonization. Like trying to get rid of all the things that, you know, that changed culture because of the colonization that happened. Those that were the, hispanic people, the native people, the african americans, everybody. But it's a conversation, it's not like battle		T-Translanguaging
313	Student 2	Ah ok		
314	Interviewer	Well sometimes it gets violent. But for the most part it's a social battle than anything. So I was wondering if there was anything like that every in Congo		T-Engish when stuck
315	Student 2	No.		
316	Interviewer	(8 :34)Are you pretty happy with the Belgians ? Les Belge ?		T-Translanguaging
317	Student 2	[shurgs]	Sociocultural home perspective	
318	Interviewer	You get along ok ? Well that's good. That's rare. But that's good. Because sometimes that can create a conflict.		T-Translanguaging
319	Student 2	Ah, pardon je veux poser une question. Comment Est-ce que tu as àprendre avant ? Quand est-ce que tout à appris à parler français ?		
320	Interviewer	Bon j'ai commencé au lycée.		

Note. Title line reads "ID, Speaker, Student 2, Open Code 1, Open Code 2". The alternating lines represent the change of speakers.

I began by going through the data subsets once using open coding, marking significant passages using a word or phrase to describe the information in either the Open Code 1 or Open Code 2 column. Open Code 1 was designated for cultural instances and Open Code 2 was designated for language instances. Each interview and observation had its own tab. The artifacts shared a tab and were displayed in each row as a link to the image of the actual artifact for quick reference.

Once the open codes were complete for each data set, I created a new tab, appropriately named "Combined" that was coded to auto populate all of the data within that database into one master tab (see Figure 3.4). The purpose of this was to be able to create one pivot table for each open code to then find patterns on one Google sheet.

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Figure 3.4

Combined Interviews, Observations, and Artifacts for Case 2 Sample

	A	B	C	D	E
1	ID	Case	Text	S2 Open Code 1	S2 Open Code 2
483	481	Student 2	S2 is sitting	Appears unmotivated	
484	482	Student 2	T goes around checking work		
485	483	Student 2	At S3's table - males work is done. S3 is still writing. She asks male student to look over her work. Now that T has gone back to desk S3's table starts to talk, as well as a few other tables. Table start talking about friend conversation		
486	484	Student 2	S2 is still sitting quietly - talking to herself - looking around her backpack.	Appears avoidant of work	
487	485	Student 2	T goes back to explaining rest of assignment. "you are the author of your article" clarifies audience		
488	486	Student 2	A student asks if they can use google translate, T says yes but do not be completely dependent on it. Use what English you know and then use google to help with what you don't know		T- mediates for self sufficiency in languaging
489	487	Student 2	T turns paper		
490	488	Student 2	Female student at table tell them "da le vuelta" "Ey que dale vuelta"		
491	489	Student 2	T continues to explain how to write with the planning part of the worksheet		
492	490	Student 2	S3 Table for the most part keep their eyes on the table and stay on their phone or drawings. S3 looks between both phone and screen.		
493	491	Student 2	T asks what are we writing?		
494	492	Student 2	Long silence		
495	494	Student 2	Thought Log 01/10/2020	Takes advantage of language spaces	Academic French
496	495	Student 2	Thought Log 01/15/2020	Deeply interested in texts	Academic French
497	496	Student 2	Thought Log 01/23/2020	Minimal use of technology in L1	Academic French
498	497	Student 2	Thought Log 01/27/2020	Takes advantage of language spaces	Academic French
499	498	Student 2	Book Choices 02/24/2020	Too difficult and uninteresting	English books
500	499	Student 2	Book Choices 03/05/2020	More interested after reading first page	English books
501	500	Student 2	Book Choices - previous	Enjoyed movie of book	L1 book
502					
503					

Interview 1 ▾   Interview 2 ▾   Observation 1 ▾   Observation 2 ▾   Observation 3 ▾   Artifacts ▾   COMBINED ▾   Pivot Tables ▾

Pivot tables are used to summarize, sort, reorganize, group, count, total or average data stored in a database, which in this situation were the three data sets. You can transform columns into rows and rows into columns and allows grouping by any data field. For each case, I created two pivot tables, one for culture open codes and one for language open codes. Once created, the pivot tables can be sorted by letter or instances. I chose to keep it ordered alphabetically while maintaining the instance count (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5

Pivot Tables of Combined Case 2 Data Open Codes 1 and 2 Sample

	A	B	C	D	E
1	S2 Open Code 1	COUNTA of S2 Open Code		S2 Open Code 2	COUNTA of S2 Open Code 2
2	Appears avoidant of work	1		Academic French	4
3	Appears unmotivated	1		Asks T for meanings	1
4	Complex home country schooling system	3		Bilingual country	1
5	Confident in test taking	1		Easier in L1 French	1
6	Deeply interested in texts	1		English	5
7	Enjoyed movie of book	1		English books	2
8	Explaining multiple home schooling systems	2		English title book in French	1
9	Explaining role of langage in family and society	1		Explaining acces to language dependent on schooling	1
10	Explaining role of langage in society	1		Explaining languages of country	4
11	Explaining social groups in country	1		Expressing frustration with language developmelnt	1
12	Explaining socioeconomic corrolaiton to schooling	1		Helping T with language	1
13	Family conflict	2		Helping T with language confidence	2
14	Favorite book	1		Helping T language	2
15	Has negotiated how to be in that class	1		Helps T with language	1
16	Leaves classroom often for long periods of time	1		Interest in 5th language	1
17	Leaves group to work along	1		Interested in learning 5th language	2
18	Looking for relating	1		Interested in reading in English	1
19	Minimal use of technology in L1	1		L1 book	1
20	More interested after reading first page	1		L1 course offerings too easy	1
21	Oddly groups with boys	1		L1 identity colonized language	1
22	Open Code 1	1		L1 Reading pref/french	1
23	Physical mediator for specific lesson	1		Mixed language groups	1
24	Private about family	1		Multiple languages country	1
25	Resisting English literacies	4		Never tried to read in English	1
26	Seeking understanding	1		no confident with English abilities	1
27	Sits alone in class	1		No interest in reading in Lingala/Luba	1
28	Sociocultural home perspective	4		No knowledge of writers/texts in Lingala/Luba	1
29	Strongly resonates with struggle experience	2		No reading in Lingala/Luba/L1	1
30	Student helps teacher	1		Open Code 2	1
31	T mediates to clear confusions	1		Prefers what come easy	1
32	T- practices small groups	1		Reading L1 French in class	1
33	Takes advantage of language spaces	2		Sequential bilingual - English	1
34	Too difficult and uninteresting	1		Simultaneous trilingual - Lingala, Luba, French	1
35	Travel for vacation	1		Strong L1 French preference	1
36	uncertainty of living situation	1		T- English	1
37	Understanding multiple discourses	2		T- mediates for self sufficiency in languaging	1
38	Understanding doing school	7		T- Translating for class	1
39	Understands tests and language	1		T-Engish when stuck	3
40	Unsure of living situation	1		T-English	3
41	**Grand Total**	**58**		T-English when stuck	1
42				T-mediating language practices	1
43				T-mediating understanding by relating languaging	6
44				T-seeking language information	2
45				T-translanguaging	16
46				Translanguaging	2
47				Transliterated village languages	1
48				Trilingual private Belgianschool	1
49				**Grand Total**	**87**

After I created the pivot tables for each data set, I created a fourth database for the purpose of finding patterns across the data sets, or axial coding. See Figure 3.6 to see how I used different files for each case and a fourth file that combined the codes.

Figure 3.6

Case Databases and Cross Case Database File Tiles

Note. Case 2 and Case 3 does not show in tile preview but data is present.

When I first started axial coding, I used two versions of the same pivot table on the same page, which cluttered the sheet. However, despite the layout, I started to see emerging themes in both the culture open codes (see Figure 3.7) and language open codes (see Figure 3.8). The early culture patterns showed that discourses, literacy goals, and social goals were important factors. The early patterns in language open codes were classroom space and social factors outside of school that impact language.

Figure 3.7

Early Patterns in Culture Open Codes Sample

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Open Code 1					
2	Academic explaining					
3	Academic explaining		Row Labels	Count of Open Code 1		Emerging Themes
4	Academic explaining		Sports explaining	13		Emerging dual Discourse/dual currency/identity/ways of doing
5	Academic explaining		Seeking understanding	12		Goals and motivations impact on literacy identity
6	Academic explaining		Mediating language	9		Social impact on internal struggle of goals and motivations
7	Academic monitoring		Academic struggle	9		
8	Academic negative view		Negotiating information	7		
9	Academic negative view		Understanding doing school	6		
10	Academic positive feelings		Mediating-understanding home	6		
11	Academic struggle		Mediating - academics	6		
12	Academic struggle		Academic explaining	5		
13	Academic struggle		Current goals	5		
14	Academic struggle		Teacher mediation	5		
15	Academic struggle		Mediating - finding long term goals	5		
16	Academic struggle		Mediating - long term benefits	5		
17	Academic struggle		Negotiating needs	4		
18	Academic struggle		Negotiating academics	4		
19	Academic struggle		mediating - understanding motivation	3		
20	Academic unfair		Explaining academics	3		
21	Academics negative feelings		Sports home country	3		
22	Academics related to sports		Negotiating wants	3		
23	Academics status		Negative feelings living here	3		
24	Current goals		Parent situation	3		
25	Current goals		Sports goals	3		
26	Current goals		Peer mediation	3		
27	Current goals		Sports motivation	3		
28	Current goals		Reading intentional	3		

Figure 3.8

Early Patterns in Language Open Codes Sample

H	I	J	K	L
Open Code 2				
Bilingual reading		Open Code 2	Count of Open Code 2	Language Mediation
English aq approach - read		Bilingual reading	1	Class space impacts language and literacy succes
English books		English aq approach - read	1	Whole Social factors impact L1 interest
English books		English books	3	
English books		English in sports	2	
English in sports		English name	3	
English in sports		English reading preference	1	
English name		English Sports reading	2	
English name		Family learning English	1	
English name		Gestures	1	
English reading preference		L1 allowed	3	
English Sports reading		L1 not allowed	1	
English sports reading		Language practices	1	
Family learning English		Mediator technology	3	
Gestures		Medicating-Spanish texts	2	
L1 allowed		No interest in other languages	1	
L1 allowed		Spanish book acceptance	1	
L1 allowed		Spanish for SS	2	
L1 not allowed		Student - English	1	
Language practices		Student - Spanish	11	
Mediator technology		Teacher - Bilingual	4	
Mediator technology		Teacher - English	30	
Mediator technology		Teacher - Spanish	1	
Medicating-Spanish texts		Translanguaging	5	
Medicating-Spanish texts		Grand Total	81	
No interest in other languages				

Once I made the initial axial codes, I went back through the data sets a few more times cross checking the themes. I soon saw a pattern of the influences of spaces on the agency of each student. I also noticed that the agency driver, which will be described further in the findings, was present in each case but with differing emphasis. So, I reorganized and renamed my axial themes into agency mobilizers and spaces (see Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9

Final Axial Codes

MAJOR THEMES CODE KEY		
AGENCY MOBILIZER		SPACES
FUTURE SELF		HOME
ACADEMIC LITERACIES		SCHOOL
SOCIAL IDENTITY		OTHER/AFFINITY

With the final axial codes in place, I created a final sheet to clean up the unnecessary pivot tables and formatting to visually verify the axial codes. I copied and pasted the pivot tables for the two open codes vertically stacked and aligned (see Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10

Cross Case Final Axial Coding Sample

	MAJOR THEMES CODE KEY			
AGENCY MOBILIZER			SPACES	
FUTURE SELF			HOME	
ACADEMIC LITERACIES			SCHOOL	
SOCIAL IDENTITY			OTHER/AFFINITY	
S1 Open Code 1	COUNTA of S1 Open Code 1		S1 Open Code 2	COUNTA of S1 Open Code 2
Academic self-monitoring	1		Teacher - English	30
Adjusting to new home	1		Student - Spanish	11
aid from peers	1		L2 literacy attempt	7
aid from teacher	3		Translanguaging	4
aid from tech	1		Teacher - Bilingual	4
Bicultural deve - sports	15		L2 promotes efficacy	4
Book interest - English	4		Mediator technology	3
Book interest - history	1		L1 allowed in classroom	3
Book interest - soccer	3		T - mediating L1 literacy	2
Confidence in experiences	2		Teacher - Spanish	1
Confidence in future	1		T -Translanguaging	1
Desire to go back home	7		Student - English	1
Economic understanding	4		Spanish for SS	1
Family back home - father	1		Reading strategy to comprehend L1 text	1
Family biliteracy development	1		No interest in other languages	1
Future goals	2		L1 reading interest	1
Guardian conflict	1		L1 not allowed in difficult classes	1
L2 reading making connections	1		L1 literacy resistance	1
mediating - teachers care	1		L1 advanced academic opportunity	1
mediating - understanding motivation	1		Gestures	1
Mediating behavior	1		Family learning English	1
Mediating belief in students	2		English only sports	1
Mediating for others	1		English in HS sports	1
Mediating goals	1		Biliteracy	1
Mediating language	9		Grand Total	83
Mediating literacy practices	2			
			S2 Open Code 2	COUNTA of S2 Open Code 2
Mediating social issues	1		Academic French	4
Mediating social practices	1		Asks T for meanings	1
Mediating space	1		Bilingual country	1
Mediating text	1		Easier in L1 French	1
Mediating wants	1		English	5
Mediator allowed	1		English books	2
Mediator taken away	2		English title book in French	1
Mediator technology	1		Explaining acces to language dependent on sch...	1
Meeting family expectations	3		Explaining languages of country	4
Negative view of academics	2		Expressing frustration with language developme...	1
Negotiating academics	2			

To trace the open code descriptor to the original document and original quote, I noted which case the pivot table was from as they were each labeled. Once in the case database, I used the "search and replace" function to locate the exact descriptor. It would have been possible to

have one massive database with data sets from all the cases to then create one pivot table. However, I felt it necessary to keep the databases separate in part for visual clarity, but also for keeping focus on an individual student as I read though all the data and open coded.

Peer Debriefing

I used peer debriefing (Brenner, 2006) by sharing my data with a colleague to establish inter-coder reliability with all of the data. Her language and teaching experiences were almost parallel to mine. She is a doctoral student who has worked with EBs from K-12 and adults. She is fluent in Spanish, French, Greek and English and interested in social semiotics. She has also lived in Europe and South America and is familiar with working with students with origins from Latin America and French-speaking African countries.

My colleague read and viewed all of the data I had coded in each database. Overall, she had no questions or clarification of the data or coding itself. In a few instances, she noted missing information in the write up that was evident in the coding such as information on the role of MKOs in each space. We also discussed what encompassed affinity spaces which then prompted the need to include more instances under the affinity space code.

By discussing the coding with her, I was able to see where I needed to add more detail for clarity and continuity. Moreover, she gave me new insights from the data by expanding on the inclusivity of affinity spaces.

Timeline

November 2019–December 2020	Building rapport by volunteering in classroom and recruiting participants
January 2020–March 2020	Data collection and ongoing data analysis
April 2020–May 2020	Data analysis
June 2020–July 2020	Data reporting & dissertation completing

Dissemination Plan

In disseminating the study and its findings, I hope to raise awareness and understanding of this unique population to encourage transformative pedagogical practices and research in literacy. Target audiences are readers of the *Educational Researcher*, *Bilingual Educational Researcher*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *TESOL Journal*, and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. Conferences, where I would propose to present, are with the American Educational Research Association, Literacy Research Association, International Literacy Association, National Association of Bilingual Educators, Federation of European Literacy Associations, Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers, and the Latin American Literacy Association.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed my methodology for choosing, gathering, and analyzing my data. I first discussed the pilot study that influenced this study. Then I discussed my positionality and its pertinence to the study. I then described the setting, including the town where the high school is located. I outlined my role in the study. I reviewed what data I would be gathering and through which mode. I then detailed the steps I took in synthesizing and summarizing the data

through Google Sheets. There I showed through a series of figures how I open coded the raw data and then analyzed those to find major themes, or axial coding. To ensure the coding and finds were reliable, I used peer debriefing by sharing my data with a colleague. The findings of the case study were situated in literature that strengthens finding on the language and literacies of adolescent newcomers.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The acquisition of English is a critical component of academic success in the United States. The narrow attempts to address this need consisting of English-only practices that are void of encompassing students' full linguistic repertoires and cultural ways of knowing, continue to marginalize EBs (Menken, 2013). In particular, adolescents face more challenges compared to their younger counterparts because of their late entrance into U.S. schools, critical age in life, high academic demands, and limited time to acquire necessary credits for graduation (Fu & Graff, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that linguistic and cultural mediators impact adolescent newcomers whose first language is not English. This study was guided by the question: In what ways do cultural and linguistic semiotic mediation support students' literacy development in school?

In this chapter, I first present the narratives of each student's experiences including family, languaging, and schooling both in their home countries and the US. Then, I will present the participants' instances of observing, questioning, practicing, or using cultural and linguistic mediators to aid in their second language development. The major theme is agency mobilizers in spaces. Within spaces, I explore home, school, and affinity spaces. Within agency mobilizers, I expand on school literacies, social identity, and future self.

