Power, Literacy, and Emancipation for Vulnerable Adolescent

English Language Learners

by

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Dedications

This work is dedicated to my father, Holger, who taught me how to thrive on the outside,

and to my mother, Christine, who taught me empathy and understanding.

Abstract

In English Language Learning education, there are differences between immigrant and refugee students. Often the former has a background in formal literacy education, while the latter may have experienced significant gaps in their schooling. The problem is compounded for those who arrive as adolescents. Although students may have only had limited access to formal education, they are usually placed in high school and expected to catch up. Finishing the requirements of a high school diploma is an impossible task if they are learning to read and write for the first time while simultaneously acquiring English. The purpose of this study is to understand what it is like to be a low-literate adolescent English Language Learner (ELL) in high school in urban Alberta. I explore how experience during the first year in Canada impacts English language acquisition through data collected in interviews with three adolescent or young adult ELLs. Using critical literacy as a theoretical lens, I offer six recommendations to help empower and emancipate these youth from the literacies and Discourses that can be oppressive.

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Chapter One – Situating Myself

I was used to being a stranger in a strange land, but this was completely new. I remember walking through those front doors for the first time. I had never seen so many Asian people before, mostly Arabic. At 15, I was already in favour of multiculturalism, at least in an abstract way, but somehow I never thought of Middle Eastern people as my peers. Truth be told, I never thought about them at all, yet there they were. This was my first day of high school. My father moved my family, which included him and my sister and me, to the city from a rural economically underprivileged community surrounded by relative affluence. Because I am a first generation Canadian, in our village we were the 'ethnic' family, but in my new urban surrounding, I was a member of the dominant Eurocentric culture. I experienced alienation in both places, but that September day in 1990 was the first day I began to hate going to school. It was also the first day of a journey that would lead me to become an educator.

It was not until I was an adult that I began to reflect on the nature of my upbringing and how it has impacted who I am today. I grew up in a liberal family in a conservative community to a German immigrant father and a free-spirited Canadian mother. Later, my parents separated and my sister and I remained with my father. My mother remained part of my life, and this story is not about being a child of a single-parent family, but rather about being a member of an outsider family. In my community in the 1980's, there were not many single-parent families, and there was only one in which the children stayed with the father – mine. This was a fact that the local community rarely allowed me to forget. Adding to the alienation was the fact that my father was a highly unique individual from far off West Germany.

Being a single-parent family during a time of recession limited our economic opportunities, but ultimately my upbringing would not be a disadvantage. I graduated high school and went on to university. I did not subscribe to the grand narrative of my socioeconomic cohort because I did not learn it. My status as an outsider growing up actually sheltered me from a narrative that suggested I would have diminished opportunities to complete high school and have access to higher earning potential as an adult. I have had an equal opportunity to succeed because I was isolated from and therefore did not feel the weight of a grand narrative. It is with these thoughts in mind that I conducted the present study. Newcomers to Canada, especially those who come from poverty, have limited economic, social and cultural capital with which to succeed. They are in a position where they must start from a beginning in order to earn a position from which to compete for equal opportunity.

This study is about what it is like to be an English Language Learner (ELL), and what challenges ELLs face in their efforts to find a stable life in Canada. For this research, I am particularly interested in ELLs who are in high school and are between the ages of 15 and 20. Also, I am primarily interested in those ELLs who are most vulnerable; in other words those who have limited English language experience, have limited print literacy in their first language, and may have experienced significant trauma as a result of fleeing violent situations in their home countries.

In chapter one I situate myself in my research, and declare my biases. In chapter two I explain how I arrived at my research topic, describe the purpose and significance of my research, identify key concepts, and state my research question. In chapter three I provide a detailed literature review of relevant themes and topics. In chapter four I

describe the methodology I used to conduct the research. In chapter five I present my findings. In chapter six I present a discussion of my findings, offer some final thoughts about the research, including possible future steps, and summarize the limitations of the study. I also offer six recommendations.

Chapter Two – The Purpose and Significance of This Research

Personal Context

I am a second language (L2) teacher by training and experience. I graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education after degree with a major in German as a foreign language and a minor in Social Studies. I found work as a teacher right out of University, and I began working full time as a German teacher in Medicine Hat, AB. I enjoyed teaching there, but for personal and family reasons, I elected to move back home to Edmonton.

Changing school districts necessitated starting over, which meant I would have to go on the teacher supply list. After spending a short time on the supply list in Edmonton, I managed to find full time employment with the school district at an alternative program intended for vulnerable youth in the inner city. This was a significant shift from my experience in Medicine Hat, where I taught an option course to primarily middle class students. The students I now taught in Edmonton were from backgrounds that prevented them from prioritizing academic achievement, had experienced significant trauma, and were very street smart. I loved the challenge, and my pedagogical passion shifted away from L2 education to working with youth who were at risk of not completing high school. This new fascination was at least partly due to the fact that I saw myself reflected in the students. My personal background was not nearly so dire as that of the students whom I was now teaching, but I exceeded expectations in my career trajectory, and I wondered what it would take to create opportunities for youth even more vulnerable than I had been.

After I had taught in this school for two years, my administration decided to add an ELL class to our program. Many ELLs were being transferred to the alternative programs in our district, because the neighbourhood schools felt unable to meet their needs. Unfortunately, we were not set up to meet them either. I was excited for the opportunity and asked to be part of the new ELL initiative because I saw it as a marriage of my skill set with my passion. That is, I would be able to use my expertise as a L2 teacher to help vulnerable youth realize their potential.

At first the district opened a new classroom in our existing inner city location. The program was intended for students who were new to the district, of high school age, needed ELL support and were not already in school. One characteristic made itself obvious almost immediately. In a group of 12 ELL students, there was a significant range in ability. Some of the students were immigrants from Asia with a rich background in formal education. Others, however, were Somali refugees who had grown up in refugee camps in various countries in the Middle East and Africa. Many of these students had significant gaps in their schooling, or had never before attended school. These students had little or no print literacy in their first language (L1), and were now in a position where they had to learn to read in their L2 (or L3 or L4 in some cases).

Teaching these vulnerable ELLs would be an even bigger challenge than I imagined, and I began to feel unprepared. Although I am a L2 teacher by experience and training, the refugee students presented a new set of problems I had not considered before. The strategies I had developed to teach a class of highly literate Canadian born English native speakers a foreign language were not going to be the same ones I would

need for this group. I decided that I would need more training and expertise, which is why I elected to pursue a master's degree.

After two years in a city-centre location, the district moved the ELL program into a recently vacated school building. This meant the students, staff, and I would have the entire building to ourselves. The students and staff would be isolated away from the pressures of being in a neighbourhood school. We had the same mandate as before, but instead of just high school aged students, we would serve the needs of vulnerable ELLs between the ages of 12 and 20. In addition to academic support, the program was intended to help students acculturate to Canadian society. The students were not supposed to stay at the Transition School indefinitely, but rather to re-locate to a neighbourhood school when their overall English Language Proficiency reached a level of two[1] or higher as measured against the Alberta Education English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (Alberta Education, 2013). Ultimately, the program would only last two years because the district administration decided to re-allocate funding to the neighbourhood schools to set up ELL programs of their own. Nonetheless, the experiences I shared with the students, families, colleagues and community agencies, and with the reader throughout this document, impacted me both emotionally and intellectually.

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[1] There are five English Language Proficiency levels. Students are assessed a number between 0 and 5 for each of the four strands of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Level 5 is considered near native in ability

[2] The Canadian government has a legal definition of refugee, but in this study I will use the term to identify a person who was forced to leave their homeland for reasons beyond

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what it is like to be a low-literate adolescent ELL in high school in Edmonton. I hope to understand how ELL experiences during the first year in Canada impact English language acquisition. I also hope to learn some of the experiential challenges refugee newcomers confront in their academic achievement. I will use Critical Literacy (CL) as a theoretical lens (Janks, 2000; 2010; 2012) to explore and interpret the experiences of the ELLs with English literacy and to see how they interact with issues of power. I will also use New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street, 1984) to help clarify what is meant by literacy and what may be considered a text.

Key Concepts

Throughout the text I utilize a number of key concepts: critical literacy, literacies, texts and literacy events, immigrants and refugees, and BICS and CALP. Here I present some definitions of each, as well as provide some context and clarification for how I use them.

Critical literacy. CL is an orientation towards language that seeks to critique texts, paying particular attention to the tension between literacy and power (e.g. Janks, 2010; Braga, 2007). CL is relevant to my study because I am exploring the relationship between English literacy and power relations for ELLs. Low-literate ELLs are in a vulnerable position in our schools because many lack the background knowledge and language proficiency to advocate for themselves. These ELLs are therefore in a position where they must rely upon their teachers in order to orient themselves in their new environment. Here, I am using the term 'teacher' to refer to anyone who is in a position

to model or explain reliable information to the ELL about his or her new surroundings. A teacher need not be a person who holds an official teaching certificate, but somebody who serves as a gatekeeper to necessary information or social practice. When an ELL confronts a teacher, the teacher has the choice to use language to deny or empower. Using sarcasm, for example, with somebody who we know is an ELL may be seen as an act of oppression because we are deliberately using a linguistic form that our interlocutor will not understand, thus maintaining a dominant position. Alternatively, a teacher may take an empowering stance by providing clues about how one might critically engage in specific Discourses (Gee, 2012, p.2). In both instances, the teacher is in a dominant position, but in the latter the teacher seeks to provide tools in order for that relationship to change to a more egalitarian one in the future.

Literacies. For the purpose of this study, I will use the term 'literacy' to mean the ability to read Discourses (Gee, 2012, p.2). Although the ability to decode print text is important, it is not sufficient by itself. Instead, I will use the Freirean definition of literacy, which states that not only is it important to read the word, but also the world. Freire (1993) said "[t]he world-no longer something to be described with deceptive words-becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization" (p. 67). Freire might argue that the goal of literacy education should be to emancipate and empower, not indoctrinate. Freire wrote specifically about the potential for revolution of what he viewed as the oppressed over the oppressors in Brazil in the 1960s. However, in my view the goals of literacy education remain the same in the 21st Century in Canada, to emancipate and empower.

Someone might argue that low-literate ELLs need to be able to decode mundane daily literacies, but I would argue that the goal of such teaching is nonetheless to empower. For example, if we consider a bus schedule, the words written on it may be clear, but the ability to decode is useless without background knowledge of maps and geography. Furthermore, at a bus stop in Edmonton, there are often no maps displaying bus routes and times, but just the names of the bus lines and a phone number. A rider may use the number to find out when the next bus is arriving, but the practice is not self-evident by looking at the signs. Furthermore, a potential bus rider needs to have access to a mobile telephone to use the service. The way the bus in Edmonton is used requires specific local information, and therefore requires a local public transportation literacy. An adherent of CL might also note that the prospective bus rider is denied valuable information by making it only available by telephone, thus disempowering those who do not have a mobile phone.

Texts and literacy events. According to Street (2003), there is a difference between literacy practices and literacy events (p. 78). The former is a general orientation towards reading, such as skimming a nutrition label at the grocery store in order to make the most informed purchase. A literacy event is the actual instance of when the label is being read. The term 'literacy' is not specific enough and does not need to refer to a printed text. A text could be anything that carries symbolic meaning. A text could be printed words on a page, but it could also be a film, a road sign, a religious icon, or a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, I will be specific about what literacy is being discussed in this study. An example might be literacy in a high school textbook.

Immigrants and refugees. An immigrant is somebody who chooses to leave his or her home country and live in a new one. A refugee, on the other hand, is someone who was forced to flee his or her home country for safety, or for reasons beyond their control. The Canadian ministry of immigration has its own legal definitions of immigrants and refugees, but I will use the terms to refer to contexts. For example, two of the participants of this study claim they are not classified as refugees, but in both cases their families had to leave their homelands for safety and economic reasons. Perhaps they are classified as immigrants, but that is because both of them applied to enter Canada from a country other than their parents' homeland. Perhaps they themselves are not refugees, but their families are.