Narratives

The lived experiences of the students are important to the findings in that they will contextualize the cross-case analysis. While not a direct answer to the research question, the students' narratives are included in the findings. By including their narratives, it humanizes an otherwise decontextualized study. It is important that the stories of these minoritized and marginalized students are given voice so that they do not become a number. In the following narratives, their story will be told from our meeting, their lives back home, arrival and adjustment, and languaging and literacies.

Karol: A Spanish Speaker Sequentially Acquiring English

Karol is the youngest of the three students in this study at the age of 14. Upon entering the ESL study hall class in the middle of the school year, the teacher directed me to work on math with a couple of newcomers (including Karol) from Honduras since I speak Spanish. These newcomers only knew Spanish and were overwhelmed with their very first EB experience. Karol's sassiness stood out immediately. I was unsure if she would be a good candidate for the study due to her rambunctious and rebellious nature. She called me "tía," or auntie, from the day we met. While it could be interpreted as a term of endearment, it is also a term that is highly overfamiliar for the setting and perhaps even poking fun at our age difference. Either way, she never learned my name and continued to call me "tía" with what I choose to believe was a more sincere tone. To join her banter at first, I referred to her with a term of endearment as "hija," or daughter, which also stuck and is the reason I have had trouble remembering her name to this day. Prior to the study we struggled through many math problems since it was neither of our strengths and shared many good laughs at our ineptitude. She grew very comfortable with me

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despite our differing demeanors and looked forward to our chats. Our conversations were conducted solely in Spanish.

Life in Honduras: Childhood Beginnings

Karol is from Honduras where the official language is Spanish. Honduras has many Indigenous groups and languages, but the government only recognizes nine Indigenous and African or Caribbean groups. Karol and I talked about her languaging practices at home. Spanish is the only language spoken in the home and the only language her parents and grandparents know. In one instance, I asked if Hondurans spoke another language, and she began responding "hay pero … no, solo español" [There are but… no, only Spanish], and did not change her stance from there.

Education in Honduras is free and compulsory for nine years. A lack of schools prevents many children in Honduras from receiving an education, as do costs; thus, only about 34 percent finish elementary school. She attended school there for eight years, but mainly talked about the fun she had with friends and how her love of roller skating began. At first, she thought "¿En serio, patinaje? ¡Qué rara!" [Seriously, roller skating? How weird!], but she was quickly drawn in. She did not have her own pair so she would borrow her friend's inline skates but made little progress until she arrived in the US.

> Mi amiga tenia patines y yo iba a patinar con ella. Todos los días. Y aprendía a
> patinar todas las tardes, decía. Pero no aprendí pues porque casi no puedo con las
> de ruedas corridas. Sólo se las de adelante y atrás y pues entonces casi no podía,
> pero aquí ya lo agarré bien. (Karol)

[My friend had skates and I would go with her. Every day. And I would practice

skating every afternoon. But I didn't because I can't when the wheels are in a line.

I only know the ones with front and back so I could barely do it. But here, I got

the hang of it].

I was able to get some insight into her schooling when I first started worked with

her during her ESL study hall time. We would work through geometry homework or

quizzes. We could only do it for short periods of time as math was not her favorite, either

because she did not have an aptitude for it or because of the quality of her former

education. In either case, it was a source of levity. Once, we got stuck on a problem, and I

asked which way she had learned to do those problems at home in an attempt to help

make sense of what we were trying to accomplish. She said "no hice esto en ninguna

forma" [I didn't do this in any way] which resulted in a fit of laughter. She would also

talk about how much of a troublemaker she was at school and did not like listening to

teachers. "Siempre hacía travesuras" [I always caused trouble].

Arrival and Adjustment: The Rebellious Roller Skater

The reason many people leave Honduras is due to economic issues and/or to escape

violence. Karol came to the US with her father to be with her oldest brother and his family. She

is the youngest of 11 siblings, ranging in age from 14 to 40s. She came with her father, leaving

her mother with one of her brothers and nieces back in Honduras. When talking to Karol about

the reason she is here, she was unsure. She previously talked about the process her family went

through to find a coyote, or smuggler, who was a good one that did not take off with their

money, like one a friend had tried to use first. All her siblings except for one had left Honduras

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to work from California to Spain. When asked what she wanted to do here she said "limpiar casas," [clean houses]. But she didn't think about that too much, because she was more interested in roller skating.

Her passion for roller skating developed further. Roller skate dancing is inspired by an Argentinian Disney show "Soy Luna." Karol showed me some clips of the show on a YouTube where she is subscribed (see Figure 4.1). "Soy Luna" or "I am Luna" is a series about a young girl who suddenly moves from Cancun, Mexico, to Buenos Aires, Argentina, with her parents and discovers freestyle roller skating. The series covers adolescent themes and always includes choreographed roller skating. In Honduras, she would borrow her friend's inline skates, but, once in the Unites States, Karol got her own pair of "patines rosados con puntos negros" [pink with black polka dots roller skates]. Karol occasionally showed me her own videos of her roller-skating around her trailer park, in her driveway, and in her hallway: "Mire tía, ver el video, cómo se me quedó ir patinando" [Look auntie, see the video, at how my skating went]. She would very proudly tell me of her newly acquired skills. "Puedo dar vueltas, eso aprendí. Eso que saltas para arriba con los patines y quedas parada. Saltas para arriba con los patines y los truenas, tía, y sólo caes parada," [I can do turns, that I learned that. Where you just jump up with your roller skates and you land standing. You jump up with your roller skates and you click them together, auntie, and you land standing]. Once, she got in trouble because she cracked her new phone during a skating mishap at home: "Me regañaron '¡por andar patinando Karol!'" [I got scolded "for going around roller skating, Karol!"]

Figure 4.1

Karol's Cracked Phone Shows a Clip of a "Soy Luna"
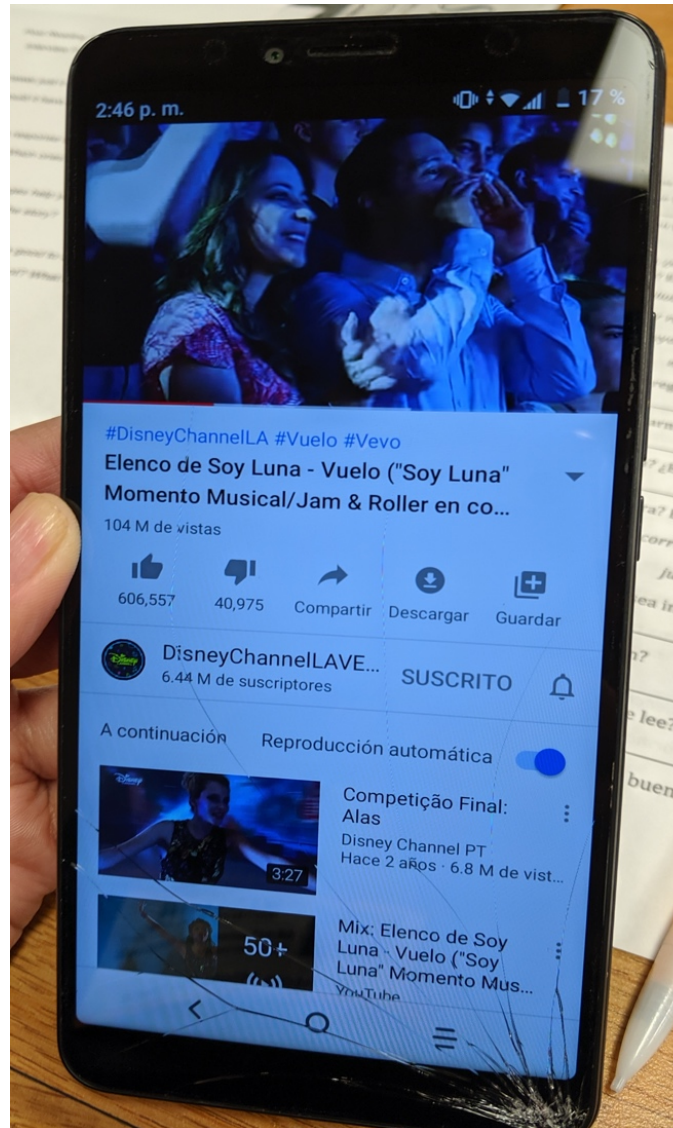
Translation. Cast of "I am Luna" – Flight ("I am Luna" musical number/jam and choreographed roller-skating in co…

Much of how she lives and sees life is strongly influenced by her family. Technology access is provided and moderately monitored by her brother. She is not allowed on certain social

media formats. It is unclear what kind of internet access is available as she said she is not able to use chat features at home but must wait to go out to public hotspots. One of her closest friends is an older niece who also attends the same school, but they do not share classes. Karol does not get to talk to her mother back home very often because there is limited technology there and being older, her mother "no entiende los teléfonos" [doesn't understand cellphones]. In addition, contacting her mother is dependent on the one brother left in Honduras being at home to give his cellphone to her mother; however, he is often working: "Es rarita la vez que le hablo porque casi no salgo a comprar salgo para… pues a veces así hablo con mi hermano, pero pos pasado y el se lleva en la calle a veces trabajando en lo que sea entonces no hablo con ma" [It's very rare the times that I talk to her because I don't go out to the stores, then sometimes I talk to my brother but briefly and he is always out working on something so then I don't get to talk to my mom].

Karol is rambunctious and rebellious. During our first meetings she often talked about how she was going to put certain teachers in their place for telling her what to do. She claims to have been the same way in Honduras and describes herself as being "traviesa" [troublemaker]. In observing her, she has made like friends who, according to her, join her in her "travesuras," or antics. I noted that in my time working with her she seemed to have settled in and was doing better. She quickly responded "bueno, nomás es que a veces sí va, pero más me voy molestando a veces como la otra clase que voy, a molestar voy con mi otra amiga," [well, it just that sometimes I do, but I mostly go to annoy, like in the other class that I go to, I go to be annoying with my other friend]. However, it is also quickly evident that she means no real harm and truly appreciates her teachers saying "Mr. Ready me ha estado ayudando también. En el primer periodo, que es inglés, me esta bastante ayudando allí en la clase. Casimente por Mr. Ready

estoy aprendiendo a escribir cosas en inglés" [Mr. Ready has also been helping me. In first period, that's English, he is helping me a lot in class. Almost completely because of Mr. Ready I am learning how to write things in English]. It may even be that her friends may be too rough for her. They often teased each other calling each other somewhat rude or vulgar names in class out of the teachers' earshot like "idiota" [idiot], or "putas", [whores], and "orejas de Dumbo" [Dumbo ears]. But she was always quick to defend herself "no soy idiota" [I'm not an idiot] or protest. In either case, she is very social and does not lack friends.

Languaging and Literacies: Fearless and Persistent

Karol is understandably cautious about transitioning fully to English. While mathematics seems to be an obstacle in either language, reading and writing are a different story. When asked about her Spanish writing, she quickly and proudly responded, "¡Puedo escribir bastante en español!" [I can write a lot in Spanish] She described herself as not really liking to read and not reading very well in Spanish: "¡No! ...casi no me ha gustado leer… puedo leer, pero no tan corrido así" [No! I didn't like to read. I can read, but not very fast]. This slightly concerned me as it could have a negative effect on her English acquisition. However, she often had a book in her backpack that she thoroughly enjoyed reading from the Spanish YA section of the library or getting books from her Newcomer English teacher. The first book that I saw in her backpack was *La maldición* (see Figure 4.2) the Spanish version of *The titan's curse* from the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series.

Figure 4.2

Self Selected Book: Rick Riordan's "La Maldición del Titian"
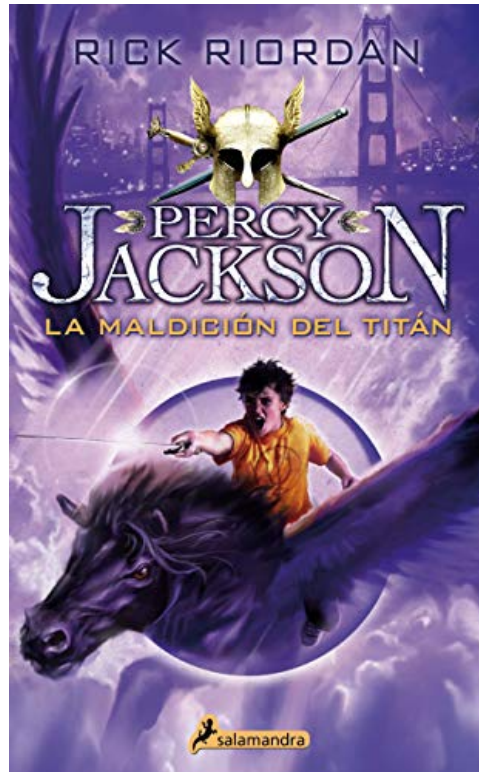
She had no trouble talking about what she was reading and always had something to write for her weekly Thought Log (see Figure 4.3) in her ELA class where she had to write a short summary about what she had read so far. She could write in any language she wanted, and she always chose Spanish. I was very encouraged to see not only her ability to read and write in Spanish but also her eagerness to read more books.

Figure 4.3

Thought Log Reflection on "La Maldicion del Titian" in Spanish

> ## Thought Log
>
> Date:01/23/20   Title:La Maldición Del Titan
>
> page numbers:280
>
> Thought Log:Hay varios desacuerdo porque algunas veces hacen reuniones para ponerse de acuerdo en algunas cosas porque algunas veces Zoe platican com Thalian y se ponen de acuerdo de las cosas y Carina con los demás deciden otras cosas y entonces hacen reuniones para decidirlo todos

Translation. There are many disagreements because sometimes there are meetings to agree on some things because sometimes Zoe talks with Thalian and they agree on the things and Carina with everyone else decide other thing so then they have meetings to decide on everything

When I asked her what she would be interested in reading, she had many ideas for different types of books such as "sirenas" [mermaids], "de patinaje" [about roller skating], "princesas" [princess] and "caricaturas" [comics]. I asked if she was interested in romance and she gave a firm "no." I chose to look for only Spanish books at the time, based on her ability and on her reactions to reaching frustration in math. She needed as many successes as possible and continuing to be able to read in Spanish, at the moment, gave her that. To confirm, I asked if she was comfortable reading in English. She said no but, "voy desarrollando, un poco, allí voy aprendiendo del inglés" [I'm developing, a little, I'm on my way learning English].

Unfortunately, I was not able to find any books on the topics that she requested in Spanish for the following meeting because they were either pictures books or already checked out to other students. I brought her a few books to choose from including *Nacer bailando* [*Dancing home*] by Alma Flor Ada, *Bajo la misma estrella* [*The fault in our stars*] by John Green and *El único destino* [*The only road*] by Alexandra Diaz. After hearing the synopsis for each one, she chose the John Green book (see Figure 4.4). The next time I saw her and asked about it she enthusiastically said "Sí, está bien bonito el libro, ¡me encanta!" [Yes, the book is very lovely, I love it!]. So, she is in fact a reader.

Figure 4.4

Karol's First Book Choice: John Green's "Bajo la Misma Estrella"

In writing, she would get frustrated with the typing and translating process. She wanted to turn in her assignments in English, but she was a slow typist and did not quite understand how to fix her translations from Google translate so she just submitted them in Spanish. One time when I came to class, I saw her writing voraciously in a small holographic notebook (see Figure 4.5). I

asked her about it, and she said it was her journal. She only wrote in it when she was feeling bad.

I did not overstep boundaries by asking to read it, but I did notice that the book was worn, almost

each page written on front and back as she closed it. That day she was missing her mother. In

fact, she said she was often sad because she missed her mother and that many bad things

happened to her, that only her friends knew about. But when she did not have anyone to talk to,

she would write in her diary: "No tengo con quien hablar así en la casa por eso me escribo en mi

diario…" [I don't have who to talk to at home so that is why I write in my diary]. To Karol,

writing extended beyond school literacies. It was personal. It was an emotional coping

mechanism to process her trauma. She was a writer.

Figure 4.5

Karol's Worn Holographic Diary
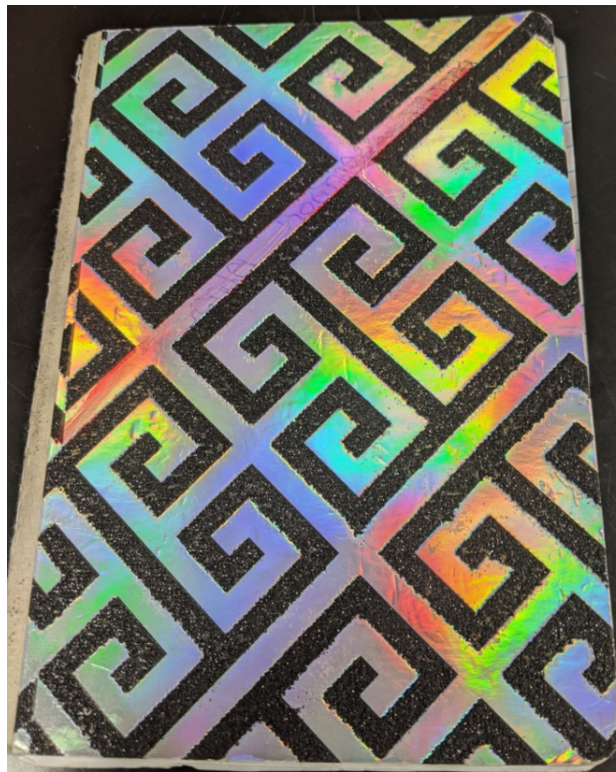
Isidro: An Indigenous Simultaneous Bilingual Sequentially Acquiring English

Isidro and I met shortly after he arrived in the United States in November 2018, and he took part in my pilot study. During that study when I was working with small groups of newcomers, he was first put in my small group for extra linguistic scaffolding because his teachers were concerned about his slower than usual linguistic and social acclimation. We only spoke in Spanish during our time together, however he demonstrated to also be bilingual in his Indigenous language, Kaqchikel (also spelled Kachiquel, Cakchiquel or Cachiquel). He had no friends and seldom tried to communicate with peers or teachers or produce work. After a little time observing him, I noticed that he was a perfectionist to a fault and responded better to people that matched his quiet and calm personality. Previously, a well-meaning professor tried to befriend him, but he shrunk away from her energetic and cheerful disposition. Fortuitously, Isidro and I have similar dispositions, so he felt comfortable working with me early on. He often opened up unprompted about family, home, and school, even showing me pictures on his phone, which allowed me to get a better insight into his cultural and linguistic experiences.

Life in Guatemala: An Agricultural Paradise

Guatemala has been a politically tumultuous country since its conquest by the Spaniards in the 1500s. In recent history, Guatemala went through a devastating civil war that lasted from 1960 to 1996. The Guatemalan Civil War occurred between the government of Guatemala and marginalized groups including ethnic Maya Indigenous people and Ladino peasants. That period is known by many names including the Guatemalan genocide, the Mayan genocide, and the Silent Holocaust. There were massacres of Maya civilians, forced disappearances, torture and summary executions of guerrillas and especially civilian collaborators at the hands of US-backed

security forces. Over 200,000 people were assumed murdered with over 80% being Indigenous people. Those numbers included some of Isidro's uncles. Currently, as the survivors search for justice, there are rumored massacres on the rise targeting activists and Indigenous communities again.

The bilingual education programs in Guatemala developed during the civil war. Geographic location, ethnicity, and gender create significant inequities in the educational opportunities available to Indigenous Guatemalan children. School is free and compulsory for six years, but many drop out of school to work or for fear of violence. All those things considered; Isidro was a highly educated individual from a very educated family. His sister completed her certificate in accounting and works in the city. At a conference in Peru, I met some Guatemalan educators who commented that it was rare to see a fully biliterate Indigenous student.

Isidro comes from a family of crop farmers. Occasionally, he would show me pictures of his family back home in Guatemala. He missed home very much, especially his mother. He showed me his grandparents, his sister, and her baby at their family home. He told me how his grandpa made aguardiente, a good liqueur, by burying a sugarcane mixture in their yard to ferment. He showed me the traditional clothes worn by the women in his family, beautiful woven clothes. The family had homes on their property in a cleared-out field that they had built themselves and expanded as the family grew. Once after one of our interviews ended, Isidro continued talking to me about the beauty of his father co-owned land. They grow cucumbers, radishes, squash, green beans, and other vegetables on "veinte cuerdas" [twenty cords], or about 3.5 acres of land watered by a nearby waterfall (see Figure 4.6). Mountains and lush forest surround the field where Isidro and his companions would sometimes hear spirits or ghosts at

night when they tried to sleep. He said bad things happen in the forest and that he had seen some "cosas muy feas" [very ugly things] that he did not elaborate on nor did I want to know.

Figure 4.6

Crop Fields in the Western Highlands of Guatemala Similar to Where Isidro Lived

Arrival and Adjustment: Marginalized Among the Marginalized

Isidro arrived from Guatemala when he was 15 years old and enrolled at County High School in the middle of the school year as a ninth grader. When he arrived, he isolated himself from his peers and teachers. His newcomer ESL teacher, Mr. Ready, felt some of the reasons could be due to being the only Guatemalan in the classroom and because of his Indigenous physical features. Among some Latinx communities there is a misguided pride in resembling our European colonizers and looking down on those who visibly fall in the Indigenous spectrum, from stature, skin darkness, and facial structure. Mr. Ready mentioned that, in his lengthy experience working with Latinx newcomers, he would have to shut down students who used many racist or negative stereotypes against Indigenous students.

Isidro's teachers were very concerned for him and asked that he be one of the students I work with in a small group or individually. Isidro came to the United States with his father to reunite with his two older brothers who had already been here a while and were working to send money back home. Almost at once, it was apparent that Isidro's father was very invested in his education and was very strict with him if he did not bring good grades home. His teachers echoed this sentiment from their conferences with his father. They even had to ask him to ease back a little on his expectations as Isidro was just beginning to acquire English. Even so, Isidro was very hard on himself and would take it very hard if he failed any test or course. He also echoed his father's desire for him to "salir adelante" or get ahead in life by learning English quickly. He preferred to stumble through an English chapter book than to read in Spanish because "hay que aprender inglés" [you have to learn English]. He would express with disgust how many of the students did not seem to care about their studies and would intentionally choose to work as far away as he could get from the rest of the class.

An exciting moment for him was when he got a cell phone (see Figure 4.7). Even though he was allowed to read in Spanish during his ESL content class, he was very insistent about doing as much as he could in English. Isidro would use the translator on his phone to translate all assignments to English. Through some group work, however, I did find that he could read and write with high proficiency in Spanish. During group time, students had the opportunity to learn content material in Spanish; therefore, I would ask them to write what they could in their native language. At first, Isidro wrote little, which made it seem like he was illiterate. In fact, he is just a perfectionist who did not want to write down something incorrectly. In the following days, he wrote much more in one sitting than he had in a week before (see Figure 4.8). Also, the group

participated in a book club reading *El único destino* [The only road], and volunteers could read aloud. The first few times he did not volunteer, but, once he realized that the other readers would make mistakes, he volunteered and read almost flawlessly.

Figure 4.7

Isidro's Cellphone Always Near When Completing Classwork in English

Figure 4.8

Week 1 and Week 2 Work in Isidro's Small Group Writing Journal
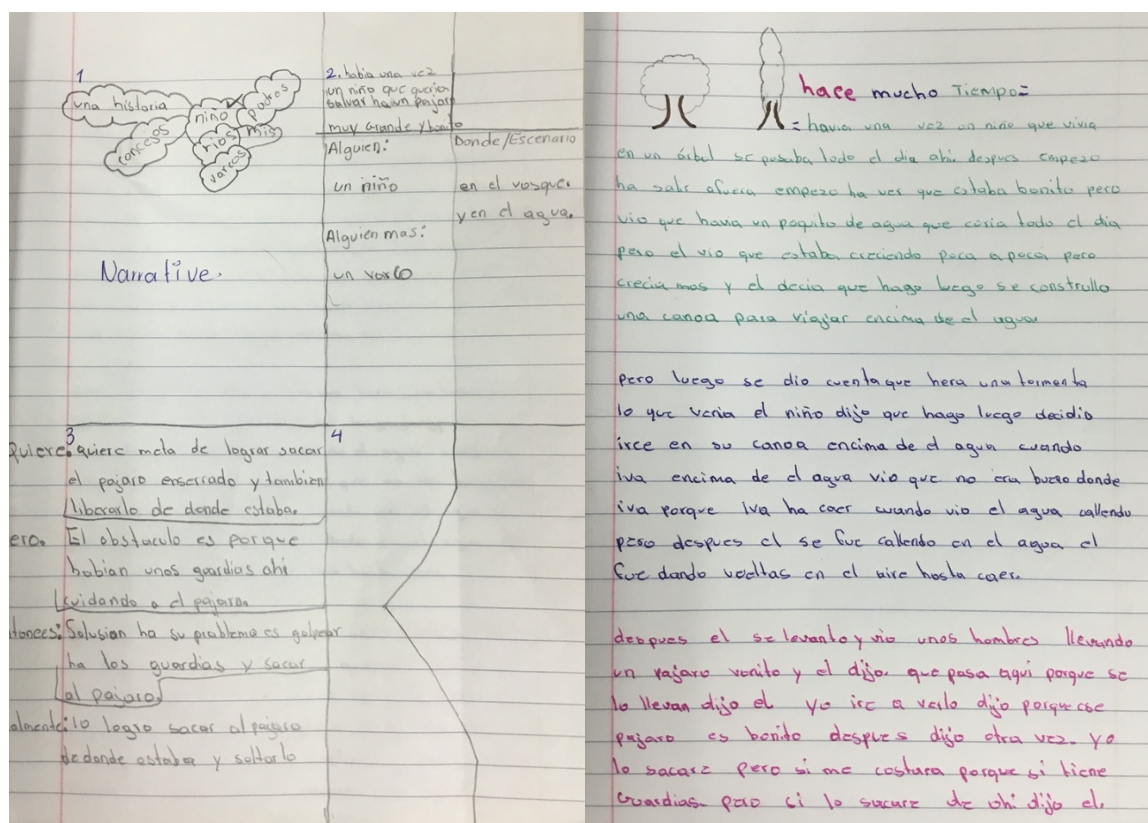
Note. First week working in small group with me, Isidro spent more time making sure he was writing in the correct space than quickly copying down. The week after, Isidro wrote his narrative base on his unfinished thinking map from the week before.

In another instance, I purposefully used the book *Caminar* written by Skila Brown because it was about historical events from his country, Guatemala (see Figure 4.9). The book is set in Guatemalan villages during the civil war, or internal armed conflict, between 1960–1996. The story is told from the point of view of an Indigenous child in a series of English poems with Spanish and Kaqchikel words. After reading through parts of the book *Caminar*, I talked through some poems in Spanish but ran into a word I could not pronounce. He quickly corrected me and

when I asked how he knew he said "es mi idioma" [It is my language] and introduced me to his language and his culture. He wrote the name of his language on the side of a paper, "Kaqchikel," which is also the name of his Indigenous group. Kaqchikel was his true first language that he was raised speaking along with Spanish. The Guatemalan school he attended taught bilingually. He translated an excerpt of one of the poems to Kaqchikel (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.9

Translanguaging Text "Caminar" by Skila Brown in English with Spanish and Kaqchikel

Figure 4.10

Isidro's Translation of an English Poem in "Caminar" to Kaqchikel
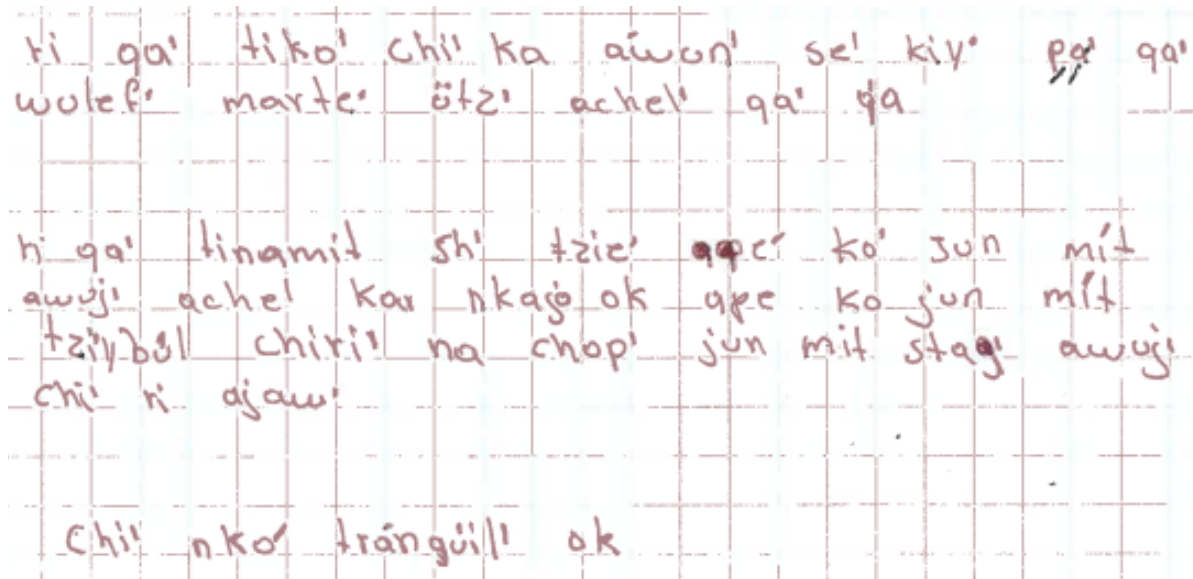
Translation. Our corn plants grew in the fields, thick and wide like a thumb. Our village sat in the folded-between, in that spot where you pinch something sacred, to keep it still.

As his freshman year wrapped up, Isidro appeared to be getting the hang of doing school. Both his newcomer English and ESL study hall teachers were proud of his progress. He still shut down or closed up when his grades were failing, or something was incomprehensible. Because of these frequent mood shifts, I was always nervous that he would say he did not want to talk with me anymore. There was once a close call when one of my colleagues brought doughnuts for her group of kids and invited Isidro and I to join them. Isidro angrily refused and said he did not want to go. I asked him to clarify what was going on and where he wanted to go. He asked to be anywhere but there, so we headed to the library. There, he did not go into details but said there was someone in the other group who was mean to him, and he did not want to be in that group. According to his teachers, he still seemed to not have friends and always sat apart from

everyone, focusing on his work. At the end of our last meeting before the year was over, he

confided in me that he was thinking of not returning to school next year. I assumed this meant he

would go back to Guatemala, but instead he said he wanted to drop out to work. This was strange

considering the message his father had given throughout the school year. I felt I could do nothing

but wait and see what happened when the year started again.

Language and Literacy: The Soccer Player

I was not able to be on campus at the beginning of his sophomore year, but his teachers

reached out to tell me that, not only had he returned, but he was thriving. In fact, this impacted

his schedule in a way that I was not able to see him when I started coming back to the campus in

November. Thanks to his teachers, I was able to work out a time to work with him by pulling

him from his Interior Design class at the end of the school day. I was finally able to catch up

with him in January. The quiet, isolated freshman from the year before had changed

significantly. Isidro had made the soccer team, bleached his hair, and had a few friends.

Observing him in class, he still sat away from most of the students, but he had a friend who sat at

his table. With his newfound identity, I was nervous that he would not want to be seen with me,

as it might damage his image. In our follow up interviews, I made sure he knew that I wanted to

diminish any sort of possible embarrassment or discomfort and that I understood if he did not

want to talk to me anymore. He said he was not embarrassed and explained that it worked out

better for him to pull him during this class because then he could be closer to the front of the

school when the bell rang so he could be on time for soccer: "Como cuando salgo a soccer salgo

allá. Como allá esta la cancha, es por donde voy pa lla. Si salgo de allá es muy, muy lejos" [Like

when I leave to soccer, I leave over there. Since the field is over there, that's where I go. If I

leave from that class, it too, too, far]. If that was not enough, once when I was working with a student in the hallway, he stopped to catch my attention and asked when I was planning to get him. Due to TELPAS testing, schedules were very off, so I had not been able to work with him in a week. His expression of interest was encouraging.

Most significantly, his father had gone back to Guatemala, leaving him under the care of one of his 20-year-old brothers. I asked him about his thoughts of going back to Guatemala that he had expressed last year. He said he almost went back with his father but decided to stay once he made the soccer team. This may have been a source of conflict at home because he said his brother wanted him to continue at school but work next year instead of going to soccer after school. Isidro has put his foot down: "si no me da soccer, pues ya no quiero. Trabajo medio tiempo y me quedo medio tiempo en la casa y se acabó" [if he does not give me soccer, well then I don't want to (go to school). I will work part time and stay home part time, and that is it]. Once Isidro had made up his mind about something, it was very hard to dissuade him.

His teachers and I saw lots of potential in him to do great things with the opportunities he has here in the United States that not many other students have. His teachers sang his praises daily and were full of pride for him. Isidro, however, did not see or value his abilities. When I asked him about his goals in life, expecting something about a career, he said, "no pienso a ser un profesional. Pues no vengo a eso" [I don't intend to be a professional]. He further clarified that he was just "aquí nomás trabajar. Así, por, en un restaurant y ganar y mandarlo. Y allá nomas trabajar en la agricultura. En eso trabajamos nosotros" [here to just work. Like in a restaurant, earn, and send it. And back home, just work in agriculture. That's the work we do]. I took this opportunity to explain that he could go to college to help farmers back in his homeland,

and he rejected the idea saying "yo puedo hacer mejor que ellos. Yo se *más* que ellos." [I can do better than them. I know *more* than them]. College was not be a motivator for Isidro, but I wanted him at least to be interested in finishing school. I told him he was doing so well and how proud his teachers were. He brushed it off and said, "sabes porque estoy bien? Es por que nomás lo hago para quedarme en soccer. Por eso hago mi trabajo" [Do you know why I do well? I just do it to stay in soccer. That's why I do my work]. He did not seem interested in finishing his high school degree saying, "eso sería para los que piensan quedarse aquí. No pienso quedar aquí," [That's for those who are planning on staying. I'm not planning on staying here]. I had trouble processing what I saw as conflicting thoughts and actions. Isidro's school literacies and his family's expectations made it seem like he was here to build a better future academically. However, what Isidro was saying was that he was just here as long as his conditions were met; otherwise he could go back home whenever he wanted, and no one would care if he went to school or not. I asked if his family made an effort to send him to the United States how could he go back on a whim. "Es que no me gusta, aqui no me gusta […] antes me gustó, pero cuando estaba allá pensé que sería mejor pero aquí es muy aburrido. Las cases es como estar en una jaula, nunca sales. Allá tenemos un lugar donde se puede salir donde sea." [Because I don't like. I don't like it here… before I liked it, but when I was over there (Guatemala) I thought it would be better, but it is boring here. The houses are like being in a cage, you never leave. Over there we have a place where you can go wherever.]