BICS and CALP. Another key concept in this study is the difference between Cummins' (1979) concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, commonly referred to as BICS and CALP, respectively. According to Bilash (2011), "BICS describes the development of conversational fluency … in the second language, whereas CALP describes the use of language in decontextualized academic situations" (BICS/CALP). BICS is the language we need to use for our daily interactions. BICS is often thought of as oral, but does not have to be. BICS is context rich and is usually acquired relatively quickly. CALP, on the other hand, refers to academic language, or language that is used for specific purposes. Consider, for example, the term 'juxtapose,' which is commonly used in literature studies, but rarely used in daily conversation. CALP is often confronted in "context-reduced" (Bilash, 2011) situations, for example a written text with few or no pictures. It is often estimated

that CALP takes seven years to acquire enough proficiency to be fluent in the classroom (Bilash, 2011), but for low-literate ELLs, it can take much longer (Kanu, 2008, p. 917).

Significance

This study focuses on language learners who are the most vulnerable and who are most at risk of not having the pre-requisites to begin high school when they arrive in Canada. Although every context is different, these students tend to be refugees rather than immigrants (Kanu, 2008)[2]. In 2012, 20,461 refugee claimants entered Canada (CIC, 2012a). From the 781 of those who settled in Alberta, 170 of them settled in Edmonton (CIC, 2012b). There were 2,182 refugee claimants in Canada from the age group that roughly correlates with the participants in this study, 15 to 24 (CIC, 2012c). This age group represents the second highest number. The age group with the highest number of refugee claimants to Canada was 25 to 44, which totalled 5,636 people. Both of these age groups represent the age at which one expects to be in their peak income-earning years. Many of them are not able to seek employment because of both limited experience and limited access to CALP.

English language education is of increasing concern in Edmonton. According to the Edmonton Public Schools (2012) policy document, only 51% of ELLs complete high school in a period of three years. Unfortunately, this document does not delineate who these ELLs are, whether they are immigrants or refugees, how old they are, nor what their relative English Language proficiency is. These descriptors matter to the likelihood of success for the student. Let us assume the number refers to any student who, when first

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[2] The Canadian government has a legal definition of refugee, but in this study I will use the term to identify a person who was forced to leave their homeland for reasons beyond their control. The legal designations are purely circumstantial.

registered in high school, was considered a language learner. A high school student is anybody who is between the ages of 15 and 20. If a student arrives at the age of 15, with appropriate programming s/he has a chance of completing the requirements for a high school diploma. If, on the other hand, the student arrives at the age of 19, s/he will be permitted to finish the school year as a publicly funded student, and after that will be considered an adult and have to find and personally fund additional learning opportunities. With no academic background, both students will be placed in grade 10 classes, but the 15 year old has at least three years to try and complete as many classes as possible, whereas the 19 year old will only have the balance of the school year from the point at which s/he registered. The document further states that 68% of ELLs complete high school in five years. (Edmonton Public Schools, 2012). That means 32% of all students coded as ELL when they register for high school do not finish the requirements for their high school diploma. Opportunities exist for adult ELLs to complete their high school diplomas, but they are not free of cost. Often, the price of the classes is beyond the means of newcomers who are living at or near poverty. The age of arrival of limited English adolescents, therefore, has a direct impact on their financial and academic wellbeing.

How many students does 32% represent? According to the policy document, in 2011 ELLs made up 17.8% of the district student population (Edmonton Public Schools, 2012). This number translates to 14,377 students. In a class of 30, 17.8% is the equivalent of 5.9 students. Some classes of 30 have more, and some have less, but imagine a classroom where five or six students are struggling to acquire the CALP associated with the content of the course. Furthermore, the number of ELLs in the

district tripled between the years 2005 and 2010 (Edmonton Public Schools, 2012).

Whether that trend continues or not, we already have a large number of ELLs with high

academic and linguistic needs.

These numbers only tell part of the story, because they do not distinguish between

immigrants and refugees. Often, refugees from violence-ridden areas such as Somalia

have had little or no previous experience with formal schooling (Kanu, 2008, p. 918).

These youth may have grown up in a refugee camp, or even taken away from their

families to be child soldiers, and not had the opportunity to learn print literacy in their

first language. Since in western education, print literacy is often privileged over oral

literacy, these students are at a significant disadvantage. Imagine the student who arrives

in Canada at the age of 17, is placed in a grade 10 English class, her classmates are all

younger, and she is expected to keep up even though she has never read a book before.

Collier (1987), in her study about CALP acquisition for low-literate youth, described it

this way:

> Immigrants of school age who must acquire a second language in the context of
>
> schooling need to develop full proficiency in all language domains (including
>
> the structures and semantics of phonetics, phonology, inflectional morphology,
>
> syntax, vocabulary, discourse, pragmatics, and paralinguistics) and all language
>
> skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and metalinguistics knowledge of
>
> the language) for use in all the content areas (language arts, mathematics,
>
> science, and social studies). (p. 618)

Collier is referring to immigrants, rather than refugees, but her assertion here is true,

regardless of the relative proficiency of the learner. It is especially profound for the

late teenaged student who is being introduced to these concepts for the first time.

Upon arrival in Canada, a 15-20 year old will be placed in a high school regardless of previous experience or language competency (Government of Alberta, 2015). It is the school's responsibility to meet the student's educational needs. However, it is the student's task to adjust to his/her new host country, acquire English, acquire print literacy, acquire the background knowledge that was covered in the first nine years of public schools, and complete the requirements for a high school diploma before his/her public school funding runs out at the age of 20 (Alberta Education, 2014). The immigrant, while also an ELL, has a rich background in formal education in his/her first language. Indeed, the immigrant may even have some experience with other language learning. The refugee from a war-torn country, on the other hand, has not been introduced to many of the concepts we take for granted in school, including what schooling is. I have known teenagers who have never learned any alphabet, never read a book, nor sat at a desk in a classroom, the very skills that form the bedrock of our school system.

Generally speaking, a language learner acquires what Cummins termed BICS relatively quickly (Cummins, 1979). As mentioned above, BICS refers to the language needed to communicate basic needs and wants to be able to participate in social life on a superficial level. For most of our daily interactions, which are rich in context clues, BICS is all we need. However, CALP is more elusive. CALP is the language we need for school and post secondary education. BICS is context rich, whereas CALP tends to rely on language rather than visual or context clues. Cummins estimated it could take seven years to acquire CALP at a near native ability (1979).

Collier (1987), in her study, found that it takes four to eight years for learners who are 12 to 15 years old (p. 637). Kanu (2008) asserts it can take 10 years or more of concentrated language learning to acquire enough CALP to succeed in an academic setting (p. 917). Regardless of which number we choose, completing the requirements for a high school diploma would appear to be an impossible task for those who have the misfortune of arriving in Canada at 17 years of age with limited experience with print literacy.

Coming to My Research Question

My research is at least partially inspired by narrative inquiry (NI) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In particular, I am interested in NI's emphasis on voice. As educators, we often make assumptions about what is in the best interest of our students, but we sometimes neglect to include their voice when we make our plans. During my time at the ELL Transition School, I began to wonder what it must be like to be a newcomer in Edmonton. What is it like to be compelled to relocate to this city, to be forced to acculturate, to navigate these icy streets in order to go to school for reasons that may seem obscure. These questions arose out of informal observations. For example, most of the students' families were linked to an agent who worked for one of the community agencies in Edmonton. These agents would help the families find housing, find schools for their children, make doctors' appointments, or even help to open bank accounts. More often than not, the agent was present when I registered the student for school. She would become my first contact for matters that concerned the student. In other words, this agent was an important authority figure in that student's life.

Occasionally, a student would be absent from school. When I inquired why, I learned that the student had booked an appointment of some sort. I usually explained that it should not take all day to go to the bank, for example, and that such appointments should be made after school. Gradually, I began to realize that the community agent was making the appointments, and they were being made during school hours because those happened to be the agent's business hours. The agent was no more likely to take families to appointments in the evening than I was to teach a lesson at that time. I realized that it must be frustrating and confusing for an ELL who is unable to express himself in my first language to be criticized by me when he was merely doing what he was told by his agent. Both the teacher and agent represent authority to the student, and they were giving conflicting messages. I began to wonder about the unnecessary stress we are causing these young people, who rely on us for support, not for erecting barriers. Both the teacher and the agent were tasked with providing support during a critical period in their lives.

Initially, when I was searching for a theoretical model with which to frame my research, I considered using attribution theory because of its emphasis on the participant's own thoughts about what motivates them. I viewed attribution theory as an opportunity to explore the voices of ELLs themselves. Attribution theory is the study of motivation, and to what we attribute our successes and failures (Dörnyei, 2003, p.8). Although attribution theory has far reaching implications in what motivates us to do anything, I was specifically interested in this orientation as it applies to L2 acquisition. In other words, what motivates somebody to learn a language, and to what do they

attribute their successes or failures. Williams and Burden (1999) describe attribution theory this way:

> The central tenet of this theory is that a person's affective and cognitive reactions to success or failure on an achievement task are a function of the casual attributions that are used to explain why a particular outcome occurred. (p. 194)

> Williams and Burden's article (1999) presents a very clear overview of attribution theory as it applies to L2 acquisition. They differentiate between the various approaches a learner may have towards a task. A learner may (a) see success or failure as coming from themselves, (b) will view achievement as either fixed or dynamic, or (c) will see possibilities as either lying within one's self or in the hands of others (p. 195).

Ultimately, I abandoned attribution theory after I read Braga (2007). Her study of the interactions between affluent university students in Sao Paulo and underprivileged youth in a depressed suburb helped me understand that the ELLs I was interested in exist in a specific context, which is beyond their control. A simple assessment of their attributions of their potential successes and failures would not help me understand what their experiences are, and, more importantly, what supports they need. Braga emphasizes that there is a power imbalance in Sao Paulo, which I saw reflected in vulnerable ELLs in Edmonton. Braga's article also introduced me to CL (e.g. Janks, 2010), which is the study of how language and power intersect. Because I was interested in issues of social justice, I decided to use CL as a theoretical framework. However, I was still interested in the research participants' perspectives about their own contexts. As a result, the term 'attribution' remains in my research questions.

Research Question

What factors do low-literate adolescent ELLs attribute to academic English literacy acquisition?

1. To what do low-literate adolescent ELLs attribute their perceived language acquisition successes?

2. To what do low-literate adolescent ELLs attribute their perceived language acquisition failures?

3. What supports for language acquisition do the low-literate adolescent ELLs believe they needed?

4. Do the low literate adolescent ELLs believe they had access to the supports they needed?

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

In this chapter I present a brief literature review about concepts related to this study: ELLs in context, CL, NLS, Digital Story Telling and Photovoice.

English Language Learners in Context

Prior to the 1980s the majority of immigrants to Canada tended to come from Europe and Asia. Increasingly, however, newcomers are originating from the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; Kanu, 2008; Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). In her study of English Language intensive schools for limited English students in Manitoba, Kanu (2008) cites the most common origin countries as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Somalia (p. 917). Kanu's observation about the countries of origin of the students in her study are consistent with mine at the Transition School in Alberta. Based on my own observations, the most common origin countries tended to be Somalia, Ethiopia and Iraq. I also had students from Eritria, Kenya, Turkey and Iran. In contrast to the newcomers who arrived prior to the 1980s, these new refugees and immigrants came with different skills and needs than what we were previously used to. According to Kanu (2008):

> Research indicates that this increase [of African origin refugees] has generally not been accompanied by appropriate educational and other specialized support specifically targeted to assist the acculturation, integration, and school success of students who are from war-affected, disrupted schooling backgrounds and whose culture, ethnicity, language, and religion are significantly different from those of the mainstream in host countries. (p. 916)

In contrast to migrants from other regions of the world, refugees of African origin are more likely to have experienced war-related trauma (Kanu, 2008, p. 917). Some of these traumas include witnessing a family member suffer a violent death, becoming child soldiers or knowing someone who was forced to, and having suffered sexual and other violent abuses. These kinds of traumas may manifest themselves in different ways in the classroom. For example, I used to have a meter stick in my classroom, which I used to point at things such as a place on the map. I noticed every time I picked it up, one student in particular winced. I immediately put it down and asked if he was ok, which started a class discussion. All of the African students had been hit with a meter stick at least once in school, or had been threatened with one. As a result of this information, I put all the meter sticks I could find in storage and stopped using them.