     I had no argument for him after he described the beauty of his land and all the various crops that they grew. They spend most of the days working on the land in the middle of the

mountains where the water source is a waterfall that comes down the mountain. I wanted to live there, too.

Somehow, through all this, he still wanted to work with me, so I wanted to make the best of it. His literacy practices remain the same: diving in headfirst and using only English. When I had asked before how he was able to understand all the English books, I would see him reading, he said he just tried really hard to understand and would keep going to the end. He also did not want to read or do work in Spanish. His English writing improved significantly, but he was still hesitant to speak in English. He often addresses his teachers in Spanish if they are one of the ones that let him. Now that he had a couple friends in class, he asked them for help sometimes too. He even provided help to his peers and teachers if needed. However, he had some trouble in other classes, especially those where he felt he cannot make himself understood or where there are unfair treatments. One class he dislikes, he says he did not choose and is obligated to take: "No lo entiendo tanto el trabajo nomas nos da poquito tiempo de tener un proyecto … pero luego dice que ya no lo puedo entregar… pero no se por qué a mi me da así a los demás sí los acepta" [I don't understand the work and she only gives us a little time to finish a project... but then says I can't turn it in anymore. I don't know why she does that to me but accepts everybody else's work].

This year he still did all his assignments in English; however, he did tell me he had read some books in Spanish. This was encouraging to hear since it seemed that he was pushing Spanish to the side. I took the opportunity to choose some Spanish books, as well as some non-sports books for him to choose from in addition to the sports books he asked for. When I presented him with the books, I told him he could choose as many as he wanted, but to please

take at least one since the spring break was the following week. To my pleasant surprise, he chose four books (see Figure 4.11), each time looking at me to make sure it was ok to take more than one. He chose a book in Spanish in addition to the two English sports books he had requested and a fiction book (which, according to him, had the least feminine cover). I was very excited to talk to him about these books after the break.

Figure 4.11

Four Books that Isidro Chose to Read Over Spring Break

Justine: A Polyglot Enriching Her English Acquisition

When I started going the County High School to work with students in November, I noticed a girl always sitting away from others with headphones on, intently working on something. She was never in any of my small newcomer groups, but she was in both the ESL study hall and the newcomer English class. Eventually, the study hall teacher introduced us, knowing of my interest in working with newcomers and my knowledge of French, which was also Justine's first language. Justine was very obliging in meeting with me and content to help in any way she could. Although at first she may have just been accommodating, she appeared to develop an interest in me and our conversations.

Life in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Rich Diversity

Justine was from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Belgian colonization of the DRC began in 1885 by King Leopold II following over 300 years of enslavement due to the Atlantic slave trade. In 1960, after an uprising by the Congolese people, Belgium surrendered, and Congo gained its independence. However, the government was still unstable due to two civil wars, continued conflicts, genocide, and massacres. Few people have gone unaffected by the wars. This instability has negatively impacted schooling quality and opportunities, although it is better now than right after the second civil war. Primary school is not compulsory nor free. In addition to being severely underfunded, the largest issue with the schools is that children and families are afraid to go because of risk of abduction into being a child soldier. There are different types of public and private schooling options in the DRC organized by ideology or social group such as Catholic schools, Brotherhood schools or Salutist schools. Justine attended a

Belgian school (see Figure 4.12), which tend to have a higher tuition rate than most starting at

4,000€ a year for "maternelle," or Pre-K, up to 7,000€ for the final year of high school.

Figure 4.12

A Belgian High School in DRC Similar to the one Justine Attended

The DRC is a highly linguistically diverse country. The official language of the country

is French, but there are over 200 living languages and four national languages (Kituba, Swahili,

Tshiluba, and Lingala). The students are taught formally in French but also communicate in

Lingala, the most widely used oral language in the country. Lingala does not have a formal

writing system, although it is often transliterated, meaning that it is an oral language that is

written using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language. According to

Justine, some public schools do teach in Lingala. Justine's school was a French/English bilingual

school. At the age of 10, Justine's school began to teach English. Justine continued school until

arriving to the United States at the age of 16. As per protocol, Justine took the U.S. required

English placement test which leveled her as a novice English speaker. Although I continue to be

skeptical of the assessment because of cases just like Justine's, in working with her I noticed she

was heavily French dominant.

Throughout the study, about 90% of our conversations were in French. Justine had a strong preference for French, even though she would often say she was trying to improve her English. She even mentioned that she had never read a book in English, neither in the DRC nor since arriving to the US. In talking to her Newcomer English 1 teacher, it was clear that she was still in the early developing stages of English. This explains her strong preference for languaging in French at any given opportunity. She also shared that she grew up speaking Lingala and Luba, two African dialects that are official languages but not formally taught at school. Justine was a polyglot!

Justine did not have too much to say about life in DRC. When asked why her family relocated here, her response was that they sent her here and that she is staying with guardians. She did not speak of her family, but I knew that her brother was in her Newcomer English class. When we spoke about language practices, she did mention that her family speaks Lingala and Luba among themselves. Other than that, there was no mention of her family and I sensed that I should not push the topic. I asked her about any conflicts or social issues in the DRC that impacted her knowing the reports of kleptocracy and human right violations. According to Justine, "il n'y a pas de conflit" [there is not a conflict] and "il n'y a pas lutte pour l'égalité" [there are no fights for equality].

Arrival and Adjustment: The Expert Cultural Navigator

Justine was a little different from the other newcomers. I first saw her in the ESL Study Hall class. She physically stood out from the other newcomers because she was the only black student in the class. Additionally, being African, she did not share any of her native languages with another student in the class. She also came from a completely different continent as most

students were Spanish speakers from Central America. There was very little connecting her to her peers besides being a newcomer learning English and being in the same classes.

Justine had an older brother who came to the US at the same time, attended the same school, and lived with the same guardians as Justine. Their teachers told me that the siblings were having trouble being in the same class. On their arrival, teachers had contemplated separating them into different classes due to severe disruptive issues in the class. They settled on making sure they sat as far away from each other in class. Once, when I was interviewing Justine, we saw her brother in the hallway. That prompted me to ask if they were getting along better: "Not really… Oh, yes! Yes! But you know…we are not really close."

Justine had the most knowledge of how school works and how to be successful of the students in the study. She comes from one of the most diverse countries where she participates in its languages and cultures. She is privileged in that she been able to attend school, which is expensive, and travel abroad for vacations. The summer before she came to the United States, she spoke of going to Belgium for a nice vacation. She may not know it, but she had a good amount of cultural currency, or social assets, that allowed her to adapt to new cultures a little easier than others. Once, when I was having trouble understanding the different languages in her country, she explained to me how language worked in her country:

> Luba c'est une autre langue. Ce n'est pas tout le Congo qui parle cette langue.
> Mais c'est une petite partie, c'est comme un petit village c'est donc dans un petit
> village on parle cette langue en fait il y a beaucoup de petits villages partout où on
> parle chacun chaque tribu parle sa propre langue soi-même mais sinon on connaît
> tous lingala parce que lingala c'est la langue qui national que tout le monde parle

mais sinon chacun a sa langue à côté. Sa propre langue. Oui c'est comme ça, j'ai, je ne sais pas... il y a beaucoup de langues. Il a swahili, il y a kikongo, il y a bah, tetela, fin, il y a beaucoup de langues. Et moi je parle le luba et ça c'est la langue de ma famille qu'on parle, ça c'est la langue familiale. Dans ma famille tout le monde parle luba et y on a même d'autres qui ne parlent ni français, ni lingala, ils parlent que du luba. Du coup, ben, je suis obligé de parler cette langue aussi pour communiquer avec d'autres personnes éloignées de ma famille. Voilà. (Justine) [Luba is another language. All of Congo does not speak it. But it is a small part, like a little village will speak this language. In fact, there are many little villages and tribes everywhere that each speaks their own languages themselves. But that is why we all know Lingala because it is the national language that everyone speaks, if not then everyone would just speak their own language. Yes, it's like that. I don't know. There are many languages. There is Swahili, there is Kikongo, there is, uh, Tetela, in the end there are many languages. And I speak Luba which is my family language. It is a familial language. In my family, everyone speaks Luba and there are others that don't speak French or Lingala. They speak Luba. Hence, I am obligated to speak this language to communicate with other people from my family. There you go.]

This showed me that she understood the complexity of her culture, and she knew how to navigate between the languages and sub-cultures. In addition, she understood how schools work and seemed to see it as important. Perhaps she did not recognize the privilege she had, but,

because of her cultural currency, she had the biggest lead in taking advantage of the academic system.

Language and Literacy: In Overdrive

Justine was an avid reader with a strong preference for French. She always had her nose in a chapter book. The first time I asked her if she would like me to find her books to read in English, I was a little shocked to hear her say "Non je n'ai jamais essayé ici. Franche, je n'ai jamais essayé" [No, I've never tried. Frankly, I've never tried]. When I asked what she had been reading all this time, she let me know she was checking out books from the French section of the library. The book she was reading at that moment was *Hunger Games* (see Figure 4.13), which has the same title in the French version. This explained why I thought she was reading in English and why she was hesitant about me finding her books in English. She also completed as much classwork as she could in French (see Figure 4.14), except for what she would copy from the board. Again, this was surprising considering her bilingual education.

Figure 4.13

French Version of "Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins
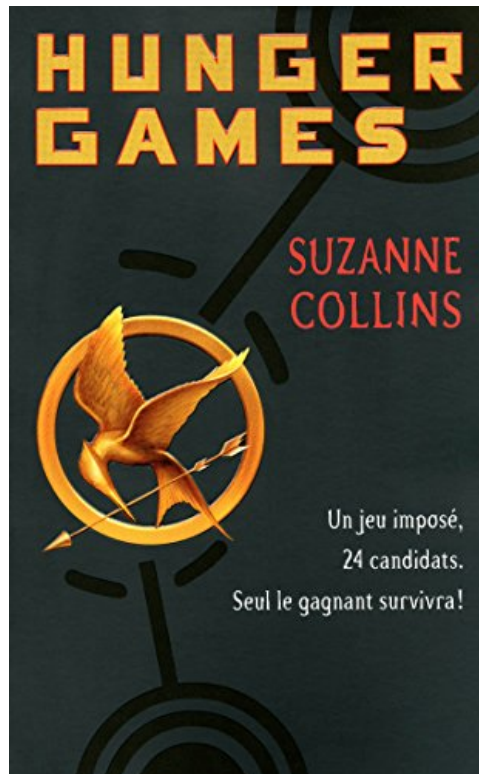
Figure 4.14

Justine's Thought Log Justine's Thought Log in French

Thought Log

Date: 9/1/20   Title:Hunger games

page numbers:181

Thought Log;_ katnis a commencer le jeu jusque la elle se debrouille plutot bien

Elle pensee que pita etait de son cote mais malheuresement non car pendant qu'elle etait cacher sous l'arbre elle entendu Pita les autre tribus faire un plan pour l'eliminer et c'est a partir de la qu'elle a realiser qu'elle avait finalement riason de pas lui faire confiance .

Translation. Katnis has started the game and is doing very well she thought that Pita was on her side but unfortunately not because while she was hidden under the tree she heard pita and the other tribes make a plan to eliminate her and it was from that that she realized that she finally had a reason to not trust him.

However, at about the same time, she was trying to figure out how to get out of the newcomer English class and into the ESL English 1 class. She thought that "ça classe est un peu trop facile pour moi, tu vois" [the class is a little too easy for me, you see]. The teacher had told her he would consider it but needed to see more improvement in her English writing. One way to do that, he said, was by reading more in English. Frustrated with the idea, she wanted to give it a try. After she gave me ideas for the types of books she wanted, I went on a hunt for a book that she might like and that would not frustrate her. I looked at books based on their topic and gaged

their readability by reading the first page or so. I found a young adult romance novel called *Romiette and Julio* (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15

Justine's First Book Choice: "Romiette and Julio" by Sharon M. Draper
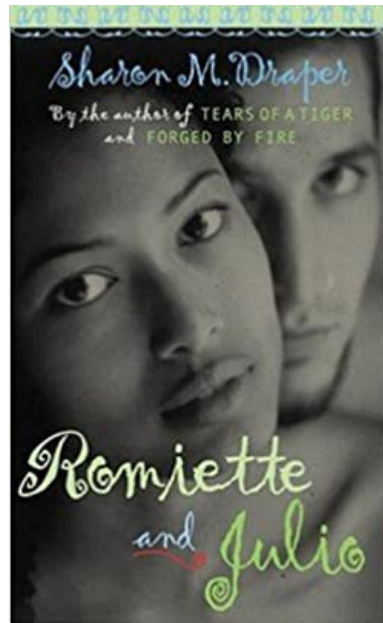
When I touched base with her 2 weeks later, she emphatically explained that it was too hard and did not get past the first page. When we got a chance to talk, I shared with her how I get frustrated reading and writing in French. Speaking it is so much easier but when I read and write I feel like my brain goes into overdrive and would rather just not try. She excitedly exclaimed "OUI, exactement!" [YES, exactly!] that is exactly how she feels. We had a good moment of relating how we have all the theoretical language knowledge but when it comes to putting it into practice, "on a la flemme," we're a bit lazy. She was also exasperated by the thought of having to refer to a dictionary every other word to understand a page "I want to, I do, but j'essaie mais j'y arrive pas. C'est trop difficile. Un heur chaque fois, quand il y a un mot if faut que je doive

chercher en Google traduction" […I try, but I can't do it. It's too hard. One hour each time when there is a word you have look for it on Google translate]. After some venting on both our parts, I did come around and remind both of us that the only way to get better is to read. I also assured her that it was my fault for choosing badly. I should have done better in choosing a book she could read. I made sure not to say anything that would make her internalize that she was not a reader. With more knowledge of her English reading abilities and attitudes I found better book choices for her, although they did not fit the romance requirement. Of the several books I brought, she chose *The Turtle of Oman* and *Uprising* (see Figure 4.16). For solidarity, I gave her a promise that I too would engage in improving my French literacy by reading more French books. It was a deal.

Figure 4.16

Two Books that Justine Took for Spring Break

Pandemic Interruption

By the time the students went on spring break, the first COVID-19 infections were discovered in Texas. By the end of spring break, the Texas Education Agency closed public schools for weeks at a time, and then indefinitely. Initially, I chose to wait out each period for school to resume as a way to re-adjust my plans as well as give teachers spaces to deal with the sudden circumstances. Finally, I was only able to get a few work samples and news that everyone was safe at home, although some had shaky internet service. Therefore, my study ended sooner than planned.

Cross Case Analysis

Although, as shown in their narratives, each of the participants is unique, the findings illustrate themes that cut across the cases. I was privileged to have the time with them that I did because we learned a lot from each other and connected in different ways. Through my research and interactions with them, I learned about various similarities in their stories. Besides leaving their countries, all the students have left their home, leaving behind their mother, if not both parents, so they were somewhat on their own (see Table 4.1). Whether they expressed it or not, I believe they all missed their mothers.

Table 4.1

Student Familial Living Situation

Student	Family members in the US	Family members in home country
Karol	Lives with her oldest brother, his wife and daughters, and her father. Other older siblings and nieces live within driving distance.	Mother and an older brother. Other siblings are spread out over Honduras, Europe, and the US.
Isidro	Lives with older brother, who is legal guardian, and his daughter. Another older brother lives nearby.	Parents, grandparents, sister, niece and nephew
Justine	Lives with older brother and non-related guardians.	Parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles

In addition to missing their family and the sense of insecurity that created, all of them also shared an insecurity of permanence. All of them did not know how long they were going to be in the United States or if it was even a temporary or permanent solution. I never received a definitive answer, only incertitude and conditions (see Table 4.2). Karol and Justine were the most uncertain in knowing if, where, and when they would be relocating. Isidro showed confidence that he would be returning, but his current conditions meant he had to stay.

Table 4.2

Student Residence Outlook

Student	Responses to: Will you be going back home?
Karol	No sé, creo que sí, no sé.
	[I don't know, I think so, I don't know.]
	Es que no sé, por una parte, me gustaría regresar porque ya me quisiera ir. No puedo [...] Sí es feo estar lejos de ella.
	[It's just that I don't know. On one hand I would like to go back because I want to leave. I can't. It's hard being away from her (mother)].
Isidro	No se. Quiero trabajar. El próximo año... ni quiería venir a la escuela este año. Menos que mi hermano me inscribió otra vez.
	[I don't know. I want to work. Maybe next year… I didn't even want to come to school this year. My brother signed me up again.
	Sí quiero regresar.
	[Yes, I want to go back]
Justine	Je ne sais pas. C'est possible. C'est possible.
	[I don't know. It's possible. It's possible.]

Even though they have diverse backgrounds, we found different ways to connect. Isidro's and my demeanors were a perfect match to open a way for conversation. Justine and I had shared frustrations and struggle with our multilingual literacies. Karol and I had fun laughing at ourselves. They are all trying to make sense of their situation the best they can with what they have.

There were larger themes that I found in this study. In this cross-case analysis, I answer the following question: In what ways do cultural and linguistic semiotic mediation support students' literacy development in school? In analyzing instances of semiotic mediation in spaces where reading and writing in a second language occur, three themes emerged within an overarching theme. The semiotic mediation space is a mediating factor to impact how school literacies, social identities, and future selves interact with each other.

In trying to create a visualization of my findings, I found that the typical process and relationship models could not encompass what I was visualizing. After seeing a gear model that resembled the interconnectedness of the findings, I designed a model that better represented the finding and provided a model for future research findings using the critical semiotic mediation framework. The visual representation (see Figure 4.17) shows the findings in a simplified two dimensional snapshot of gears exchanging information within a space. A gear is a wheel with cogs whose job is to transmit power from one machine's part to another in order to accelerate or decelerate speed, increase force or change the direction of the machine. In this model the gears stay in perpetual motion by the need for the receptors, or cogs, to continuously receive and transmit information from space to gear, and gear to gear. The stream of instances, or events, that occur within various spaces are captured by the cogs and interpreted in the gears which is then passed on to influence other gears, via the cogs, over and over indefinitely. Larger cogs tend to be central to drive smaller cogs. The gears are also linked together as to not fall apart and encased metaphorically in each person. The result is then how a person acts within spaces. In theory, I propose gears exist within the students and that they are dynamic. The size, or importance, of each gear can vary from day to day, space to space, and student to student. It is

difficult to talk about the internal processes in a linear or even cyclical manner as language and culture are inseparable yet interactive. Semiotic mediation spaces and gears also have a dynamic relationship. This is resulted in how a person influences a space by the way they act in it. It is in a sense a symbiotic relationship in that the influence may be positive, negative, or neutral. The gears always stay together but can grow larger, shrink, or remain the same based on the interactions within a space, usually a physical space, although it can be a digital or imagined.

Figure 4.17

Agency Mobilizers in a Semiotic Mediation Space Model
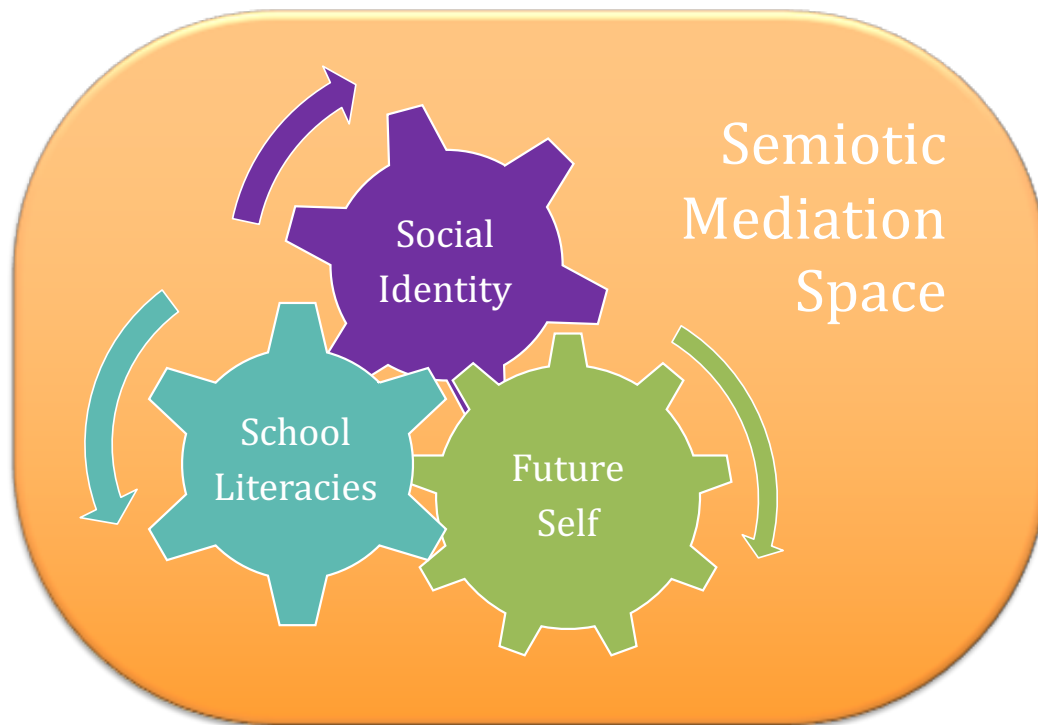
Note. Visual representation of agency mobilizers such as future self, school literacies, and social identity as gears working within a semiotic mediation space.

Semiotic Mediation Spaces

Cultural and linguistic semiotic mediators manifest in countless ways, physically or internally. Sometimes they are intentional and sometimes they are accidental. They can be tailored to a specific situation of a specific student or generalized based on past experiences. In essence, they are tools that can help students gain benefits, such as cultural currency, that will help them succeed in society. Semiotic mediators are always present, ready for internalization, and our students are always trying to make sense of things, ready to interpret and internalize. The space where semiotic mediation occurs is usually physical.

In this study, most spaces have a defined physical space where semiotic mediation occurs. The person or people in charge of the space have the most control over the semiotic mediation that occurs there. This is when the dominant More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) can guide a learner in an aspect of their life, whether it be abstract or concrete. As a student internalizes these mediations, they act on them on their own and can even become a MKO in that same space to their peers. It is equally important to note that students are MKOs in their own right. They know more about their lived experiences than anybody else. Therefore, it is important for teachers to also be willing learners, or co-learners, and not assume an authoritative MKO role. When teachers become co-learners, they have more opportunities to make learning meaningful.

The cultural and linguistic attitudes of that which makes up a space impact how students receive and internalize the mediator thus influencing the gear reactions. The spaces in the study are primarily at school and at home with occasional affinity spaces in the community as none of the students spent too much time out of school and home spaces. A mediation space must have

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an MKO so that progress can happen. The combination of the MKO and resources within the space impact the students.

School Spaces

Students spend much of their waking time at school, so there is heavy influence from the school space as a whole and the sub spaces within the school. The classroom that each student attends impacts their literacies, goals, and identities differently depending on the types of semiotic mediators they perceive and absorb in the classroom. The observations and interviews occurred in this space. Figure 4.18 shows how the gears, or agency mobilizers, function within a school space.

Figure 4.18

Agency Mobilizers in School Spaces
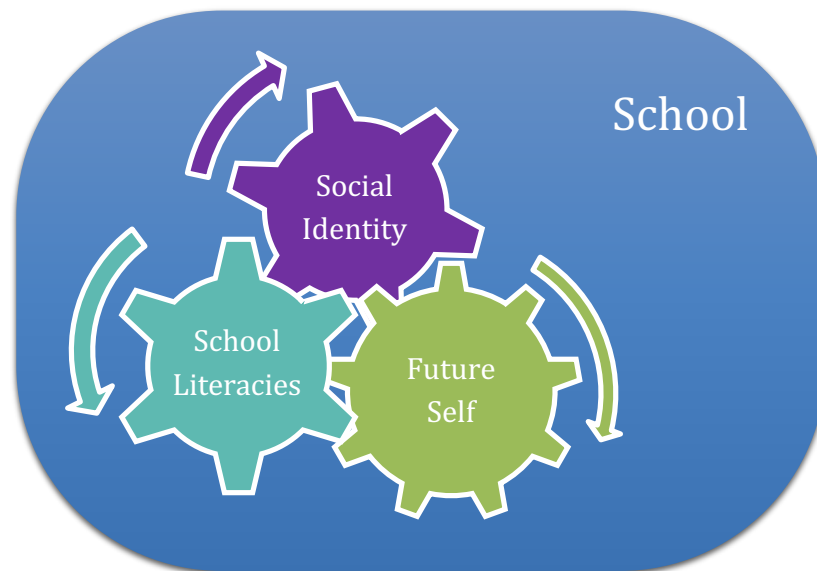
The students indirectly referred to Mr. Ready's class as a positive space. They would refer back to him as to why they were performing in a certain way or as to why they made certain decisions. In observing Mr. Ready's classroom, I noted how he promoted literacy with a wall

overflowing with books and his constant conversation of what he is reading and inquiring about what others are reading. He often translated words to Spanish and French, the two main native languages of the students in his newcomer class. Mr. Ready grew up in a Spanish-speaking community and used what he had picked up to communicate with his students. He also purposefully looked up key words in his lessons in French ahead of the class. Mr. Ready carefully scaffolded the work that he had students do according to the needs of the students and the complexity of the material (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19

House on Mango Street Worksheet

Note. Mr. Ready explained key words as shown in the first document and checked for understanding. Isidro turned in the following work.

Similarly, in the newcomer study hall, while the teacher, Ms. Hart was a math teacher, students also talked to her in Spanish while she responded in English. Because she did not understand a lot of Spanish, when she had difficulty communicating, she used the translator on her phone or asked for assistance from a more fluent bilingual student. In both classes, these teachers were also intentional about mediating social behaviors due to their cultural sensitivity and understanding of addressing needs of adolescents. Mr. Ready gave quick tips such "one squirt of cologne is enough, guys" while physically demonstrating squirting and choking from being overwhelmed with the smell. Ms. Hart put together gift bags to hand out to the students before the winter break as a way to discreetly give hygiene products to certain students without embarrassing them.

In other classes where students felt at ease, there was a correlation between reporting that they were allowed to use their L1 and their general positive view of the class (see Table 4.3). This included science teachers, art teachers, and coaches.

Table 4.3

Relationship of Teachers' L1 Attitudes and Positive Student Attitudes

Perceived teacher attitude to L1	Students' attitude toward class
A veces si nos dice que podemos hacer en español, o en inglés, pero a veces si nos dice que son en inglés. [Some time he does tell us that we can do it Spanish, or in English, but sometimes he does tell us to do it in English.]	En el primer periodo, que es inglés, me está bastante ayudando allí en la clase. Casimente por Mr. Ready estoy aprendiendo a escribir cosas en inglés. [In first period, English, he is helping me a lot in class. Almost completely because of Mr. Ready, I am learning to write things in English. (About TELPAS Listening & Speaking exam) No, casi mucho me preocupo, por vez, si va, pero casi con Mr. Ready, no me preocupo con eso… Los temas, lo que él me enseña todas las cosas. Yo ya sé bastantes cosas [No, I don't worry with Mr. Ready. I don't worry about it. The topics, what he teaches, all the things. I already know a lot of things.]

Note. Teachers' L1 attitude as perceived by students

In the classes where students said they were struggling the most, there was a relationship between attitudes different from those of Mr. Ready and Ms. Hart. It was evident that the teachers' attitudes differed slightly (see Table 4.4). In those spaces, English was the only language spoken, and the students were required to speak it. Tests and homework were only

given once and had to be turned in on time or no credit was given. Technology was not

permitted, and so translators were not used.

Table 4.4

Relationship of Teacher L1 attitudes and Negative Student Attitudes

Perceived teacher attitude to L1	Students' attitude toward class
Nomás en las otras clases. En esta la que estoy ahorita casi no. En las otras clases, me deja hacer un proyecto así en español o algo así, pero per en esta clase siempre tiene que sé en inglés, nunca en español. [In the other classes they let me (work in Spanish). In this class that I am in right now, not really. In the other classes, they let me do projects in Spanish, but in this class, it always has to be in English, never Spanish.]	No me dejaron cambiar. [They wouldn't let me change (my schedule).]
Por eso es que hay un poco la agonía, porque no es mucho lo que, no nos deja casi usar traductor cuando nos toca así exámenes. [That's why it's a little agonizing, because he doesn't let us use a translator in the exams]	"Entonces, por eso me ha puesto suficiente nota y a este con Mr. Herb que 'stá reventado." [Then, that's why he did give me a satisfactory grade and with this Mr. Herb that I'm failing.]

Note. Teachers' L1 attitude as perceived by students

Home Spaces

While the students shared the school spaces, home spaces were unique to them and did not overlap (see Figure 4.20). I did not observe students at home; however, they did speak about their home environments. The way each space put emphasis on certain life aspects differed from each student and what they put emphasis on. Mediation in home spaces was influenced by the fact that they are in a shared space with people who usually have more shared experiences with them up to this point in their life and who are also trying to figure out new territory. They are still the MKO in most cases, as they are using what they know about "doing life" back in their home country and adjusting it to "doing life" in the United States.

Figure 4.20

Agency Mobilizers in Home Spaces
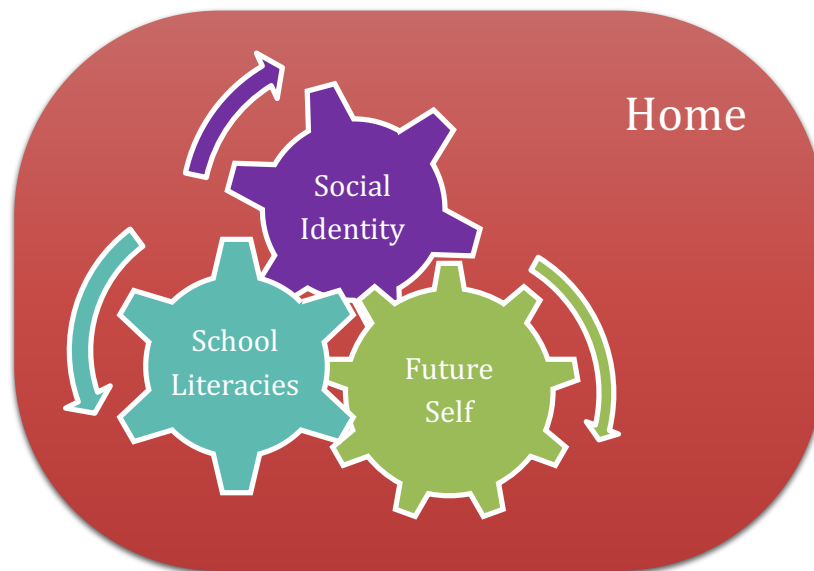
The way semiotic mediators are present in this space are from the messages adolescents receive from their guardians on how they should behave at home and at school and give general direction to their future. For this reason, the guardians are the dominant MKOs in that space.

Their messages and mediation can give emphasis on one thing more than other but that may not always be how it is internalized and acted on. Home spaces also consist of a group of people with long-term shared experiences.

All the students' home space were mobile in the sense that they moved frequently. The main consistency were the people that exist in their various home spaces. Isidro's first home space in Guatemala was on his family's land with his mother, father, sister, and niece. Here in the United States, his home space was with his brothers (who had been in the US longer), niece and father. Then his father went back to Guatemala. Justine's first home space was in DRC with her parents, grandparents, and siblings. Here, her home space was with guardians who are from DRC and her older brother. Karol's original home space in Honduras was with her parents and most of her siblings. Some of older siblings had started leaving home to work since before she was born. Karol's home space in the US was with her older brother, his wife, and their daughters. Her father, some other siblings, and nieces lived within driving distance to her older brother's home.

In these cases, the students lived with someone who was familiar with the original home spaces. They also have highly dynamic and mobile home spaces. It is fortunate that they have at least one family member to provide consistency in the inconsistency of their home spaces.

Affinity Spaces

Home and school spaces can be related or connected to other spaces; however, affinity spaces are separate enough that they are their own spaces. Affinity spaces (see Figure 4.21) are spaces where groups of people are drawn together because of a shared, strong interest or engagement in a common activity. Such spaces exist in the community physically or digitally.

For example, some students may work while other join guardians to run errands. Extracurricular spaces fall under this category as well, because, as the name indicates, while they are associated with school, they occur outside of the curriculum.

Figure 4.21

Agency Mobilizers in Affinity Spaces
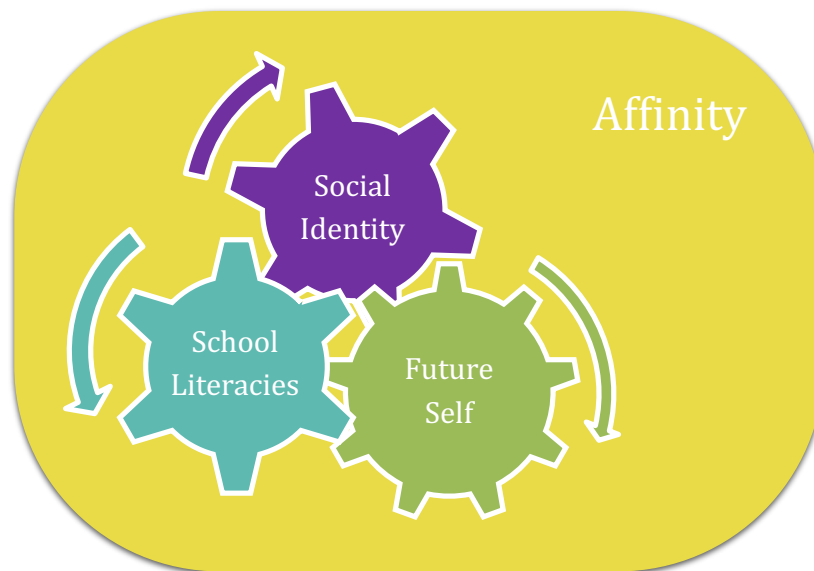
Isidro spent his time at work mostly in the back of the restaurant, but, on occasion, he interacted with the customers. He went out in the community to do errands. Isidro also took part in the school soccer team as a player. That meant he went to practices after school hours and competes in matches. Karol spent a lot of time at home, but she often spent time on YouTube, watching roller skating videos. Both Karol and Justine participated in a created mental space such as Karol's diary and Justine's romance novels.