African refugees are more likely to have spent five to eight years on average in a refugee camp (Kanu, 2008, p. 917); this is more than refugees from other regions of the world. While this may have psychosocial implications such as those listed above, of particular concern here is the impact this has on their ability to succeed in western schools. Generally speaking, an extended stay in a refugee camp means that these students have had interrupted schooling before arriving in Canada. It may mean that they have not been trained in print literacy in their first language, and are learning it for the first time in English. Woods (2009) described this situation:

> Some of these students at least find themselves in the precarious situation of
> learning print literacy for the first time, in a language that is not their first and in
> which many have only basic levels of competence, in a school system that is
> foreign or perhaps the first school system that they have encountered. (p. 83)

It is common that war-affected ELLs lack access to appropriate programs designed to support their unique needs (Kanu, 2008, p. 918). In particular, students who have had gaps in their formal schooling are at a disadvantage to other students. In second language studies, we often use Cummins' notion that it takes seven years of intensive learning to acquire near native abilities in CALP (1979). However, studies of war-affected youth with limited print literacy suggest that number should be at least 10 years (Kanu, 2008, p. 917; Thomas & Collier, 1997). In western society, a lack of proficiency in the dominant language jeopardizes a person's opportunities to pursue secondary studies and limits earning potential, thus limiting one's ability to realize their potential.

Knowledge of pre-migration factors that contribute to a student's current context as a limited English high school student are crucial to understanding how schools might provide support, but equally important is an understanding of their experience post-migration. Although we are talking about a group that is diverse, and delineating common experiences is therefore elusive, certain patterns do emerge. In her interviews with ELLs of African origin, Kanu (2008) found the following themes to be common: lack of academic support at home, separation from family, cultural dissonance, acculturation stress, limited English proficiency, academic gaps, fast paced curriculum, fear of authority, fear of speaking out loud, grade placement based on age rather than proficiency (p. 923). Furthermore, many ELL students experience domestic burdens that their Canadian counterparts need not worry about. For example, the students tend to acculturate faster than their parents, which can lead to role reversals outside of the house. Also, many students need to contribute to the household economy, and therefore have part-time jobs after school. Not only does this tire the students out, it also prevents them

from taking part in after-school activities because they have to work right after school (Kanu, 2008, p. 930).

Critical Literacy

My current study has been informed by CL as a theoretical framework, especially the work of Janks (2000, 2010, 2012). According to Janks (2010), "CL works at the interface of language, literacy and power" (p. 22). CL concerns itself with the relationship between power and language and rejects the notion that every text, as well as the ability to read it, is politically neutral. CL acknowledges the fact that every text is created with an intended purpose, an intended audience, and by extension an excluded audience. Those in power determine dominant language forms, such as Standard English. Lau (2013) argues "CL education aims to equip individuals with a *language of critique*, to analyze and challenge dominant social assumptions and ideology embedded in cultural texts as well as a *language of possibility*" (p.2).

Central to Janks' work with CL are her four orientations towards literacy: domination, access, diversity and design (2000; 2010; 2012). Domination refers to the use of language as a means to maintain power (Janks, 2000, p. 176). In school, for example, Standard Academic English is privileged over other forms of communication. Furthermore, the written text forms such as essays are privileged over other modes of communication such as oral language, drawing, photography and so on. In a school context, it is the teachers and administrators and policy makers, who are in positions of power, who determine which literacy forms are privileged and use them to dominate their students.

Access refers to who is taught the dominant forms of literacy and is therefore granted entrance to dominant discourses (Janks, 2000 p. 176; 2010; Gee, 2012). According to Gallo (2002), issues of access are also evident in the workplace: "Limiting access to discussion of workplace issues by invoking rules of "proper" language usage is a way of silencing those who are not well versed in the discourse styles of the dominant group" (p. 54).

Diversity acknowledges that literacy exists in a wide range of modalities (Janks, 2000, p.176). Modalities could include, but are not limited to, written text, spoken language, body language, visual representations, music, and so on.

Lastly, design means that language is created with the intent of maintaining and producing power (Janks, 2000, p. 177). An academic exam is a perfect example of a text that is designed to produce and maintain power. Janks argues that in order for us to understand the relationship between power and language, all four orientations are interdependent and need to be considered together, rather then in isolation.

I will use a personal anecdote to illustrate Janks' orientations and illustrate why they are important to my research. I remember a Somali boy, for whom I will use the pseudonym Mustafa, who was interested in getting a membership at a local community fitness club whose mandate was/is to support communities and healthy lifestyles for all citizens. The Club has fees, but also subsidizes costs for people who do not have the means to pay. I had a personal connection to the gym and offered to negotiate a deal on Mustafa's behalf since he was an ELL student and lacked the confidence and local knowledge to do this himself. We negotiated that he would pay $20 a month for a membership, and Mustafa agreed. Mustafa showed up at the gym with $20 in his hand at

the pre-arranged time and was told he could not get the membership as agreed because he did not bring a void cheque. Mustafa had neither a cheque nor a chequing account and did not know what a void cheque was. Mustafa did, however, bring picture ID and proof of his address because he had become accustomed to this requirement from schools, immigration services, and a number of other organizations and agencies that he had to navigate as a refugee in Canada.

The literacy practice in question is the use of a void cheque in order to allow direct withdrawals from a bank account, rather than pay in a tangible way such as using cash. The gym used this as a means of domination by requiring that Mustafa be familiar with the practice of using a blank cheque, and has access to an institution such as a bank. No attempt was made by the gym to offer alternative methods of payments, nor was there any attempt to explain how to get a void cheque. The notion of access is literal here: Mustafa was denied access to the gym because he did not understand the use of the void cheque. Mustafa actually had the means to pay, so that was not the problem. Diversity was denied by not allowing Mustafa to pay in cash, which is another modality of economic literacy. Lastly, the process of requiring a void cheque seems designed to exclude anybody who does not have one. It is common that a young person does not have personal cheques, but they might have a parent or guardian who could provide one. However, in the vulnerable ELL communities in urban Canada, it's completely reasonable that a new or recent family has not yet had a chance, or opportunity to negotiate the bureaucracy of setting up a bank account and becoming familiar with all of its uses. Mustafa did not have a voice in this discourse.

Braga's (2007) study concerned itself with a social class in urban Brazil that does not have a voice in their dominant institutions. Braga's work was influenced by Janks' orientations to literacy. Braga's study involved assigning her university students in Rio, who are relatively affluent, to design a website for a community agency that meets the needs of youth and young adults in an underprivileged community in the outskirts of the city. Braga (2007) wanted the work to be done collaboratively with the members of the community agency because "it is important to engage all social groups in the process of social critique in order to favour alliances that can promote more progressive political actions" (p. 181). Braga found that both the community agency members and the university students were surprised with one another: the former gaining some level of trust for the latter, and the latter impressed with their counterpart's technical abilities and knowledge of web design already acquired through hard work, necessity and access to free software (pp. 192-193).

Ibrahim's (1999; 2008) work is also of interest to my present study. In a small junior and senior high school in Southern Ontario, Ibrahim observed a group of African refugees in a French-speaking school. Ibrahim (1999) observed that rather than using French as their common language to communicate with one another, the students used what Ibrahim calls Black English (p. 351). Ibrahim theorizes that prior to arriving in Canada, a narrative already exists in North America about who and what black people are. Although these youth have little to do with African Americans, it was because of their phenotype that they readily identified with black American culture. The students' identification with African American culture was most obvious in their appropriation of hip-hop culture. Ibrahim's argument is a chicken-egg argument. Does the narrative

already exist and the newcomers gravitate towards it, or do these youth choose their external identity based on a selection of choices. However, their insistence on using Black English rather than the dominant form in their school, in this case French, is an interesting study of power relations and language. For my part, I can report that most of my black African students tended to gravitate towards American hip-hop culture more readily than any other pop culture forms.

Ibrahim's observations about students using Black English as their *lingua franca* is consistent with observations made in Patel's book, *Youth held at the border: Immigration, education, and the politics of inclusion* (2013). Patel conducted a qualitative study at a school designated specifically to ELL students in Boston, Massachusetts. Because most of the students' countries of origin tended to be either in Central, Caribbean or South America, the most common language heard in the hallways among the students was Spanish. Patel's book focuses specifically on the plight of illegal immigrants in the United States, and the kinds of literacies they must acquire in order to succeed, but simultaneously to be able to go undetected in order that they not be deported. Immigration policies can be viewed as another literal example of Janks' orientations of domination, access, diversity and design.

New Literacy Studies

CL and NLS are closely linked in my present study, and a brief description in order to provide context is warranted here. NLS seeks to understand literacy as a social practice rather than a politically neutral skill (Street, 2003, p. 77). Lau (2013) stated "NLS scholars view literacy as socially situated practices connected to socially-situated identities" (p. 5). NLS assumes that reading practices are culturally specific, and serve a

specific purpose, which may not be obvious to an outsider. Gee (2012) refers to this as a capital "D" Discourse" (p. 2). One dominant Discourse many Canadian educators prioritize is silent reading. The purpose of this activity may be evident to Canadian-born students, who have practiced this particular social Discourse since grade 1, but may be obscure to the limited English language learner. I do not wish to conjure a stereotype of what an ELL is, but let us imagine a student who comes from a culture that prioritizes oral language. The practice of sitting quietly and staring at a book is not obvious. Such a student might argue, perhaps successfully, that no communication is taking place during this literacy practice.

Based on the work of Street (1984; 2003), NLS attempts to expand on our traditional definition of literacy. Street (2003) distinguishes between autonomous and ideological models of literacy (p. 77). The autonomous model suggests that literacy is politically neutral and is a simple matter of skill acquisition. It also implies that the acquisition of print literacy will automatically have positive cognitive and economic implications. Critics of globalization have been highly critical of the autonomous model. Nordtveit (2010), for example, calls into question the way literacy rates are accounted for by well-meaning organizations such as UNESCO in third world countries. Nordtveit suggests that organizations such as UNESCO are primarily concerned with promoting skills and discourses that are friendly towards western liberalism (2010).

Alternatively, Street (2003) proposes the ideological model, which acknowledges that the way we approach reading and writing is embedded in our own epistemologies and identities (p. 78). Literacy practices are embedded in specific educational, job market or cultural practices. Gee (2012) would argue that every text, regardless of intent

or modality, is highly theoretical. Even a text as seemingly innocuous as an aspirin bottle label is in fact highly ideological and its legibility is dependent on the reader having access to certain knowledge of social practices (p. 42).

Furthermore, NLS distinguishes between literacy practices and literacy events (Street, 2003, p. 78). The former is a general orientation towards reading, such as skimming a nutrition label at the grocery store in order to make the most informed purchase. A literacy event is the actual instance of when the label is being read. If we consider Mustafa's story above, the literacy practice in question is the use of the void cheque by the gym in order to secure a membership. The literacy event is when the attendant asked Mustafa for a void cheque, which he was unable to produce. The term 'literacy' is not specific enough and does not need to refer to a printed text. A text could be any artefact or context that communicates something to its audience. In Mustafa's case, the text is the void cheque and the twenty-dollar bill. Therefore, literacy events occur constantly. They occur with roads signs, watching T.V., or reading Dostoyevsky.

All of the students at the Transition School were literate in discourses and texts with which I am unfamiliar. The problem for them is that they lack familiarity with discourses and texts that will allow them to gain access to cultural institutions such as gyms and post-secondary schools that would function to improve their standard of living. However, there is little argument that digital texts have become increasingly prioritized in western academic culture, and most of my students at the Transition School had at least some knowledge of computer use. Based on my personal observations, many used social media primarily to remain in contact with family and loved ones who had been displaced in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. With Braga's (2007) study in mind, I

wondered "how the power of digital technologies can be critically exploited to promote more progressive ends" (p. 183).

Digital Story Telling and Photovoice

One opportunity to allow for a diversity of voices, as CL calls for, and maximize the use of literacy modalities, is with the use of digital storytelling. A digital story is an oral story told from the speaker's first person point of view. According to Lambert (2013), digital storytelling "explores the role of literary voice and the style that grows out of it" (p. 37). They usually combine still photographs, narration and sound effects to create a short film. Digital stories are usually no longer than two or three minutes long. The advantage is that anybody with access to a computer can make one, and anybody can publish his or her story on the internet. The stories can be made with software that usually comes stock with most computers, and the stories can be viewed on YouTube or other websites specifically dedicated to them. I was originally attracted to them because of their democratic nature.

Another way to allow research participants to share their perspective is through the use of photovoice (Gallo, 2002; Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants are given cameras and asked to take pictures. The use of cameras provides an insider's view of the research subject that may not be available if the researcher is always present. Photovoice allows the subject to share what s/he chooses, and to hold some authorship over the research. This is in contrast to, say, an interview where the researcher asks specific questions. However, the research participant may have other valuable information to share that the interviewer did not think to ask about. According to Gallo (2002), "[b]y taking their own photographs [participants] are able to represent themselves and present

their images as they would like others to view them" (p. 50). Photovoice has the potential to provide access to social practices of which the researcher may not be a part.

Gallo (2002) describes a fascinating case study in which adult ELLs who are in a class sponsored by their employer to improve their English skills are given cameras as a language learning technique. In the case study, the self-produced photographs had all kinds of benefits, perhaps most importantly empowering the students to use their voice to express their needs. Using the photographs, the students generated discussion themes that were relevant to their own experience and even came up with a list of improvements that their employer could make to improve their standard of living and put them in the suggestion box. Their manager wrote back and the company addressed most of the ELL employee's concerns. According to Gallo (2002), "[s]tudents were enthusiastic and felt empowered by the changes implemented" (p. 54). Using photovoice as an instructional strategy has the potential to give a voice to the participants to express the contexts in which they live, and also to communicate their needs, which is a major concern for this study.

Summary of the Literature Reviewed

To conclude, this chapter presents literature that is relevant to the main themes of my research. The main themes are ELLs in context, CL, NLS, Digital Story Telling and Photovoice.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process and procedure used to conduct this study. This chapter describes (a) my research approach; (b) my role as a researcher; (c) ethical considerations; (d) participants; (e) data collection procedure; (f) data analysis, and (g) the limitations of the study.

My Research Approach

The present research is a qualitative study. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Although trends and patterns are important, I have sought to understand the experience of the research participants. I hope to reveal some aspects of the ELL experience by allowing them a space to express themselves. For this, I could not collect data and measure it against a pre-determined set of data, since I had no way of knowing what the participants would share. Therefore, a qualitative approach was necessary.

Creswell recommends that before beginning a research project, that the researcher determines what his/her worldview is with regards to what s/he wants to achieve. Using Creswell's (2009) descriptors, I aligned myself most closely with his description of an advocacy worldview accordingly. "An advocacy/participatory worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda" (p. 9). This view appeals to me for two reasons. Firstly, there is no doubt that the inspiration for my research was based on a desire for social justice for vulnerable ELLs. Secondly, I align myself with scholars in both CL and NLS, who would argue that objectivity is not

possible. Another way of thinking of politics in research, as in the Creswell quote, is for the researcher to declare his or her biases and to situate him or herself in the research.

In addition to clearly defining my worldview, Creswell also recommends that the researcher decide upon a research strategy. The strategy to gather data that I was most compelled to use was narrative research, which Creswell (2009) describes as when "the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives" (p. 13). The method I used to collect the participants' narratives was a structured open-ended interview. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative interviews "involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (p. 181). I developed an interview, and I did collect some demographic information, but I attempted to develop questions that would invite the participants to tell their own stories.

My Role as a Researcher – Then and Now

Although I did not realize it at the time, this research began three years before the time of writing this. I had become interested in digital story telling as a democratic medium for giving voice to marginalized groups. The students at the Transition School had limited English, to varying degrees, but that did not invalidate their knowledge or expertise. By combining audio and visual elements, I wondered if my students could more effectively tell their stories about who they are and what their lives are like. If I gave them cameras to take home, they could capture a visual document of a day in their lives. They would be in control of the data and choose which images to capture, and which to leave out. Furthermore, the pictures would provide scaffolding for them to create a text in English.

I invited my University classmate, Marina (pseudonym) who was also interested in digital storytelling, and who wished to gain experience leading a workshop, to come to my class once a week to facilitate a digital storytelling workshop for the students. For two months, we worked together with my teacher colleague and both of our classes. Marina guided the students through the process, and I supported her by providing classroom management, materials and follow up work time during the school week. Marina showed the students how to make a storyboard on poster paper. We asked the students to think about their school experiences, both in their home country and in Canada. The question revealed a wide variety of experience. Some of the students had no previous schooling at all, and some had very formal and strict school experiences. Marina and I were amused at the differences in our own childhood schooling experiences. Her experience was a very formal one in Pakistan where all of the students wore uniforms. Mine, on the other hand, was in a school that consisted of several portable modules sitting on concrete blocks on a muddy field, which had no grass, and was on the cold open Canadian prairies. In my school experience, we did not wear uniforms. Indeed, among those present, I was the only one who had never worn a school uniform. However, the school theme did not resonate with everybody, and the storyboards reflected a variety of experiences and themes. We elected to allow the students to tell their own stories, and not focus on any one theme, and provide guidance and scaffolding where necessary. The students choose which stories they wanted to tell, rather than focusing on a specific theme.

Through the Transition School, I had access to enough digital cameras for each of the students. Everybody took a camera home with instructions to take pictures, and to

think about what story they would like to tell about themselves. The students had a lot of fun with the cameras. The photography started as soon as the cameras were in the students' hands, and continued until they left school that day. There were also a few pictures of their commute home. This experience was consistent with Gallo's (2002) who stated "[t]he initial response to using the camera was excitement and enthusiasm as they began to document and share their life experiences, communicated through images despite linguistic barriers" (p. 53). Interestingly, only a few students choose to take pictures of their home life. I found this noteworthy, considering their enthusiasm for the cameras in the classroom. In the end, most of the stories were about the milieu in which they currently found themselves, the Transition School.

When Marina returned, she taught the students how to import the photos onto a laptop and set about teaching them to use *Windows Media Player*. This was the part where they would choose which photos to use, decide what story to tell, start thinking about narration, and start making aesthetic choices such as colours, music and overall structure. Although most of the students were used to using social media to correspond with their friends and family who live all over the globe, very few knew how to use a computer as a tool to create a text in which they controlled the content. Creating a visual presentation was a new literacy modality for some (Janks, 2000). Indeed, in my experience in Canadian classrooms today, using the computer to create visual presentations for school assignments has become a social practice (Street, 2003). One has to be familiar with the conventions and rules to understand its purpose.

Two years later, my role changed from classroom teacher to researcher. The digital stories were not originally intended as research, but as a learning activity for both

my students and myself. My research supervisor, Dr. Olenka Bilash, helped me realize

that they provided excellent data from which to compare their experiences then and now.

The participants of the activity would be the perfect candidates to solicit interviews from,

and to interview about their language learning experiences since creating the video.

Participants

The data collected for this study are from three interviews with three participants.

All three participants had been students at the Transition School at the same time. There

were two classes at the Transition School; two of the participants were in my ELL class,

and one was in the other. However, in such a small program, we did many activities

together, and the digital story making exercise was one of them. Two of the students are

from Somali parents, but their relationship with Somali culture is very different from one

another. The other student is from Iran. The English language proficiency of the three

participants was not the same. When they left the Transition School, the young Iranian

boy had been in Canada for the shortest amount of time of the three, and had little to no

English Language ability at that time. Using the Alberta Education Benchmarking

system (Alberta Education, 2013), he was given an overall assessment as pre-one. The

Somali girl was somewhere between one and two on this scale, and by the time he left the

Somali boy scored a solid three. I sought participants from the group who had created a

digital story with Marina and myself. All three of the participants agreed to be

interviewed voluntarily.

Data Collection Procedures

I contacted the members of the Transition School who had participated in the

digital story telling exercise by email. Upon closure of the Transition program, most of

the students wanted to stay in contact with me, and I remained generally aware of where everybody lived. I composed an email message that was approved by the University's ethics committee, which described to the students in relatively accessible English that I would like to meet them and conduct an interview (see Appendix A). Four students responded to my request. I interviewed all four, but kept the data for only three. The first student I interviewed declined to have his voice recorded, so I took notes. Also, relative to the group, his English was the weakest, so I reluctantly decided not to use his data since I could not be sure if he understood the questions.

After the students responded to my email request, I arranged a location that was easiest to access for the student. For example, I met one student at a local fast food restaurant, and another at the school he was attending. Because I had no control over the environment, I was concerned about technical details such as not being able to record their voices if the environment was too loud. I brought my laptop with me and used *Garageband* to record the interview. I also made a video recording of the interview, which also uses a microphone so I had two audio recordings if I happened to lose one.

I began each interview with a few demographic questions after which I asked permission to play them the digital story they themselves had created two years prior. After the short video, which was 30 seconds to a minute in length, I resumed the interview. The entire interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Using the audio recordings, I made a literal written transcript of each interview. In some cases, where the audio recording was not clear, I referenced the video recording as a secondary source. I also watched the video recordings of the interview and paid special attention to facial expressions. I was particularly interested in their reaction to the

digital story. I made this decision in recognition that their English proficiency may have

limited what they were able to express, and their facial expressions might reveal more

data.

I also made a summary of each interview using simple language. The purpose of

the summary was to show to the participant for a member check (Creswell, 2009, p. 191).

This consideration was made with their English reading proficiency in mind. I felt that

an entire transcript of the interview would be too overwhelming for the participant to

read, not to mention time consuming. Ideally, I would have liked to meet the participants

and read the summary to them in person, but it was difficult for them to find time for me

in their busy lives. I therefore sent them the summary of the transcript and asked them to

tell me if the information was accurate. They did and all summary data was acceptable to

them.

Data Analysis

Using the data from transcripts, I followed Creswell's (2009) suggestions to

derive codes and themes (p. 186). After reading all of the transcripts, and getting a sense

of what they were about, and also keeping my research question in mind, I settled on the

following themes, for which I assigned codes. The themes also reflect the questions I

asked.

1. Experiences that supported English Literacy Acquisition before arriving in
   Canada

2. Experiences that limited English Literacy Acquisition before arriving in
   Canada

3. Experiences that supported English Literacy Acquisition after arriving in Canada

4. Experiences that limited English Literacy Acquisition before after in Canada

5. Perceived strengths

6. Perceived weaknesses

7. Additional supports needed

Ethics

Because my study involved working with people, the University requires that I complete an ethics application through their research ethics board. I submitted an ethics application to conduct this study, and adhered to the procedure that they approved. This study presented very minimal risk to the participants. I thought it might be possible that the participants might become emotional during the interview, but that did not happen.