The goals of the MKO in these spaces are very different from the home and school spaces in that their mediations are more self-driven than people driven. That means that affinity MKOs want to mediate to meet their own needs rather than the needs of the adolescent. What this looks

like in a store, for example, is an employee will be more motivated to help with communication and cultural practices if it will help with a sale or efficiency, and not to help the person learn for future similar situation. However, there could certainly be those who are empathetic to the needs of newcomers and immigrants that may go out of their way to intentionally mediate, but that is not their main purpose. These spaces tend to be spaces of unintentional semiotic mediation, but mediation nonetheless that will be interpreted and internalized into the gears.

Agency Mobilizers

The gears represent agency mobilizers. They are different aspects that make up our identity, beyond basic demographics, that give the capacity to act within an environment. There are certain factors that mobilize or propel us through life more than other factors. Everyone is unique in the way that they interpret life and its meaning. The gears, or agency mobilizers, are theoretically vast, even endless, within each human. They are also constantly informing each other. The cogs represent this as they help the gears continually turn. The turning transfers the information from each gear to another since, at one point or another, all cogs will have had contact with the information of each gear. The amount or importance of the gear is influence by the space that they spend the time in. This is basically how we internalize messages that we receive from the influencers or MKOs from each space.

In this analysis, three gears or agency mobilizers stood out overall that were relevant to the study and the research question: future self, social identity, and school literacies. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, these gears are dynamic, so they could change. To represent the main agency mobilizer in the individual, the gear is visually larger than the other gears as it may be the one mainly informing the other gears. At any point in time, the gears could

change in size in any sort of combination. For the purposes of this analysis, one gear will be larger than the two similarly sized gears.

Future Self

Everyone has a goal in life as to what they want to accomplish. Some goals are in the near present, some are much further in the future. For some students (Isidro in particular), the future self is a driving force in how to manage life now (see Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22

Dominant Future Self Mobilizer
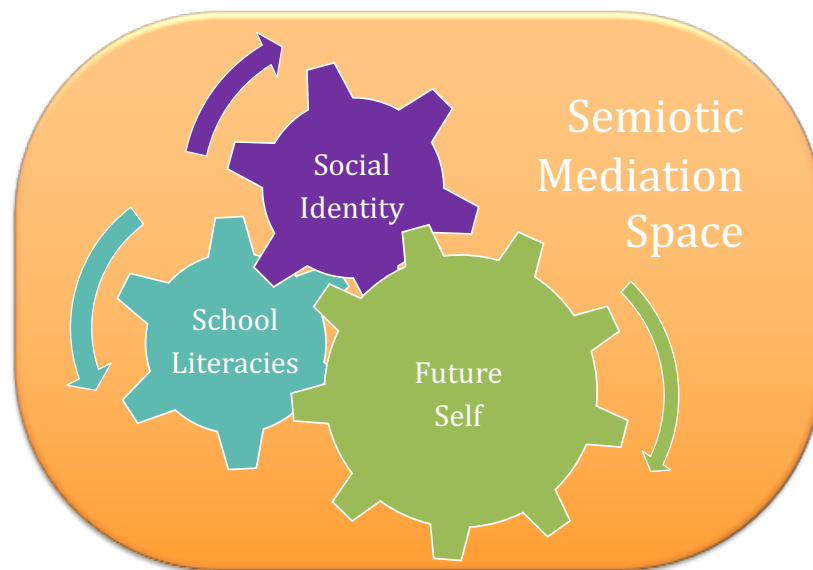
When Isidro first arrived, his father set the goals for him because of who he wanted for his son's future. He was there to study and to do well in school or else there would be consequences. He was at school to learn English and he had better acclimate quick. While Isidro was very unhappy at the end of the first school year, he still did well in school. He would be disappointed when he failed any courses. He dove right into reading and writing in English using his phone as a translator.

The next year saw a slightly different Isidro. He was still doing well at school even though his father had gone back home. He claimed to not be interested in education, even though that was the message his father had given in the year prior. However, he still seemed be developing socially and linguistically. His teachers were supremely impressed with his progress and excited for his future in college. Isidro however, had other plans. His main goal was to "trabajar" [work]. He could not specify what he wanted to work in for a long time. He was not interested in college at all claiming "yo sé mucho más que ellos" [I know more than them], and "yo no vine para eso, vine para trabajar" [I did not come here for that, I came to work]. So, what was motivating his progress now? He was not currently working. In fact, his brother told him that he needed to quit soccer so he could work more. Isidro rebelled and told his brother that if he could not play soccer then he would not go to school. His main goal was soccer. To participate in soccer, students must maintain a 70 or more. So, he did everything he could to maintain that score. His writing improved dramatically from the year before.

Karol's future self, on the other hand, did not drive her as much as her social situation. When she first arrived, I asked about her life goals. She said she wanted to clean houses and that was it. Eventually she said she wanted to do hair since she saw there was a program. Later, she was no longer interested in that because she said it was too much work. I have a sense that cost was also a factor in the sudden change in interest since she thought it was free when we first talked about it. She had shared her love of roller skating in our interviews which then evolved into her goal being of being a roller-skater. She was clearly still in the process of figuring out her future self, as she continued to explore the opportunities that are available to her now.

Again, just because Karol did not have a clear direction for her future self, does not mean it does not exist or suffers neglection, or that she is unmotivated for her future. It is present; however, presently, it is not her dominant agency mobilizer. In her case, she has likely internalized the message that one leaves home to do manual labor, since that is what her parents and siblings have done. It would be reasonable to conclude that she has not had the opportunity to explore and understand the newly available opportunities beyond what she has internalized before: that she will do some type of manual labor. Since she is still young and her much older siblings have established themselves better and are making different goals for the future self of their own children, she may have an opportunity to shift more emphasis in her future self gear should she choose to.

Justine did not speak at all about her future self beyond school. Even so, I believe that students who dedicate themselves to performing well in school both academically and behaviorally have goals beyond school but that are achieved through schooling. I do not believe that the only motivator is to do well in high school and then just stop. Knowing her academic history, Justine is likely headed to college to pursue a career. Whether that is self-driven or guardian driven is not evident.

When talking about topics that they would like to talk about, Isidro and Karol talked about interests that reflected interests in their future selves, such as a book on soccer methods or a book in roller skating. Justine only asked for romance novels and twice asked for a specific book she had read at school in the DRC that she really liked call "Be Safe." When asked how long she would be in the United States she would answer, "je ne sais pas. C'est possible. C'est possible" [I don't know. It's possible. It's possible]. Although capable, she is hesitant to push her

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English abilities beyond comfort. Perhaps there is no reason for her to do so if her future resides back in DRC or if her future is too unclear.

School Literacies

Some students come with a very literate background and are accustomed to navigating between discourses. They may understand the importance of being print based literate and the importance of schooling in general. Success in their home country school may be common. In cases like these, I propose that these students have school literacies as an agency mobilizer (see Figure 4.23). This means that doing well in school is what gives them the capacity to act. To do well in school includes being able to read and write academically, but also how to behave and "do school."

Figure 4.23

Dominant School Literacies Mobilizer
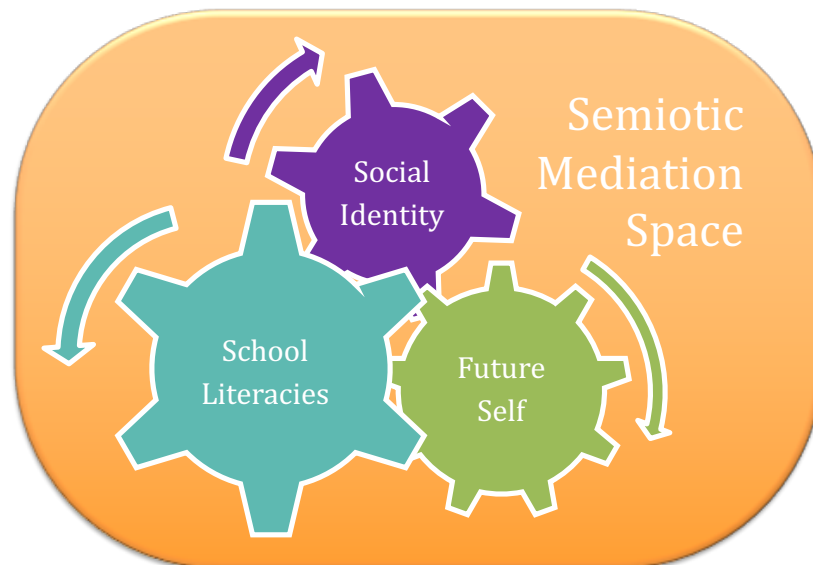
School literacies mobilized Justine. Although she never spoke directly about liking school, she never complained about school. Most students will relate their previous schooling identities to current ones saying things such as "I was never good at school" or "I never liked school." Justine never spoke those words. In both classes where I observed her, she was always doing schoolwork. She was always very concentrated on her work, regardless if it was math, history or English. When she needed help or clarification, she would raise her hand to ask the teacher. Since she sat alone, she did not often seek for peer assistance. In the school spaces she knew that her teachers were there to help her. It is quite possible that there were other classes that she may have not particularly liked but I am certain that she is passing all her classes.

Justine is the most literate in practically all definitions of that word. She knows how to read the world around her as well as literally read and write proficiently. In her home country where there are many languages, close interactions of social classes, and subcultures, Justine has become an expert at navigating cultures. She knew what languages are taught at school and who is privileged enough to know her home country's official language. She understood that some people cannot read due to economic reasons. She knew there are languages and registers to use at home and others to use at school. She knew that she has some privilege by being able to attend a Belgian school. Justine is fully literate in French and an advanced developing literacy in English.

Justine's ability with school literacies is what is driving her through school. She is learning the way the system works so that she can be successful. She knows there is a system at work, and she know how to work it. She was driven to communicate with her teachers to be successful in school. She did not hold back from asking her teachers for help understanding assignments or content with no regard to what her peers might think. Although she would like to

be with friends and others like her in a more advanced class, she decided to stay where she was because she understood that the other class might be too difficult for her to be successful in. Therefore, although it would be nice to be with friends, friends were not enough to drive her motivation. She would rather be alone and successful than to risk failure surrounded by friends. While that may be a rather extreme interpretation, it does show that her understanding and value of schooling drives her cautious choices. This also in a way shows why she was reluctant in reading and writing in English.

Justine had more tools available to her than most newcomers, but she still resisted reading and writing in English. Why could that be? As seen, she would rather be without her friend to be in a class that she will certainly pass. Similarly, Justine was meeting the requirements to pass without having to put more effort than needed to read or write in English. In her Newcomer English class, students were allowed to read and do work in their L1. This is because their teacher understood that students need their L1 as a tool to acquire an L2. Most students in that class had no exposure to English prior to arriving to the United States. Some students in those classes had extended periods of interrupted schooling. Justine did not fit into those categories. However, she did take advantage of the situation. She read her books in French and did her assignments in French when allowed. Interestingly, when she found out that there were other languages that she could study at school during our first meeting, she was immediately interested. As I went through the list of languages taught at that school, she would exclaim as I got to ones she was interested in "Il y a des cours d'allemand ici? Ah bon ? Espagnol aussi ?" [There is a German class here? Really? Spanish, too?]. In our next meeting when I asked

if she had thought about a language to learn next semester she quickly responded with "Yes. Spanish."

Isidro similarly had a rich background in school literacies. He fortunately received education in his Indigenous language, Kaqchikel, as well as his colonized language, Spanish. Although difficult and expensive, Isidro attended school for a significant amount of time compared to others with his similar demographic background in Guatemala. He expressed that money was a major obstacle in continuing education in Guatemala, "Hay una buena universidad, n'hombre está bien carísima" [There is a good university, man, it is very expensive]. He continued to explain to me why earning money was more important:

> Y como el dinero se gana así si, cuesta para ganar, entonces lo que hace la gente,
> venir acá nomás es ganar dinero, mandarlo, entonces allá abunda y ya se van y
> hacen sus cosas allá, y luego siguen lo mismo. Nomás los quieren esperarse un
> poco, y ya se van otra vez. (Isidro)
>
> [And since you get money like that, yes, it costs to earn it, so then what people do,
> just come here, is to earn money, send it, so then over there it abounds, and they
> leave and do their things over there, and then the same continues. They just want
> to wait a little and they go again.]

Although he was allowed to turn in work in Spanish, Isidro would almost always do his work in English. He was able to achieve this by mainly typing out his answers in Spanish in Google Translate and writing down the translations almost word for word as is shown in Figure 4.24. This is an interesting approach considering how he was already fluent in two languages so, theoretically, he should have an idea that translating from one language to another is not simply a

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one to one process, but he chose to do it this way regardless. Unlike Justine, he was not as concerned about the appearance of the output, as he was with completeness. Just like Justine, he knew how to act at school to be successful. However, his motivation for being successful at school was outside of academics (soccer).

Figure 4.24

Isidro's Effects of Imperialism Essay
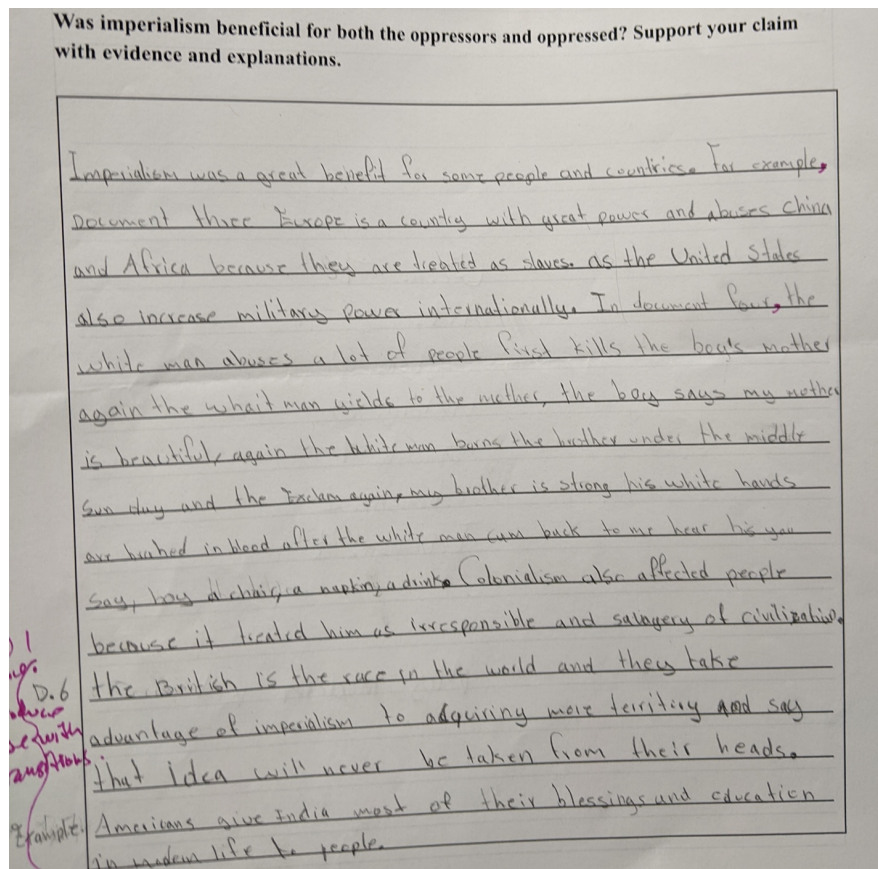
Exact words. "Imperialism was a great benefit for some people and countries. For example, document three Europe is a country with great powers and abuses China and Africa because they are treated as slaves. As the United States also increase military power internationally. In document four, the white man abuses a lot of people first kills the boy's mother again the white

man yields to the other, the boy says my mother is beautiful again the white man burns the brother under the middle sun day and the exclam again my brother is strong his white hands are brahed in blood after the white man cum back to me hear his you say, boy a chair, a napkin, a drink. Colonialism also affected people because it treated him as irresponsible and slavery of civilization. The British is the race in the world and they take advantage of imperialism to acquiring more territory and say that t idea will never be taken from their heads. Americas give India most of their blessing and education in modern life to people."

Karol on the other hand, had the least amount of school literacies compared to the other two, but that does not mean she did not have the capabilities. She did not see herself a reader or writer based on her experiences in Honduras. However, her behaviors said otherwise. She loved reading romance and adventures novels. She still liked princess and mermaid stories and was on the lookout for books on roller skating. She was also a writer. She wrote a lot about her feelings in her journal. Once during tutoring, I had the chance to help her write. Ms. Hart chose to give Karol a written test instead of the geometry midterm that the rest of the students got. Karol did not want to do it, but after a little pushing, she began answering the questions while loudly complaining how much she hated typing. She finished it in Spanish and quickly threw it in Google Translate and turned it in. This writing was interesting to me because you could see her voice and mine (see Figure 4.25). She claimed to always be a troublemaker, as she was in Honduras. Although at first, she did skip class a few times, she slowly changed those behaviors. In class, she seemed to be trying to follow along with the teacher and trying to figure out how to do school. Even with her friends goofing off around her and teasing her, she seemed to push that aside to try and do work for her teachers.