I contacted the participants by email, using a letter that had been pre-approved by the ethics board (see Appendix A). The purpose of using a pre-approved message was to ensure that I was not pressuring or coercing anybody to participate. The letter made it clear what my purpose was, what I wanted from the recipients, and that they were free to decline or accept. Before I conducted each interview, I read the information and consent form to the participant (see Appendix B), both pre-approved by the ethics board. After I read the letter, I gave the participant an opportunity to read the letter themselves, if they so chose, and ask question. The letter made it clear what my purpose was, how long the interview would take, and what was expected from the participant. The letter also clarified that the participant was free to answer questions in any manner desired, or to decline to answer. Furthermore, the participants were free to terminate the interview at

any moment. The letter also indicated that all data collected would remain anonymous, and that I would protect the participants' identities by using a pseudonym.

In the interests of protecting the participants' private information, I have encrypted and stored the interview audio recordings, video recordings, transcripts, and digital stories on a hard drive, which is in a safe. As required by the University, I will keep the data for five years, after which time I will destroy it.

Limitations of the Methodology

I identified three limitations of the methodology used in this study. Perhaps the most obvious limitation to the study is the language barrier between the participants and me. I am fluent in English and German only. Therefore we were compelled to use our only common language, English. My supervisor and I had a brief conversation about using interpreters, but abandoned the idea for several reasons, not the least of which was my pre-established relationship with the students. I wanted the participants to feel as comfortable as possible and I thought a third person might change the nature of our relationship. A third person might also translate my intentions differently or even censor comments. Since I know the participants already, I decided that it was more beneficial to rely on our mutual familiarity rather than language proficiency.

Second, a follow up interview with each participant would have been preferable, rather than a simple member check. It is possible that I asked questions that the student had not considered before. A second interview would have given the participants a chance to reflect and perhaps revise what they initially gave as a response.

Lastly, the purpose of my study was to understand what it is like to be a low-literate adolescent ELL refugee in Edmonton. Using NI would have been the perfect

methodology to answer that question. However, the scope of my project being what it is, NI would go well beyond that for both researcher and participant. For an excellent narrative inquiry that explores the life of a recent adolescent immigrant language learner in Toronto, I propose Xu, Connelly, He and Phillion (2007).

Chapter Five – Findings

I analyzed the interview transcripts according to five main themes. They are: (1) experiences that supported English language literacy acquisition; (2) experiences that limited English language literacy acquisition; (3) perceived strengths; (4) perceived weaknesses; and (5) supports. I also provide a summary of each participant's attributions, as well as two tables comparing the attributions of all three participants.

The findings of this chapter are organized according to participant, rather than theme, emphasizing the fact that their experiences are unique from one another. Indeed, the participants were only together for a brief period at the Transition School, after which time they continued on their individual trajectories. Although this is not a NI, I am attempting to honour the participant's voices in the research: "We need to see our participants as univocal, not tied to one theoretical structure or mode of behaviour that would leave them with the appearance of being unidimensional" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 147). By presenting the participants one at a time, I hope to maintain a sense of voice and narrative, rather than distil each interviewee into commonalities. However, because the goal of this study is to discern what types of supports are needed in the school systems, which is by nature a homogeneous process, I will necessarily analyze their experiences using specific criteria.

Shariifo

Shariifo (pseudonym) is a young woman from Kenya. At the time of the interview, she was 21 years old. Shariifo arrived in Canada in 2011 when she was 18 years old. Although she was born and raised in Kenya, Shariifo sees herself as Somali. Shariifo's parents fled Somalia and she grew up in Kakuma, a refugee camp outside of

Nairobi, Kenya. Shariifo is a single mother, and needs to work to support her baby and herself. Shariifo said she is literate to some degree in Somali, Swahili and English.

Experiences that supported English literacy acquisition.   According to Shariifo, she attended school for three years in Kakuma, Kenya, where she learned Swahili, Social Studies, Science and English. Interestingly, Shariifo said she acquired print literacy in Somali by learning how to read Swahili. According to Shariifo "Swahili and Somali are the same. When you write and read is same thing." She went on to clarify: "It's not same words, but when you want to write Swahili and Somali it is same." In other words, Somali and Swahili share an alphabet. Shariifo claims she worked out how to read Somali based on her grapheme/phoneme knowledge of Swahili, and applied it to her oral knowledge of Somali, which is her first language.

When Shariifo arrived in Canada in 2011, her first school was the Transition School. Shariifo remembers her time at the school fondly, and cites it as a positive experience in her development as an ELL. Shariifo remembers positive social interactions at the Transition School as being most helpful to her development in Canada. For example, a community group visited the school once a week, and once a month or so the students and I would go on field trips with that group. Examples included going cross-country skiing, going to a hockey game, getting a private lesson on how to ride the bus, and visiting a local recreation centre where the students learned to skate and used the fitness machines. Shariifo cited these field trips as memorable. Also, I taught Physical Education every day, and she remembers playing sports in the gymnasium, especially basketball, as a positive memory. I remember the Muslim girls in particular cherished this experience, and Shariifo was no exception. Shariifo said that

the environment was positive, welcoming, and happy. Shariifo attributed this

environment as helping her to have the confidence to participate in class, which in turn

gave her an opportunity to practice speaking English.

In terms of English acquisition, Shariifo feels her time at the Transition School

supported her English oral skills. In fact, a lot of our lessons focused on oral proficiency

before working on print literacy. I was aware that this lesson structure was new to most

of my students, but I gambled that accessing oral proficiency first would resonate with

most of my students, who came from oral traditions in their L1. Furthermore, Shariifo

indicated that exposure to new friends, teachers, and mentors, coupled with a positive

atmosphere, forced her to speak in English. In the interview, Shariifo emphasized her

perception of the impact of positive and safe social interactions on her ability to learn.

Experiences that limited English language acquisition. Shariifo said she

attended school in the refugee camp in Kenya for three years between the ages 14 and

16. When I asked what she did before she was 14, Shariifo simply stated that she stayed

home. This is in stark contrast to an average Canadian student, who would have already

attended school for 9 or 10 years by age 14. It goes without saying that by the time she

arrived in my classroom at age 18, Shariifo brought with her a different set of

experiences and needs than most of her Canadian counterparts. Indeed, at 18 many

mainstream Canadian students have either graduated or are making plans to do so, or

they are preparing for life after high school. Shariifo had only just begun her schooling.

Shariifo cites context as a limiting factor in post-migration. For example,

Shariifo was not able to stay in one school or learning environment long enough to gain

much academic traction. Shariifo was already 18 upon arrival, and she only had until the

age of 20 to receive public school funding. Because the Transition School program closed, Shariifo was compelled to find another school for the following fall semester. Shariifo said that after two semesters at her new school, a career counsellor advised her to attend a local college which has a program specifically dedicated to limited English young adults. Unfortunately, adult education is not free, and Shariifo said she had pressure to support herself and her family financially. Shariifo was not a mother yet, but she told me she needed to contribute to her Edmonton household as well as send money home to Kenya. Ultimately, Shariifo elected to work full time rather than go to school. At the time of this interview, Shariifo was working in a meat packing plant in a small city several hours drive from Edmonton. Displacement and migration appear to be a theme in her narrative.

Shariifo also cites her lack of familiarity with academic English vocabulary as a barrier to success in other classes at school. Shariifo has reasonably fluent BICS in English, but she has not had nearly enough time to acquire the CALP required for high school Math, Science, and Social Studies. Because of these contextual factors, Shariifo was not able to complete the requirements for a high school diploma. Shariifo indicated that her relative English language proficiency was a barrier to completing classes other than English.

Perceived strengths. Shariifo views herself as a successful ELL. When prompted to give reasons, her response was because she enjoys learning English. I eventually concluded that she collocates success with happiness. Therefore, if something is enjoyable, it suggests happiness, and success is finding happiness. Shariifo feels happiest, and therefore is most successful, at English reading, writing and listening.

Perceived weaknesses. At the time of this interview, Shariifo felt least confident in speaking English. However, an interesting exchange occurred in the fast food restaurant where we conducted the interview. We ordered drinks and Shariifo ordered "green tea four by four." The cashier knew what that meant, but I was clueless. Apparently, it means four creamers and four packets of sugar. So Shariifo knew an English Discourse (Gee, 2012, p.2), with which I was entirely unfamiliar. I took the opportunity to describe my observation, and Shariifo smiled with pride. This gesture is visible on the video recording of the interview.

Supports needed. The only support that Shariifo felt she needed was financial assistance to continue to go to school. Shariifo said she does not have very much money, and has financial obligations. She has a son to take care of; she sends money home to Kenya, and she needs to pay for rent, food, utilities, and so on. Shariifo feels that somebody with her level of education can only find low paying jobs, and it can only provide enough financial support if she works full-time. Therefore, Shariifo feels working part-time and going to school is not an option. Shariifo told me a story in which she applied for welfare, but was told that she could work part-time, and go to school part-time. Shariifo was compelled to work full-time in order to support herself. Shariifo's perception that she needs to earn enough money to meet her needs is surely strengthened with the addition of her son in her life. Shariifo told me she had been married, but that she was now separated from her husband. I do not know if the father of her child contributed financially or otherwise to his son, but she kept the baby and therefore the majority of the responsibility.

Summary of attributions. Shariifo said she did not learn to read her L1, Somali, in a formal setting such as school, but she did say that she is literate in Somali print literacy. Shariifo attributes her ability to read Somali text to her education in Swahili literacy in Kenya. I wonder if this ability could be harnessed to assist her now, while she is learning English, since she has a proficient level of oral BICS, and English, Somali, and Swahili share an alphabet.

I was interested to know how the Transition School may have contributed to her development of English CALP, but Shariifo was not able to answer this question. Instead, Shariifo emphasized the importance of the positive social interactions she enjoyed there. Shariifo recalls her time at the school as "happy." In fact, Shariifo recalled that when she moved on, her school at the time told her she was too old to return for another semester. Shariifo remembers calling me on the telephone and asking if she could return. In the interview, Shariifo used the term "my school" to differentiate between the Transition School and others. Incidentally, I consented to Shariifo's request to return since she was not too old yet to receive public school funding and also because I did not support her leaving in the first place.[3]

Shariifo does not believe she received enough academic support since leaving the Transition School, but she does not attribute this to schools, teachers, or anybody else. Rather, Shariifo cites her financial situation as a primary barrier to academic achievement. Shariifo would like more financial support in order to concentrate on

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[3] Many of the students at the Transition School were anxious to move on. They were worried that if they did not move quickly, they would be left behind. Many of them were also under pressure to achieve from their families. I was sympathetic to this sentiment, and did not take offense. Shariifo was not the only student who left and returned.

learning. Shariifo would like to attend college full-time in order to complete the requirements for a high school diploma.

Omer

Omer (pseudonym) is a young man from Yemen. At the time of the interview Omer was 19 years old. Omer immigrated to Canada in 2011, when he was 16 years old. Having grown up in Yemen, Omer's first language is Arabic. However, both of his parents fled Somalia to live in Yemen, and then eventually Canada. Omer said he is not a refugee, but an immigrant to Canada. However, these are merely legal terms. In his reality, he has been compelled to migrate as a result of political and social unrest in his parents' home country: Somalia. Omer does not see himself as a Yemeni, nor does he readily identify with Somalis. Omer says he is fluent in Arabic in all four strands of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), but hardly knows Somali at all.

Experiences that supported English language acquisition. Omer's fluency in his L1 is significant to his development in his L2, English. Arabic was the dominant language of his environment in Yemen. He also went to school and learned to be literate in Arabic. In fact, Omer claims he had no gaps in his schooling save for a few weeks between Yemen and Canada. In his last year of school in Yemen, Omer told me he learned Chemistry, Physics, Math, Arabic and English. This being the case, when he arrived in Canada, Omer already had a rich background in academic education. Omer has had success in the Canadian school system, and he plans to graduate with a high school diploma. So far, Omer has enjoyed some scholastic success, and it seems probable that his background academic knowledge as well as his first language literacy played a key role.

Compared to Shariifo, Omer has had mainly successful experiences in Canadian schools. Omer's first school in Canada was the Transition School, which he attended with both of his brothers. Like Shariifo, Omer cited the positive environment, fun activities and supportive atmosphere of teachers and peers as contributing to his English language development. In particular, Omer felt that the classes supported his oral language skills. Omer also felt that the Transition School helped him prepare for mainstream high school afterwards. Omer felt that the Transition School helped him prepare for Canadian school culture and expectations. Indeed, when he was new to my class, and I called on him to answer a question, Omer would stand up and answer very formally. This was a new experience for both of us.

Based on my own observations, Omer has a very supportive family, who encouraged him to take advantage of the supports available to him. Due to social pressure, all of the students at the Transition School hoped to be transferred to the mainstream high school at the end of the semester. Some of them asked me to recommend them before they were ready, which was supposed to be when they achieved a reading level of two (Alberta Education, 2013). Omer had achieved that benchmark, and I was ready to recommend him to his neighbourhood high school, but his mother requested that I allow him to stay for a second semester. Omer's mother, in contrast to other parents of the students at the Transition School, insisted that he take the time he needed to develop. Our school district offers summer courses for ELLs, and Omer took advantage of those during the summer after the Transition School and before mainstream high school. By the time Omer entered high school in the following fall, he went to a mainstream English class. For my part, I recommended further ELL support. However,

rather than being identified as an ELL, he was given access to the dominant discourse of high school (Gee, 2012, p. 2; Janks, 2010, p. 24), and he continued to move forward from there in exponential increments. Indeed, Omer plans to finish the current school year with a high school diploma.

At the Transition School I practiced Extensive Reading (Day, 2002) as well as guided reading, and I also took the students on regular field trips to the public library. I observed that Omer challenged himself and improved his English reading proficiency very quickly. In particular, I remember that he liked to read graphic novels. I asked him about those graphic novels in the interview and Omer saw them as a form of entertainment, but not as a middle step towards reading and understanding more academically challenging texts. Referring to graphic novels, Omer said "… they're good for reading, speaking but they don't help me with getting English." However, taken as a whole, Omer felt that all of the activities in my ELL class helped him to be able to read a novel such as *Night*, by Elie Wiesel (2006), which he said he did for his grade 12 English class.

Like Shariifo, Omer said that he enjoyed positive social interactions at the Transition School, which he attributed as a supportive factor in his English language development. By having positive, and safe relationships with his classmates, Omer said he was able to develop his listening and speaking abilities, which he cited as a personal weakness. Omer also learned to use environmental print to navigate the city with his newly found friends at the Transition School. By exploring the city, and pursuing after-school recreation, they solved problems together such as "how to use the bus", "what road signs mean", and how to orient themselves in the city.

Experiences that limited English language acquisition. Omer is very positive about himself as an English learner and a student in Canada. In his opinion, Omer has had every opportunity and support needed to be successful in school in Canada. Omer did indicate that he learned some English in school in Yemen, but according to him was not successful. In Canada, however, his English language success is another matter. Omer even expressed surprise at his own success. While explaining to me what his grade in grade 12 mainstream English Language Arts was, he said "I know I can see, you are surprised right?" Referring to the same point, he said "I am surprised too." Omer's comments seem more aligned with the Discourse of self-deprecation than actual surprise at his accomplishments. The acquisition of this Discourse may further be seen to have contributed to his success at gaining entry to the thinking of the mainstream or dominant habitus and thus facilitate the completion of his high school credits. Acquiring this social capital was further suggested when Omer said he began to understand why students enrol in certain courses, and not in others. Once Omer knew that high school classes are designed with future planning in mind, he was able to focus on what was required of him to pass the course.

Perceived strengths. As mentioned above, Omer feels that he is completely fluent in Arabic. He also said he excels in sciences, especially biology. Indeed, based on my observations, Omer has always had a keen interest in the sciences. In English, Omer identified writing as his strongest skill, and since his time of arrival has improved significantly in listening and speaking. A comparison of his interview transcript and his digital story confirms his improved skills in speaking. Omer attributes his relative

success to his classroom experience, and the types of classes and supports he had access to.

Perceived weaknesses. Although he sees himself as a successful ELL, Omer does not see himself as a successful French language learner. However, Omer said he only took one French class in high school in Edmonton, and there is a great difference between a second language and foreign language experience. Omer appears to be aware of the difference when he said "it could have worked, but I didn't really have energy to focus on it at the time." Furthermore, Omer perceives himself to be weakest in Math, although he did finish the grade 12 level. In English, which is perhaps most relevant here, Omer cites speaking in particular as an area of weakness.

Supports needed. Omer did not cite any additional supports he would have liked. Omer believes that he has had both support and opportunity, and is happy with the help he has received. In response to my question if there were additional supports he wished he had, Omer said "[t]hinking about, no. I mean there can't be any other help from teachers, and I don't like tutors." Based on this quote, given the opportunity, Omer places the responsibility to achieve on himself.

Summary of attributions. In Yemen, Omer saw himself as quiet, and somebody that people did not pay attention to. When thinking about his identity in Yemen, Omer referred to himself variously as Somali, Black and African. Omer used these terms to contrast himself with the mainstream Arabic population. Omer felt that as a result of his differences with the mainstream culture, he was bullied.

Omer said he started attending the Transition School three months after arriving in Canada. Like Shariifo, Omer cited positive interactions with students and staff as

important to his development, although he was vague what this may have contributed. Playing sports in the gymnasium was particularly interesting for him. When attributing reasons for his academic success, Omer takes a big picture view. Rather than citing one particular activity or event, Omer believes that the experience of attending the Transition School helped him be ready for mainstream high school after that. Omer even went as far as to say that the English language experience and instruction he received there was enough for him to be successful in high school English Language Arts. When I asked him how he passes mainstream English Language Arts, Omer said "[He] had some experience from [the Transition School]."

In his digital story, Omer says his dream is to become an astronaut, but immediately after watching the video during our interview, Omer said he no longer believes that dream is feasible. Instead, he would like to become a Petroleum Engineer. When I asked him how he arrived at that conclusion, he said that attending classes and speaking to fellow students helped him understand why they take specific classes, and not others. Omer had acquired enough sociological literacy and a sense of empowerment to know how to gather relevant information. Omer was not able to tell me why he chose Petroleum Engineer as a career goal, but he said this goal helped him understand which classes he needed to finish in high school.

Amir

Amir (pseudonym) is a young man from Iran who now lives in Canada. At the time of the interview, he was 19 years old. Amir arrived in Canada in 2012, after having lived in Turkey for a short time. Amir's first language is Farsi, and he said he can speak

a little Turkish. Amir is in high school and is struggling to learn English at a level that would allow him to be successful in a Canadian academic environment.

Experiences that supported English language acquisition. Amir said he is completely fluent in all four strands of Farsi – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Amir went to school in Iran where he learned academic language (CALP) and content such as mathematics and science and Farsi. Amir said he learned some English in school in Iran, but not very much. Amir also claims to have learned some Turkish while he lived there. Although I am not able to judge this for myself, having no knowledge of the language, he seems to have primarily learned BICS in Turkish, because he never attended school there.

Amir was not at the Transition School for very long. He arrived mid-semester, which happened to be the last semester before the program closed. Amir does not remember very much about being at the Transition School, but he called it a kind, welcoming environment. After a few months there, he went to a high school, which offers ELL classes and support. Amir is very positive about his school experiences, and the relationships he has made, but is vague about scholastic achievement. Amir said he sometimes goes to English tutoring at lunch and sometimes after school.

Experiences that limited English language acquisition. Although Amir had access to mainstream Education while growing up in Iran, he has a negative attitude towards his experience there. For example, Amir does not like that the students were hit for bad behaviour. This led him to mistrust his teachers there. Also, although he had some English lessons in Iran, he does not think they prepared him at all for living in Canada. When I asked him to rate his own English language proficiency upon arrival, he

merely said "zero." Furthermore, Amir's family fled Iran to Turkey, where they lived for a short time, and he said he did not attend school there. Amir could not recall precisely how long he lived in Turkey, but it was long enough to pick up some of the language. Based on my own observations, I witnessed him translating Turkish to Farsi for a fellow student at the Transition School.

Amir had only been in Canada for two and a half years at the time of this study. Keeping in mind that his level of English was zero when he arrived, a number that I would agree with based on my experience with him, his English language proficiency since then has steadily improved. Based on the interview, I would estimate his level of oral proficiency at two or three (Alberta Education, 2013). Unfortunately, it has not been fast enough for him to be able to complete high school in the short time allotted to him given his age. Amir continues to struggle with English, and that struggle impacts his ability to succeed in school. At 19 years of age, Amir has only one year left with public school funding, after which time he will not be eligible to attend public school. Amir does not plan to graduate from high school and has not made future plans. Academic and career counselling is part of the high school Discourse (Gee, 2012, p.2), and Amir's ability to engage in future planning appears to be limited.

Perceived strengths. Amir can read and write in Farsi, and his English literacy skills are improving. Amir feels like a successful ELL, and cites life skills as an example. Previously, when Amir would go shopping he would have difficulty getting what he needed because "[he] miss everything they say." Presumably, Amir is referring to cashiers and other staff who work in sales. Amir believes he now has enough BICS in both speaking and reading that he can go shopping, and get what he needs without

confusion. This has improved his standard of life because he no longer feels helpless while navigating the city and taking care of his needs.

Perceived weaknesses. Amir did not cite many weaknesses, however, my impression is that he had not thought about this question and therefore did not have an answer. A follow-up interview, as opposed to a member check, would have been ideal, but unfortunately was beyond the intended scope of the current research. Amir did cite speaking in English as a personal weakness, when compared to reading and writing. Amir's interview transcript would seem to confirm his opinion; however, I have no access to his current writing, so this is entirely his perspective.

Supports needed. Like Omer, Amir did not cite any additional supports that were needed, but in his case, I had the impression that he has not yet thought about it. Perhaps he is unaware of the possibilities. I have some thoughts of my own, which I will describe in the following chapter.

Summary of attributions. Amir had difficulty expressing himself in English, which made it difficult for him to attribute reasons for his successes and failures. Also, my personal impression is that Amir had not reflected very much on the events that lead him to where he is now. From the entire interview, I could only discern three opinions about himself as a learner. Firstly, Amir feels pretty negatively about his schooling in Iran. Amir said he did not feel happy at school in Iran because the teachers used corporal punishment as a management technique. For example, Amir said "if we don't give homework is hitted … hitted in the hand." Secondly, Amir feels happy in his school right now, although it is clear to me that he has given little thought to the fact that he cannot stay there much longer. Lastly, Amir cites his sister as an important academic

support for him. Amir said that his sister helps him with his homework, and helps him with understanding assignments. I am not sure if she is younger or older, but she is also a high school student, so they are very close in age.

Comparing Attributions

The following are two tables summarizing and comparing all three participants' attributions. Both tables are separated into psycholinguistic and social linguistic attributions. Psycholinguistic attributions are those that are linguistic and personal in nature. They might be thought of as strategies or conditions that supported or negatively influenced the acquisition of CALP English. Sociolinguistic attributions are those offered by context, such as social norms. They might be thought of as experiences or contexts that facilitated or negatively influenced the ability to acquire CALP English. Table 1 refers to attributions that contributed to acquiring CALP English. Table 2 refers to attributions that did not contribute to acquiring CALP English.