Figure 4.25

Karol's Algebra Midterm Alternative Assignment

Spanish
1{ Lo que hice bien en este semestre es el examen de algebra. Otra cosa que hice bien es en la clase de ingles. Estoy entendiendo mas .
2{Lo que podria haber hecho mejor es la clase de dibujo. A mi me falto un poco de esfuerzo. Tambien fuera que la clase de algebra fue prestar mas atencion.
3{Este verano lo que quiero hacer es ir al parque ureca. Otra meta es ir al parque a patinar. Otra meta es ir al mol y pasar tiempo con mi sobrina.
4{ Para el proximo semestre una meta que tengo es aprender mas el ingles. Tambien quiciéra ser mas paciente y pacitiva. Soy capas e inteligente y lo debo creer.
5{Si fuy una buena amiga de Jeniffer .Hablamos mucho. Con ella los escapabamos de la clase para andar corriendo en las escaleras.
6{Podria ser mejor amiga en ser una influencia pocitiva. Seria mas amigable y mas bromista con mis amigas.Quizas quesiera tener mas amigos y amigas para esquipiarme de las clases y hacer mas travesuras.
7{Yo seria una mejor miembro de la familia siendo responsable de mis actos. Seria bonito poder contribuir economicamente pero no me dejan. Me dicen que nesecito estudiar pero no quiero.
8{ Le darea un 100 por ser una maestra perfecta. Nadie es perfecto pero mi modo. Nesecito ser mas respetosa con ella.
9{Podria ser mejor maestra si no fuera tan enojada. Debe estar f‐‐‐‐‐‐s portamos mal. Es broma.
10{El consejo que tendria para los estudiantes es que sean mas tremendos y que los esquipiemos de la clase. Mi otro consejo es que se porten muy mal. Es broma.

English
1)   What I did well in this semester is the

Translation. 1) What I did well in this semester is the algebra exam. Another thing I did well is in English class. I am understanding more. 2)What I could have done better is the drawing class. I lack a little effort. It was also that the algebra class was paying more attention. 3 {This summer what I want to do is go to the ureca park. Another goal is to go to the park to skate. Another goal is to go to the mall and spend time with my niece. 4 {For the next semester one goal I have is to learn more English. I would also like to be more patient and peaceful. I am ready and intelligent and I must believe it. 5 { I was a good friend to ███████. We talked a lot. With her we escaped them from class to run on the stairs. 6 {I could be a better friend in being a positive influence. I would be friendlier and more prankster with my friends. Maybe I would like to have more friends to skip classes and do more pranks. 7 {I would be a better family member by being

responsible for my actions. It would be nice to be able to contribute economically but they don't let me. They tell me that I need to study but I don't want to. 8) I would give her a 100 for being a perfect teacher. No one is perfect but any way. I need to be more respectful to her. 9) She could be a better teacher if I wasn't so angry. You must be happy when we misbehave. Just kidding. 10) The advice I would have for students is that they be more prankster and that we skip class. My other advice is that they behave very badly. Just kidding.

Social Identity

While some students have set goals for themselves and understand how to be successful in school, there are those who were still figuring things out. This is typical of adolescents, since it is a normal time for processing life. I propose that being identity-driven means that the student is still trying to make sense of what is going on around them (see Figure 4.26). While all adolescents are trying to figure themselves out and newcomers are trying to figure out their new cultures, identity-driven students are not quite sure what motivates them yet.

Figure 4.26

Dominant Social Identity Mobilizer
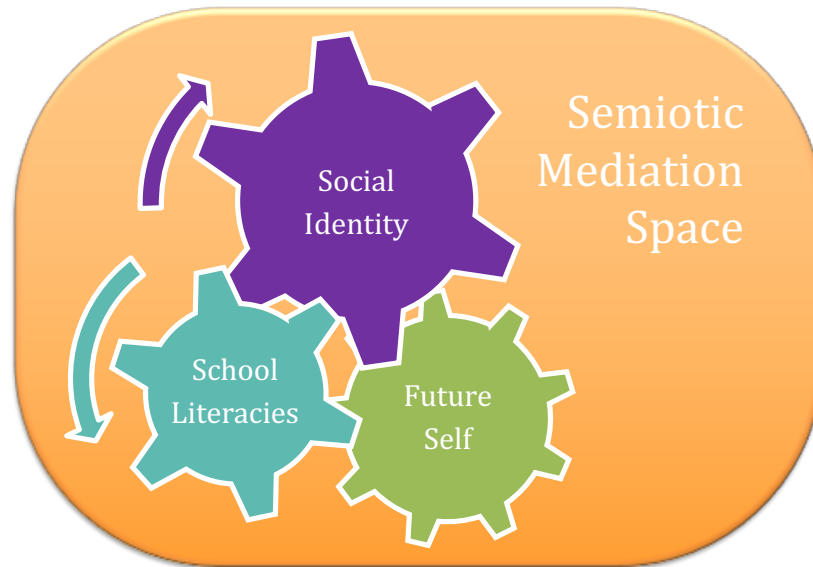
Karol was the youngest of the students in this study. She was also the most social identity-driven student. She was outwardly a rebel and claimed that she was never good at school. When asked why she was here, she said she was not sure except that she had to come with her father to be with her brother. Her family had a strong say in what she did, which is appropriate for her age and being in a new country. She said she is not a good reader or writer. She made a lot of friends quickly, as well as cut out some friends, too. Her relationship with her friends was tumultuous and, at times, questionable. It is clear that she has not yet figured out her future self since she is still trying to figure out who she is now.

It may be for these reasons that she skipped classes she did not like often and did not worry about doing her homework or even finishing tests. She had a difficult time at school in her home country and now with the added language barrier she had given up hope about being successful. At home, she practiced her roller skating and watched videos to help her improve. In

particular she loved to watch "Soy Luna." She watched "Dave and Ava" videos with her

youngest niece in Spanish. She read the English books her niece brings from Pre-K.

She strongly emphasized the importance of her friends. An interesting shift that I saw

where her social identity overlapped with her school literacies was with her relationship with the

other Honduran girl that had arrived at County High School at the same time she did. The girl

had left only a couple of months after arriving, but she stayed connected with her teachers

through Twitter, so I had a general idea of where she was. I also knew that this girl and Karol

had been close, and so I imagined they stayed connected. I asked how the other student was

doing and was not quite prepared for the reply:

> Pero todos los amigos de ella le dijimos que se viniera, que estuviera aquí con
>
> nosotros y todo, pero dijo que no, que iba trabajar porque el papa no quería que
>
> estudiara y no sé qué más. Al final fue que nos mintió porque a un amigo eso le
>
> dijo a la otra amiga le dijo que no quería venir porque mejor quería trabajar. A mí
>
> me dijo otra cosa. Nos 'stá mintiendo, nos mintió pues, entonces todos nos
>
> enojamos y pues ya no hablábamos ya. (Karol)
>
> [But all her friends, we told her come back, that she should be here with us and
>
> everything, but she said no, that she was going to work because the father didn't
>
> want her to study and I don't know what else. In the end it was that she lied to us
>
> because she told that to one friend and to another friend, she said something else.
>
> She is lying to us, she lied to us so then we all got mad and, well, we don't talk
>
> anymore].

Her friend had broken a group rule; therefore, she was no longer welcome. Interestingly, to get her to come back, they wanted her to come back to school, not just around town. This was the first instance of a positive verbal expression of school literacies. To confirm this, Karol continued to explain how her friend could come back to school and still work, like one of her other friends at County High School, Isabel: "Mi amiga, esta Isabel, ella viene aquí a la escuela, ella viene a la escuela y trabaja" [My friend Isabel, she comes here to school, she comes to school and she works]. Her social identity was starting to include school literacies.

Social identities are evident in Justine's life, albeit to a lesser extent than Karol in as far as how they spoke about friends and groups outside of school. Justine did not talk about friends here nor in the DRC. However outwardly, she was purposeful about her appearance and how she wanted to be seen. She was very stylish according to the current trends wearing chunky tennis shoes, baggy pants, a form fitting top with an oversized jacket. Her hair was always well coifed and her accessories, from large wire rimmed glasses to 1990s style jewelry, were also trendy. Before the break, she got new blond braids that were loud and fabulous. When we sat in the hall to talk, if she saw a friend walk by, she would say hi loudly and confidently in English. It was clear that she knew who she was.

Isidro had emerging interest in Social Identities or being part of a group. His first year, he would purposefully pull himself away from others. The second year he had a couple more friends, thanks to soccer. He was also very interested in being a part of that group as a junior varsity soccer player. He frosted his tips, or bleached the tips of his hair, like his teammates over the summer. Because of how isolated he had been I was concerned about embarrassing him by our sessions but with time it turned out I was the only one concerned about that.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings for these case studies. The research sought to answer: In what ways do cultural and linguistic mediators affect students' development in reading and writing in a second language? After I transcribed the semi-structured interview responses and the classroom observations, I identified common themes in the interviews, observations, artifacts, and anecdotal notes.

Before presenting the cross-case analysis, I gave voice to each student by presenting their narratives. The narratives provided context and humanized the students. I presented the home lives, adjustments, and languaging and literacies of Karol, Justine and Isidro. Then, I presented the themes in two categories: semiotic mediation spaces and agency mobilizers. In discussion the semiotic mediation spaces, I identified the spaces that the students had contact with including home, school, and affinity spaces. I explained that spaces impact how our gears internalize the messages from the MKOs. Then I discussed the agency mobilizers represented by gears. The gears stay in perpetual motion by the need for the receptors, or cogs, to receive and transmit information from the stream of instances, or events, from the various spaces and other gears. I explained how for the purposes of the study I identified three gears, although the actual numbers are vast. I also explained how one gear can mobilize each students' agency more than others while still using the others. Here I showed how each student fits within each dominant gear.

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CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the cultural and linguistic semiotic mediators that influences newcomers' English language development, particularly in the areas of reading and writing. The question that guided this study was: In what ways do cultural and linguistic semiotic mediators support students' literacy development in school? The theoretical frameworks that influenced my study were socioculturalism and critical literacy, providing the conceptual framework of critical semiotic mediation.

I first introduced the study by giving historical background on education policy that guide English language acquisition programs in the United States by noting that policy has been evolving since in conception to try to fit the needs of the ever-growing EB population. I also reviewed challenges and promises that students and teachers face within the constraints of these educational policies. Many of the challenges with these policies is that they seem to try to solve challenges with "one-size-fits-all" policies for a dynamic and diverse group (Behizadeh, 2014; Enright, 2010). As the population changes, some promising efforts and policy changes to address the various linguistic and cultural needs of EBs are happening. I then described the elements of adolescent newcomers, the focus of this study. Adolescents are facing a unique time in their lives. In addition to that, newcomers also have to navigate their adolescence as well as a new cultural world (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018). Finally, I shared that my background uniquely positions me for this study. I am a daughter of immigrants from a low socioeconomic

background and an EL. In addition to speaking Spanish, I also learned French as a second language. I have taught first, second, and third generation EBs in primarily bilingual education programs and Title 1 schools.

I then presented the theoretical lenses of my study of socioculturalism and critical literacy. I reviewed key points in each theoretical lens made by key figures and their seminal work. Vygotsky's (1978) work on language development in children presented emerging theories and ideas that are at the core of sociocultural theory. The ideas pertinent to this study were on semiotic mediation, the ZPD, and the knowledgeable others. Freire (Freire, 1972b) was an equally prominent figure in advancing the critical literacy theory through his work with illiterate Brazilian peasants. I focused on Freire's theory of liberating the oppressed through teachers and students as co-learners, conscientização, and transformative pedagogy.

Using these lenses as a basis for the proposed conceptual framework of critical semiotic mediation, I then presented a review of literature. The literature outlined the idea that language and culture are inextricable; therefore, semiotic mediation should be culturally and linguistically critical. The review included works that depend and expand on the theories of socioculturalism and critical literacy as they pertain to newcomer EBs. Language as a mediator encompassed bilingual asset based stances and recognizing full linguistic repertoires. Culture as a mediator promotes the use of culturally relevant texts and CSP.

The methodology of the study was a qualitative case study guided by the work of Dyson and Genishi (2005). I gave background on the setting and on the participants. The study takes place in a large town high school in the North Texas area. The students all are newcomers who have been in the United States less than 2 years and have been designated a beginner level

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English proficient by district language proficiency testing. The artifacts gathered for this study include two interviews per student, three observations per student, writing samples, book choices, miscellaneous literacy artifacts and reflexive journaling that included informal conversations with classroom teachers. I analyzed the data using open and axial coding in Google Sheets.

Two major findings in the ways that semiotic mediation supported students' literacy development in school were the concepts of semiotic mediation spaces and agency mobilizers. First, I gave voice to each student by presenting their narratives. The narratives provided context and humanized the students. I presented the home lives, adjustments, and languaging and literacies of the three students. Then I presented the thematic findings. A model illustrated the symbiotic and interactive relationship of agency mobilizers within semiotic mediation spaces. In discussing the semiotic mediation spaces, I identified the spaces that the students had contact with including home, school, and affinity spaces. I explained that spaces impact how our gears internalize the messages from the MKOs. Then I discussed the agency mobilizers represented by gears. I explained how, for the purposes of the study, I identified three gears (agency mobilizers), although the actual numbers are vast. I also explained how one gear can mobilize each student's agency more than others while simultaneously using the others. The gears stay in perpetual motion by the need for the receptors, or cogs, to receive and transmit information from events. The gears then determine how a person acts within a space, affecting the space and thus continuing the symbiotic and interactive relationship. I then showed how each student fit under each dominant gear and how the spaces possibly informed them.

Contributions

This study contributes to literature on adolescent newcomers. This study adds to the literature on identity theories, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and diversity of immigrants.

Identity Theories

It is evident that the ideology present in a space/site is a major factor in the messages send to adolescent newcomers. Administrators and teacher language and culture ideologies toward immigrants and ELs impact school spaces. The nuclear family impacts the home space. Affinity group members impact their space. These spaces played varied a role in impacting each student's identity.

The newcomers in this study had to navigate the shifting dynamic of their known spaces, or cultural worlds (Holland et al., 1998), to redefine spaces in a new country. There were instances of competing sites of the self, or the loci of self-production, as they used semiotic mediators to modify their behaviors. They developed the ability to organize themselves in the name of an identity, "as one transacts cultural artifacts with others and then at some point applies the cultural resource to oneself" (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007, p. 12).

Norton's (2013) work with adult immigrants on investment, imagined identities and imagined communities shifts our focus to language learners. Norton argues that language learners "invest" in language and literacy with the understanding that they will attain a wider range of symbolic and material resources that will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. To do so, however, the differences in traditional conceptions of learner identity must be eliminated and then "recognize that the conditions of power in different learning contexts can position the learners in multiple and often unequal ways" (Darvin & Norton, 2015,

p. 37). In this study, we saw the different approaches each student had in "investing" in the new language and culture around them while at the same time trying to be successful at school. In situations outside of their ESL classrooms where the students had a lot of homework and had to adhere to rigid deadlines, they were less invested.

This study expands each of these theories through the application to adolescent EBs. The teachers in this study made sure that their classroom were spaces where students could be safe to develop and express their identities. They provided intentional semiotic mediators that would help them increase students' cultural capital. They also showed understanding that the traditional curriculum could position them in an unfair way. Their approach to pedagogy was critical to sustaining their students' cultural identities.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

This study contributes to the emerging literature of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017) which deepens the ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy. CSP "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). CSP means that we must bring to the forefront of our understandings that we have traditionally measured ourselves and the young people in our communities against White, middle class norms of knowing and being. We also must be aware that, without intentionally making changes, those norms will continue to dominate the notion of educational achievement. (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Students responded better academically and emotionally with teachers who in various ways tried to acknowledge or sustain the students' cultural roots. Sometime, this came in the form of giving space for students to communicate in their own language (Gort, 2020; Martínez &

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Martinez, 2020). Teachers allowed or even encouraged the use of translators, people or translation devices, to help with verbal communication with the teachers or in completing any English assignments. Teachers also made efforts to learn their students' languages and cultures which is an important component of critical multilingual language awareness (Bucholtz et al., 2017; O. García, 2017). The teachers' attempts were demonstrated through their using the language they did know to aid in communication, using translators, and asking MKOs for help when communicating. In the ELA classes, the teacher, Mr. Ready, made an effort to give students a space to write about their experiences as well as question and reflect colonization practices that tied in with their own lived experiences shown in Figure 4.24 (W. M. Brooks et al., 2018; Lee & Walsh, 2017; Ross & Stewart, 2019). Much of the information that I got about the students were from informal conversations with the teachers who shared with no questioning or prompting. They were excited about each student and knew their student. The ideology that their teachers possessed gave these students a different academic experience that they would have had in an otherwise monolingual or unresponsive high school (Au & Boyd, 2013; O. García et al., 2013). It is possible that the teachers' actions and ideologies pre-existed, but participating in the graduate courses that address meeting the needs of EBs could have been further encouraged them.