Table 1: Attributions that contributed to acquiring CALP English

Summary of Self-perceived Positive Attributions			
	Amir	**Omer**	**Shariifo**
Psycholinguistic			• Literacy transfer between L2 and L1
Sociolinguistic	• Positive environment at school • Safe relationships at school • Relationship with sister	• Positive environment at school • Safe relationships at school • Friendships outside of school • Access to recreation (e.g. sports) • "big picture" perspective	• Positive environment at school • Access to recreation (e.g. sports)

In table 1 we see that all three participants emphasized the importance of positive environments and safe relationships and felt that caring support was a contributing factor in their achievements. Only Shariifo mentioned a psycholinguistic attribution (her ability to acquire print Somali based on her knowledge of print Swahili); no learning strategies specific to the acquisition of vocabulary, or increased proficiency were otherwise mentioned. It is possible that the participants were not able to express these strategies in English, or not conscious of using them, and I was not able to successfully probe for responses specific to psycholinguistic attributions.

Table 2: Attributions that did not contribute to acquiring CALP English

Summary of Self-perceived Negative Attributions			
	Amir	**Omer**	**Shariifo**
Psycholinguistic	• Ineffective English lessons in home country	• Ineffective English lessons in home country • Scaffolded reading (e.g. graphic novels) did not lead to higher level reading	• Ineffective English lessons in home country
Sociolinguistic	• Negative experience in school in home country	• Negative experience in school in home country	• Not enough financial support • Not enough access to academic support

We also see similarities between all three participants in table 2. For instance, we see that all three participants view their English education prior to attending school in Canada as ineffectual. Furthermore, both boys cited intimidating teachers in their schools in their home countries. Omer also said that he had been bullied, but he did not attribute that to his current level of achievement. Shariifo did not speak unfavourable about her school experience in Kenya, she merely indicated that she did not get enough, having only attended for three years. However, in contrast to the boys, Shariifo feels similar about her access to school in Canada, that she has not had enough.

Also, Omer did not think that reading graphic novels lead to higher level CALP proficiency. Instead, Omer viewed graphic novels as a source of entertainment. Given enough time during the interview, I would have suggested that reading anything at all

allowed him to become engaged with the *habitus* of reading. However, at the time of the interview, I felt that this was beyond the scope of my intended purpose and chose not to contradict him.

All three participants, whether based on the perception of positive or negative experiences, seem to be emphasizing the importance of opportunity. Based on their attributions, all three base their achievements and failures on their access to opportunity, or support to pursue academic learning. In the final chapter, I will discuss the implications and possible future directions.

Chapter Six – Discussion and Closing

I conducted this study using CL as a theoretical framework. In particular, I used Janks' (2010) four orientations to CL to guide my own thinking: domination, access, diversity and design. For clarity's sake, I restate the orientations here and briefly describe how they relate to the individual participants in this study. I will also critique their applications to the data presented in this study.

Domination

Domination, as it relates to CL, refers to how language is used to maintain power (Janks, 2000, p. 176). A public high school is the perfect place to analyse this phenomenon. Policy makers such as education ministries create curricula that the schools are mandated to carry out. They also create the requirements that indicate whether a student has achieved an acceptable understanding of the curricula. Furthermore, school administrations create policies and conditions under which the curricula are to be taught. When students are able to demonstrate that they have achieved a pre-determined level of competence, then they will be permitted to leave high school with a diploma. In a classroom, the teacher, who represents the school administration and policy makers, compels students to engage in the dominant discourse by virtue of being the temporary gatekeeper.

What is at stake for all high school students, ELLs inclusive, is a high school diploma. Among the participants of the present study, only Omer had plans to finish the requirements for a high school diploma. Shariifo was unable to remain in school, and therefore was not even permitted to participate in school discourses. Amir has attended school and maximized his limited amount of time as a public school student, but the few

funded years that enabled him to spend time in classrooms in Canada were not enough for him to gain enough proficiency to obtain a diploma.

Access

Access in the context of education refers to the degree we allow students access to dominant discourses. When working with students who find themselves at the margins, this can be a matter of balancing priorities. According to Janks (2010),

> If we provide students with access to dominant forms, this contributes to maintaining dominant forms. If, on the other hand, we deny students access, we perpetuate their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of these forms. (p. 24)

As a classroom educator, I see my role as providing as much access as possible to dominant discourses. I take pains not to minimize the students' various epistemologies; however, engaging them in discourses and modes with which they are most familiar is beyond the scope of my responsibility and ability. My primary role as far as access is concerned is to create the conditions that are most conducive to navigating and understanding dominant language forms. In addition, my role as a classroom teacher is to enable the students to decode and critically engage with the literacies and discourses required of them in schools in Alberta.

By completing his requirements to exit public school, Omer will receive a powerful symbol of access, a high school diploma. Furthermore, Omer will have access to more discourses such as post-secondary education, as well as employment opportunities. Omer arrived in Canada with an access advantage over the other two participants of this study. Omer already had a rich background in a formal education that

values themes and discourses similar to our own, such as the scientific method, numeracy and print literacy. Furthermore, upon leaving my ELL class, Omer did not attend any more ESL classes, which was my recommendation for him. Actually, the school he attended did not have specific classes dedicated to ELLs. As a result, Omer was placed directly in a mainstream English class and due to a fluke of scheduling, was granted access to mainstream education. In his case, this access may have been more important than his level of proficiency. By attending mainstream English classes, Omer was not marginalised as an ELL, and continued on a trajectory similar to other Canadian students.

Amir had limited access to dominant school discourse, but not to the same degree as Omer. Firstly, his background in formal education upon arrival was not quite as rich, perhaps owing to the time he spent in Turkey, when he did not attend school. Furthermore, after leaving my ELL class, Amir attended a school that does have ELL programing. As an ELL, Amir is subjected to another layer of access that he must overcome, namely acquiring the requirements for his ESL classes before he can attend mainstream courses. That being said, there is a difference in gaining access to a discourse, for example mainstream education, and acquiring skills. I recommended further ELL support for both boys after leaving the Transition School, because neither of them had achieved an overall English language proficiency of five (Alberta Education, 2013). Only Amir received ELL support. However, Amir's level of proficiency in English was not the same as Omer's, and it is not helpful to make direct comparisons between two specific, but completely different cases. Nonetheless, there are many factors in play, I would argue Omer gained more access to high school discourses than Amir did.

Upon arriving in Canada, Shariifo was at a relative disadvantage to what she was able to gain access to. Shariifo was already 18 when she arrived in Canada and had only been to school for three years in her home country of Kenya. Shariifo did not have very much knowledge about science, numeracy, and print literacy, which are the currencies that are valid in the Canadian school system. Shariifo was denied access to formal education after she arrived as well. After leaving my ELL class, she was considered too old to attend mainstream high school, so she was told to attend a school that is specifically designed for students who are between the ages of 18 and 20. After completing a year there, she reached the limit of what publicly funded education would provide and was referred to a college that could meet her educational needs. Unfortunately, studying at College is not free and Shariifo does not have the means to pay for her studies. It could also be argued that the welfare agent Shariifo said she spoke to further denied her access to formal education by choosing not to take forward her request for assistance, and instead suggesting she work part-time and go to school full-time. However, working part-time at minimum wage would not meet Shariifo's basic needs of survival, especially as a single mother, and she was therefore forced to work full-time.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the many ways of "reading and writing the world in a range of modalities" (Janks, 2010, p. 25). Print literacy is most often privileged in western education, but that is not the case in all learning traditions. Gee (2012) cites Scribner and Cole's study of the Vai of Liberia as an example (p. 55). The Vai can have no print literacy, literacy in Vai, Arabic, or English. Any individual person may be literate in any

combination of the four possibilities including no print literacy. The term 'modality' refers to the various media through which a Discourse may be communicated. The Vai of Liberia, for example, use a rich variety of modalities. Modalities include, but are not limited to, visual, oral, print, music, video, and so on. CL acknowledges that diverse people read the world in different ways, and do not privilege the same media.

Among the participants, I was struck by Shariifo, who did not attend school until she was 14 years old, but was fluent in both oral Somali and Swahili. In school she learned the grapheme/ phoneme system to read Swahili, and was able to apply the same set of rules to her first language, Somali. A typical narrative for a Canadian student is that she would begin to learn how to read after having acquired some oral proficiency. The narrative was the same for Shariifo, but in her case she was learning to read in her L2. If we assume that Shariifo's story is correct, then improving her English literacy proficiency is also possible, but she would still lack the symbolic capital that a high school diploma could provide. Shariifo may improve her English literacy, but if she cannot gain access to dominant discourses, her efforts to improve her standard of life may be jeopardized.

Omer has been able to adapt the dominant forms of literacy that he must navigate in order to find academic success. Interestingly, Omer claimed he was nearly monolingual upon arrival in Canada. Omer used Arabic as his first language, and did not learn Somali from his parents outside of a few words and phrases. Omer also had some knowledge of school English, such as it was taught in his school in Yemen. Nonetheless, Omer characterized himself as monolingual when he arrived in Canada. What lead to Omer's relative success in Canada is speculative, however looking through a CL lens,

one notices that Omer's background was one that prioritised printed text, just as Canadian schools do. Omer struggled to learn English grammar, syntax, spelling and vocabulary, but the epistemologies he had to navigate were similar to the ones with which he was already familiar.

Design

The design orientation towards CL acknowledges that all texts are produced, and are therefore productive. By productive I mean texts actively carry out the relationship between literacy and power. A text has an intended message, and an intended audience, and by default an unintended audience. "Design encompasses the idea of productive power – the ability to harness the multiplicity of semiotic systems across diverse cultural locations to challenge and change existing discourses" (Janks, 2010, p. 25). Digital stories are multimodal semiotic systems. They communicate through narration, photography, sound, and visual design. Of course, a text such as a novel is also a multimodal text. Obviously one must be able to decode the printed text, but the cover, the author, and indeed the context provide clues and messages and are likely interpreted in an infinite number of ways.

Novelist Adichie (2009), in her Ted Talk, recalls reading English novels growing up in Nigeria (2009). Adichie aspired to be a writer and began writing stories that mimicked the English stories she grew up reading. She recalls writing stories that included references to ginger beer, although she had no idea what that was. It must be similar for our ELLs. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is a typical novel taught in our schools, and it tells a distinctly American narrative. Imagine being a newcomer and being asked to write about the coming of age themes of a novel whose

settings are totally obscure to the experience of someone who grew up in, say, a refugee camp in Kenya. In the case of the Lee novel study, reflecting on growing up in America is what we ask our ELL refugee students to do, along with everybody else.

The requirements of a high school diploma are clearly a design, which is intended for those who have the specific skills and knowledge that those in positions of power deemed priority. Neither Shariifo nor Amir said they were able to secure the requirements for a high school diploma in the time allotted to them. Is this because the narrative actively excludes them, or is it an oversight? I wonder if there is room for alternative intelligences that may not be standardized, but are nonetheless useful for both the possessor and to the greater society. By limiting those without a high school diploma to low-paying jobs, we assume that they do not have other skills that are potentially valuable.

Literacy as a Social Practice

What are the NLS implications in this study? As previously discussed in the literature review, NLS distinguishes between what Street (2003) calls the "autonomous" model of literacy and the "ideological" model of literacy (p. 77). The autonomous model assumes that learning to read is a set of politically neutral skills, and that the acquisition of these skills will automatically improve one's standard of living.