Also contributing to culturally sustaining pedagogies is raciolinguistics, or how language constructs race and how ideas of race influence language use. Flores and Rosa (2015) explained the framework of raciolinguistics emphasizing the role of the white speaking and listening subject that positions an idealized monolinguism to which all national subjects should aspire. As Richard Ruíz (1989) had outlined earlier, bilingualism can be seen as a lack of national

allegiance especially when paired with a non-white person. I once worked with a White teacher baffled at why some Latino parent would take their children out of bilingual programs. I understood the choice, although not ideal, because when someone looks like me and speaks Spanish, I get told to speak English. Parents want to keep their children safe and to not face the same discriminatory and derogatory experiences they have had due to their appearance and language. When someone like the White teacher and her children speak Spanish, it is praised. There is an idealized standard English that overshadows other forms or dialects of English deeming them less correct, or less prestigious. In reality, languages like Spanglish (the mixing of Spanish and English), Fragnol, (the mixing of French and Spanish) or Spangbonix (the mixing of Spanish and Ebonics) highlight a dexterous ability navigating identities otherwise not possible. Rosa (2016) highlighted the detriment of how the classification of students' language abilities can function in covertly racializing ways by "positioning particular populations as unfit for nation-state inclusion on linguistic grounds," (p. 171).

In this study I found that teachers did what they had the ability to do within their spaces to act away from the "white gaze" or hegemonic ideological position. The "white gaze" refers to a perspective that privileges dominant white perspectives on the linguistic and cultural practices of racialized communities (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Flores and Rosa (2015) explained their framework of raciolinguistic ideologies:

> Specifically, a raciolinguistic perspective seeks to understand how the white gaze is attached both to a speaking subject who engages in the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness and to a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their

racial positioning in society as opposed to any objective characteristics of their

language use. As with the white gaze, the white speaking and listening subject

should be understood not as a biographical individual but as an ideological

position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society. (p. 151)

The race of the students was not central to the study but is of importance. As I noted, the students' dialect differed from the "standard" French and the "standard English. Justine's French accent and dialect were on par with what the French and Belgians would consider native and without accent. Isidro's and Karol's Spanish dialect strayed from the "standard" Spanish in both grammar structure and vocabulary. It would be interesting to see how they were perceived by others and how they perceived others in the home countries and trace how it transferred to their new experiences. Here, all three of them will face hardships due to how they look. Justine will face discrimination more than others by being a Black woman in the United States. I say this as the murders of three African Americans by the police have been at the forefront of the news for an entire month. Karol is light skinned but has Afro features. The general public in the US does not usually associate people who look like her to be Latinx so she will struggle with her perceived identities of others. Isidro has dark skinned Indigenous features that quickly set him apart from his Latinx classmates from the beginning. Mr. Ready shared that he has had to shut down racist commentary from Latinx immigrant students against Indigenous populations throughout his years teaching ESL courses.

This study contributes to raciolinguistics by showing how a space to language is beneficial to both teachers and students. The teachers positioned language as what the student needed to be successful in certain spaces while honoring what they are able to do currently. Not

once during my time in those classes when students mixed, or translanguaged, or used language in an innovative way, were students ever stopped, demeaned, or corrected. Neither did this space of language acceptance impede the learning of "academic" English.

Diversity of Adolescent Newcomers

This study provides insight into the diversity that exists within adolescent newcomers ranging from country of origin, to lived experiences, to purpose. In addition to the challenges that policy can present, there is a heterogenous assumption, or one story view, about immigrants and ELs (Behizadeh, 2014). Some assumptions appear to be inconsequential but can be harmful. One such example would be the constant assumption that I am Mexican because I look Latina. To this day it continues to happen, but I have learned to respond to it better than when I was younger. It infuriated me to be lumped into a group that did not reflect my culture except that we shared the same colonizers. Justin Garcia (2013) details his own experiences being homogenized by others discussing the complexities of latinidad, or Latin-ness. Latinos are not a racial group and "the nature of Latino identity is just as complex and multifarious as Latinos' complexions," (J. D. García, 2013, p. 236). Similarly, there are assumptions that because groups of people look the same or are from the same area, they share the same cultural practices (Martins, 2011; Woroniak & Tarulli, 2014).

The literature on diverse immigrant populations continues to grow. Research on language practices of Chicanos (Santoy, 2013; Valdes & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998) and Dominicans (Parmegiani, 2014) describes their struggles in grade schools and navigating higher education. There is emerging work on the various Central American Indigenous students (M. D. Brooks, 2019; O. García, 2009c; Holmes & Gonzalez, 2017) who are often confused with Hispanic

children but also marginalized within the Latino community. Immigrants from other colonized countries, such as the DRC, Cameroon, or the Zimbabwe may speak English and French primarily but they also have Indigenous languages that are used daily (Hoffman et al., 2011; Makoni et al., 2007; Pratt & Phambu, 2017). In that same grain, we cannot forget the language practices of Indigenous groups here in the US (McCarty, 2003).

This study contributes to the literature on the diversity of immigrant by sharing the narratives of three students. Karol and Isidro come from Central America but are clearly two different people with very different families and schooling experiences. Even their dialectal speech is very different. These students provide a good example of how L1/L2 are not easy concepts when Isidro and Justine's languages are different than what is on paper. The Home Language Survey does not capture their true linguistic repertoire. We need to expand our understanding of EBs since many students have multiple home languages and L2 is not really the second language, just the target language. Justine, Karol, and Isidro are all newcomers but each of them has unique academic needs thus need different approaches. Karol still needs a gentle transition into English, while Justine needs more of a push. Isidro on the other hand needs to be reminded that his Spanish and Kaqchikel literacy is equally as important as it is learning English. When the focus is just on English proficiency it may be easy to overlook these things. Understanding the uniqueness of each student culturally and linguistically provides opportunities to make more meaningful teaching practice decisions.

Implications

The findings of this qualitative case study bear implications for current and future secondary English acquisition programs that involve the teaching of immigrant students. This

study informs administrator and teacher practices. Following, I will outline implications for practice, policy and future research.

Implications for Practice

This study supports the understanding that language acquisition is a complex process that takes time. It is also important to note the different agency mobilizers present in each student and how their spaces can impact them. Therefore, one can imply that teaching English to EBs is an even more complex process that requires time and the knowledge of biliteracy and language acquisition (Cole, 2019; Cummins, 2019a). Curricula and instructional practices continue to target decontextualized English language development. The focus is usually on the mechanics of teaching English with little acknowledgement to the student's culture or funds of knowledge. Like the two of the teachers mentioned in this study, Mr. Ready and Ms. Hart, it is important to understand that English acquisition is a very important goal of their teaching; at the same time, they acknowledge their students' lived experiences and funds of are critical to their success (Jimenez, 2020). These teachers make an effort to contextualize the experiences of the students into their teaching practices (Lavadenz & Colón-Muñiz, 2018).

Language

The argument that there is no curriculum, materials, or even funding to support such a thing as continuing to nurture a student's L1 or even their cultures in high school is an understandable reality. Like with most big changes, they must be done slowly. Most of us already have access to translator apps on our phones, if not on our classroom computers. Starting with finding out how to introduce yourself in a student's language is a small but meaningful step. Teachers can allow students to work together in their own language to compete assignments in

class. There is an argument that, when students do this, they will get off task, and the teacher will not know. As demonstrated through Karol, the most rebellious of the bunch, though there were moments of off task behavior, she did try to complete her work. Like any monolingual student who is off task, Karol did have to have a few verbal reprimands for her behavior but speaking in Spanish was never the issue. Both Isidro and Justine would generally work diligently to get their work done as well.

As Mr. Ready would tell me, it does not matter if you understand the students' native language or not, as a teacher, you should know when students are on task or not. So, allowing students to speak their own language was not a behavioral issue. The worry is then, they will not learn English. Again, as shown in this study, each student was at a different learning stage in their life and learning, but none were rejecting learning English. Of course, there are general state expectations of where students should be in their English acquisitions due to yearly language monitoring assessments like TELPAS. What the teacher believed is that some will progress faster than others, and some may catch up, while others will continue growing at an individual pace.

Culture

After taking a step to implement the use of various languages in the classroom, teachers can start making purposeful choices in text and materials, both for independent reading and for supplementing other course contexts and canon lists (Ebe, 2012). With Isidro, had we not read through the book *Caminar*, we may have never learned about his Indigenous background and education because it was not on his Home Language Survey and he had not previously shared that with us. The book was definitely above his English reading capacity but even so, working

through the book together created many opportunities. Mr. Ready kept his classroom library full of various types of books that he had acquired over time based on the intention of having a culturally diverse library.

Similarly to teachers in other research (W. M. Brooks et al., 2018; Honeyford, 2014; Stewart, 2017), Mr. Ready also made many intentional choices in text for students to read and assignments that were culturally sustaining and did not require any change in the curriculum. He would ask students to write about their experiences. This fomented a connection with social studies while giving purpose to their writing. When showing English sentence structures, he used real experiences and students to make his sentences become meaningful. He included serious topics for students to reflect on oppressed groups of people like he did in his essay about imperialism and oppression (see Figure 4.24). Some students in his class, like Isidro and Justine, were very familiar with colonialism and oppression. For those who were not, this created a teaching opportunity for those who may need an empathetic guide and for those whose educations were better catered to sustain White middle class norms. Small steps are important and complete disruption or rebellion against the current curriculum is unnecessary for a teacher to make changes in practice

Implications for Policy

Administrators should support teachers by encouraging them to make these small changes. For this reason, teacher and administration preparation programs should be intentional about how they teach English acquisition pedagogy (Menken & Solorza, 2015).

Educator Knowledge of Bilingualism and CSP

CSP seeks to sustain "linguistic literature and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1). To de-center education from homogenous lenses to more heterogenous practices, it is fundamental that teachers seek to understand and honor the cultural practices and languages of marginalized and minoritized students. State certification programs and teacher perpetrations programs can take steps for teachers to be better informed about their teaching practices.

At a larger scale, ESL certification should not be as easy as just knowing enough to take the test. Some districts push for ESL certified due to the growing population of EBs. While this may seem like a positive step, the method in which some teachers are getting certified is doing no more than adding a line to their resume (Harper & de Jong, 2009). There are 1 to 3 day sessions where teachers learn the basics in history and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol methods, enough to pass the test, but not enough to change language ideologies. In my personal experience as the language specialist of a campus that had a tiny population of ELs, I was asked to give teachers study materials so that they could pass the test in order to be compliant. Teachers passed the test, but their practices remain unchanged. This is why both university teacher and administration preparation programs are important (Babino & Stewart, 2018; Cummins, 2019b).

In preparing teachers, programs should help students go into teaching with the assumption that they will have at least one EB in their classroom. Therefore, future teachers need, at a minimum, one course that will not just show them how to teach ESL but will also show them how to be critical multilinguistic language educators and implement culturally

sustaining pedagogies (Prieto, 2018; Ramírez et al., 2018). This includes teachers of elective courses. Teachers should also understand the sociocultural factors included in language acquisition (Lavadenz & Colón-Muñiz, 2018; Lee & Walsh, 2017).

Administrator Support of Bilingualism and CSP

If teachers are prepared in the manner outlined above, additional preparation of administrators would provide twofold benefits. Most districts already provide ongoing trainings for their ESL and bilingual teachers. However, the main focus of those trainings is usually sheltered instruction, and, while culture is mentioned, it is only a footnote. District leaders of these trainings should make a slight shift to focus on students' dynamic and diverse lived experiences. Additionally, districts should be more active pushing for the Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy is an award granted by a school, district, organization or state, "In recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation" (Californians Together, 2020). They should ensure that Seal of Biliteracy be given to EBs who may not have a record of taking a foreign language in the classroom when being in high school is their foreign language class.

It is important to note that nothing will replace the experience of working with EBs to truly change language and cultures ideologies. However, planting the seed of understanding will help save time and curve deficit views when the time comes to teach them. That way there is already a "readiness" to learn or anticipation of changing ideologies within the teacher. Without willingness to understand various perspective it is difficult to change teaching practices to bring EBs voices into the conversation (Davin & Heineke, 2018).

Implications for Research

Although case studies are never considered generalizable, continued research including adolescent newcomers would help expand our understanding and therefore better inform our practices. Similar studies would be beneficial to add more data to this study in understanding the complexity of newcomer adolescents. The more we seek to understand immigrants and EBs as a heterogenous group of people the better we can serve with equitable, humanizing education (Dumont & Ready, 2020; Morrell, 2017).

African Immigrants

I believe there is minimal research on immigrant newcomers from Africa. In my time as an educator, I have only worked with three students considered LEP who were from Nigeria, Cameroon, and Algeria. However, upon having a better understanding of certain testing practices, many students' parents put "English" as the language spoken at home, when in fact, like Isidro and Justine, the family also speaks one or more tribal or Indigenous language at home (Makoni et al., 2007; Pratt & Phambu, 2017). It is crucial to research why parents answer certain ways on language surveys and to examine the academic implications for their children.

Indigenous Immigrants

Similarly, Indigenous immigrants' identities remain hidden because, in answering home language surveys, parents use the colonized language as an identifier. In my working experience, I can only recall one time where a student arrived who only spoke Mixtec, a Mexican Indigenous language. The bilingual teacher was unsure what to do with her since typically students who are placed in the program either speak Spanish or English. This is yet again another example of how

the Home Language Survey does not provide the full picture of a student's linguistic repertoire. Additionally, it shows a gap in preparing bilingual teachers for students in this similar situation.

Teachers with CSP Ideologies

Another interesting direction for research is to study teachers who have had great success with EBs in their classrooms. Research noting the presentation of their ideologies in the classroom and the ways that the students respond is important. In this study, the focus was the students, but it was clear that the teachers had much impact. Student's specifically named teachers' classrooms, such as Mr. Ready and Ms. Hart who are both white and monolingual, as positive spaces. During my tutoring and observation times, the teachers showed much interest in the study by asking if there was anything they can do to contribute. They showed that they had deep knowledge about each of their students and demonstrated this by how they approached each student's needs.

Multilingual Lens

This study also highlights the importance of adopting a multilingual and multicultural lens in research. For example, if I had been satisfied with the knowledge that Isidro and Justine's L1 were colonized languages there would have been a lot of gaps in their identities and their multicultural navigation. This also brings into question the rigidity of the use of "L1." Had I approached this study with a monolingual lens, the result would have been much different.

This is why it is important to have prior knowledge and preferably experience with minoritized and marginalized populations. Even those experiences cannot guarantee a bias free study. Again, I believe that my experience positioned me well for this study, however I am

certain it did not free me from missteps and assumptions. In reviewing data, I saw instances where I unconsciously expressed hegemonic ideologies that I did not recognize in the moment.

Limitations

This study was rich with information but had some limitations. There were a small number of participants, and, therefore, the study is not generalizable. I also had limited time to work with one of the students in particular, which understandably slowed down the progress of our relationship. Justine was quiet about her family and anything outside of school, and that is her right. It is possible she has goals outside of academics or that this is based on identity negotiations. However, none of those things came up in conversations or writing with me or with her teachers. In fact, not many of her teacher knew that she and her brother were in the US with guardians, not their parents. The guardians themselves were also a mystery because they may not have been family. One can only imagine that circumstances may be serious or even tragic. It is just speculation, but perhaps being successful at school is part of an escape from reality. Justine is also a very confident person. She knows who she is. She is probably negotiating her identity as she goes through this experience; however, it does not appear to be her motivator to do things. There is missing information that could help inform with certainty what her main motivator was. But with the limited time I had with her, she had so much more to share about her home country, particularly with language and schooling than the other students who had more time to talk about themselves (Hoffman et al., 2011; Makoni et al., 2007).

Conclusions

Adolescent newcomers face many challenges as adolescents; additionally, there is an added layer of complex challenges when you move to a different country. In addition to

navigating the transition between childhood and adulthood, they have to do it while learning a new language and a new culture. They do not have the advantage of being in a traditionally more nurturing environment of primary schools. Even so, they are still as fully capable of being successful as their monolingual counterparts. The students in this study demonstrated that they were resilient, versatile human beings full of potential. Educational practices and policies should not be the reason that a student fails. Discrimination and deficit-based practices should not be the reason that a student quits. This study illustrates the complexities of each student's lived experience as well as their potentials. In asset-based spaces, these students will continue to flourish. Critical semiotic mediation makes a needed space for critical reflection and action that will empower marginalized and minoritized students.

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APPENDIX A

Semi Structured Initial Interview

1. What languages are spoken at home now?

2. Were you taught (L1) at your home country school?

3. If I required you to work and answer just in English, how do you think that would make you feel? How would it have affected your work?

4. Are there situations in school where you think it would be good to use both languages and all your resources where you currently cannot? What about outside of school situations?

5. Are there any classes where either you are not allowed to use your L1 or do not have anyone to talk to in L1? How does/would that make you feel?

6. How do you feel about reading in English?

7. How do you feel about writing in English?

8. How are you making sure to keep up with (L1) language skills outside of school?

9. What are some of you favorite things to do outside of school?

10. What kind of books do you like to read?

APPENDIX B

Semi Structured Book Interview

1. What did you think about the book(s)?

2. Tell me about your favorite parts or what you didn't like about it.

3. Was it hard or easy to read?

4. What kind of book would you like next?

5. (If book was in L1) Would you like to read an English book next?

APPENDIX C

Observation Guide

Use the following questions to guide observations:

1. What does the student do when instructions are difficult to understand?

2. How does the student react to their surroundings during instructions?

3. How does the student attempt to meet teacher expectations?

*Teacher actions are important to note; however, student actions are the focus of the observations.