> Introducing literacy to poor, "illiterate" people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their "illiteracy" in the first place. (Street, 2003, p. 77)

It is difficult to measure Street's description of the autonomous model of literacy against the experiences of the participants in this study. Firstly, it would be inappropriate to characterize any of them as illiterate. At best we could say they were less familiar with Canadian school literacy than others who were immersed in it from a very early age. It is also impossible to say if the acquisition of some academic literacy has improved any of their lives. In the case of Shariifo and Amir, they have not had enough experience yet to say that they have a proficient level of English literacy. In fact, they both expressed optimism about their respective futures in Canada. Omer, on the other hand, has experienced some success in school in Canada, but success in school need not be the same as the acquisition of skill. It is possible to receive credit for a class that one has attended, but not necessarily internalise the knowledge, nor acquire the skills as outlined by the goals of the course. Street rejects the autonomous model of literacy, and would instead favour the ideological model.

The ideological model of literacy recognizes that literacy is a social practice and "that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles" (Street, 2003, p. 77). Literacy is dependent on worldview, and is not at all a neutral practice, but rather a specific practice that is also culturally specific. In other words, it does not follow that the acquisition of the ability to read will lead to improved mental capacity and therefore economic outlook. Rather, a specific literacy practice has to make sense in a specific context. Previously I argued that Omer was able to secure some access to dominant school discourses prior to arriving in Canada, hence his relative success in school here. I would also submit that his previous school experience in Yemen furnished a worldview that allowed the acceptance of English school literacy with relative ease. On

the other hand, Shariifo's school experience was far removed from what is expected and taken for granted in Canada. Not only was she not able to secure access, school literacy did not feature prominently in the worldview of her upbringing.

NLS also distinguishes between a literacy practice and a literacy event (Street, 2003, 78). A literacy practice refers to a habitus, or a cultural phenomenon. The study of literature in school is a literacy practice, but so is checking the weather report on T.V., or checking the sports scores on your smart phone. A literacy event, by contrast, is a specific instance of engaging with a text. For example, in my class when I instructed the students to read their graded readers, the instance of sitting in a desk and decoding a printed text is a literacy event. As a teacher, I insist my students engage in literacy events, but literacy practices are more elusive. I cannot impose a worldview on them, but I can support them to gain access to dominant Discourses and forms. For students to accept a literacy practice as their own, it needs to find harmony within their own worldview, which takes time. For example, the use of an abstract placeholder symbolizing financial capital, such as the void cheque in Mustafa's case, was not consistent with his worldview of how money is used. It stands to reason that students who come from school literacy backgrounds in their first language would find a piece of their worldview reflected in at least some of their school experience in Canada. The same cannot be said for ELLs who do not have print literacy practices in their first language.

It is interesting to me that neither Omer nor Shariifo attributed anything resembling a power imbalance to their successes or failures. Shariifo did express that she would like more support, but the support she requested was to permit her to keep

attending classes. Indeed, framing the three narratives as a result of a power imbalance is incomplete. Janks (2010) herself said "[b]ecause CL is essentially a rationalist activity it does not sufficiently address the non-rational investments that readers bring with them to texts and tasks" (p. 211). In other words, not all literacy outcomes are a result of Janks' four orientations towards critical literacy. We must also remember that ELLs, and indeed all students, bring their own worldviews, values, priorities, investments and hopes to the classroom.

Recommendations

My reflections on the narratives collected in this study have yielded six recommendations.

1. **Provide CL professional development for teachers, administrators and counsellors.** Educators need to be made aware of how literacy events and practices maintain dominant relationships which serve to deny ELLs access to the opportunities and resources they need to succeed and realize their own potential.

2. **Provide ongoing information sessions about education for parents and community agents.** ELL families need to know how to prioritize what is of greatest importance to them. For example, when community agents pull students out of class to make a bank appointment, they are placing higher importance on the appointment than on schooling. The school represents the gateway to dominant literacies, and pulling students away limits their access to them.

3. **Provide ELL programing for adolescents and allow them to remain in one school until their public school funding runs out.** ELLs who arrive as teenagers have a limited amount of publicly funded time to study in high school;

changing schools on a regular basis is a further unnecessary disruption to their

education. For example, Shariifo desired more support to allow her to attend

school. Given that public education funding runs out at age 20, Shariifo could

have benefitted from a program that supported English language learning, and

supported acquiring other subjects as well. Instead, she was forced to move from

program to program because of local policies due to her age. Students such as

Shariifo should have the opportunity to maximize their limited time as a publicly

funded student by having access to a school program that allows them to stay until

they have reached the age that they must leave as per Alberta law. In Shariifo's

case, the school system failed her and did not make the right decisions in light of

the limited time she was allowed to attend school. Additionally, all personnel

who have direct contact with ELLs, such as teachers, administrative assistants and

educational assistants, need to be trained to work with language learners because

they are all teachers to the student.

4. **Provide first-language academic and career counselling.** ELL programs

    should ideally provide first language career and academic counselling. At the

    time of the interview, Amir claimed he did not know what his future held, and

    even Omer had limited himself to one specific career option. Our ELL students

    deserve the same rights as our English native speakers to access the full range of

    career and academic possibilities. Indeed, as a community, if we are not

    providing this service to ELLs, we are not accessing their skills and worldviews,

    and we are poorer for it.

5. **Design curricula and lessons to reflect and exploit the diverse literacies of the ELL classroom.** As an educator, we often notice what the student struggles with, English in this case. However, it is important to remember that the students have diverse abilities and worldviews. For example, rather than viewing an ELL student as someone who struggles with English, we might view him or her as someone who is learning a second, or third, or fourth language.

6. **Provide first language counselling on financial assistance and other supports available to students so that they understand their future prospects.** ELLs need to understand what opportunities for support are available, and how to access them. Shariifo's story about requesting financial assistance illustrates this point. It is probable that Shariifo did not know how to qualify for assistance. Shariifo could have benefitted from advice from someone who is literate in Canadian law and Somali. An ELL program that attempts to meet the needs of these vulnerable adolescents needs to keep in mind that they need access to more than just the literacies of school, but also the literacies of the Canadian habitus, its laws and policies. Using a CL approach in the classroom would go a long way to empower these young people. See Appendix D for a sample of such a lesson.

Future Research

Xu, Connelly, He, & Phillion published a fascinating narrative inquiry based on the life of a Chinese immigrant youth at an ELL program in Toronto (2007). Their paper served as partial inspiration for this study. However, since I was working with ELL students with different needs than those in Xu's study, I wondered what life would be like

for one of my low-literate ELLs in Edmonton. Any one of the participants of this study would be a worthy and fascinating subject for such a similar narrative inquiry.

Furthermore, I found little literature about the nature of English language – or L2 education – in refugee camps, and its relationship with student success in the global west. There is some research about the level of access that refugees have to school. An example is Buck and Silver's research of Somali girls and how much access they have to education (Buck & Silver, 2013). Educators of high-needs ELLs would benefit from research in this area, to better understand the nature of their students' backgrounds.

Lastly, the study here does not address the impact trauma has on academic achievement, or, for that matter, on the person's ability to learn. The work of Jungian psychologist Riedel (2013) and his project, cameras without borders, which he conducted in the Congo, northern Uganda, South Sudan and western Kenya may be instructive here. For example, Riedel (2013) compared the mind of someone who has undergone great psychological trauma to a shattered bottle. "A shattered bottle cannot hold water and a dissociated mind cannot think" (p.8). If a student is arriving at school with significant trauma, then the ability to accept a new worldview will surely be impeded. In the present study, I noticed that Omer and Amir, in particular, were either unwilling or unable to assess attributions. Keeping Riedel in mind, in order to see this research in context I cannot forget that all three of the participants likely experienced a significant amount of trauma before I met them. Research linking L2 acquisition and war-related trauma would be instructive for ELL education.

Reflections on the Limitations of the Study

An obvious limitation of this study was the possibility of a language barrier. As mentioned in the chapter about methodology, I abandoned using data from one of the interviews because I felt the language barrier was too great and therefore the data was not reliable. One possibility would be to involve an interpreter, but I feared the presence of a third person would negatively impact the nature of the relationship I had with the participants. However, the presence of an interpreter might be less intrusive if I did not have a previous relationship with the participant. I would still be concerned that the interpretations would be reliable. Ultimately, it would be best if the interviewee and interviewer shared a similar proficiency in a common language. Unfortunately, that was not possible for me this time.

I designed the data collection procedure to consist of one interview and a member check. However, a follow up interview would have been valuable. The participants had limited time with which to consider my questions. In some cases, I had the sense that they had not considered them before. Therefore, a follow up interview to allow time to reflect upon their answers would have been ideal. In particular, I believe a follow-up interview would have been helpful for them to consider their attributions.

As an interviewer, I quickly discovered that there is more to the research and data collection process than asking questions and awaiting responses. An area that I would like to improve upon is probing during the interview to elicit a response that addresses the participant's attributions. Because I only had one opportunity to interview each participant, it was important that I left with enough data to satisfy my research.

Therefore, interview probing is a technique that I would like to improve upon in order to collect as much reliable data as I can during the time I have with a participant.

Lastly, while the use of their digital stories in the interview process made each participant smile, the video itself did not elicit very much data. My presence may have been artefact enough to elicit a reaction. My role as their teacher from the Transition School was specific from that period, and the addition of visual evidence did not elicit the emotional response I was hoping for. However, the use of the video was not harmful to the research/interview process, and may have assisted in creating a safe environment in which participants could share their stories.

Final Comments

At the beginning of this study, I attempted to situate myself in the research. I am an ELL teacher, but my interest in these students was more than just professional interest. I do not share many of the cultural attributes that the participants of this study have. I have never been forced to flee my homeland, nor was I compelled make a new life in a new country. My experience abroad, where I had to negotiate my surroundings using my L2, is limited to living in Germany at various points in my life, but this was by choice. Also, every time I travelled there, I knew I was coming back. I have never been to Africa or the Middle East, but I have known what it is like to be alienated from the dominant group. I also know what it means to enter a narrative I did not create but was nonetheless compelled to carry out, a reality that many ELLs are familiar with. The students and their families at the Transition School affected me because I recognized pieces of my own story in them. I have learned how to succeed on the outside of the grand narrative, but with a window to the inside, and I hoped to share my discovery with my students.

Perhaps more importantly, I also hope that this study serves as a small porthole to the

outside.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

SUBJECT LINE: Mr. Jörg Bauer invites you to participate in a study about refugee

English Language Learners Hello,

This is Mr. Bauer. I am writing you because you were in my class in ███████ and you made a digital story as one of your assignments. I would like to interview you about your school experiences at ███████. I would also like to interview you about your experiences after you left ███████.

What will I be doing?

I will show you the digital story you made as a student in my class, and I will ask you questions about your experiences as an English Language Learner. With your permission, I will make an audio and video recording of the interview.

How long will it take? The interview will be 45 minutes.

When and where?

We will meet at a time and place that works best for you.

Interested in participating?

Please reply to this email or call me at 780-952-0708. I will contact you to find a time and place that works best for you.

Why?

I am learning more at the University. This is my research study for a Masters in Education degree. The University has approved this study and my professor, Dr. Bilash will help me.

If you have any questions, please contact me at jbauer@ualberta.ca. You can also contact me at jorgbauer@shaw.ca or call me.

Thank you for interest, Jörg Bauer Dr. Olenka Bilash, Professor (Secondary Education, University of Alberta)

Appendix B: Information and consent letter

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Adolescent Refugee English Language Learners in Canadian High Schools

Research Investigator:

Jörg Bauer 10734-154 st. Edmonton, AB, T5P 2J5 jorgbauer@shaw.ca 780-952-0708

Supervisor:

Dr. Olenka Bilash University of Alberta Faculty of Secondary Education Edmonton, AB T6G 2R3

Purpose

I am studying student opinions and stories about their beginning experiences as refugee ELLs in both Edmonton and in schools. I am especially interested in how you learned to read and write English. The results of this study will be used to support my research for my Master's of Education degree.

Background

I invite you to participate in this study because you recently came to Canada and began school here. In 2012 you were in my English Language Learning (ELL) class at the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and created a digital story about your first year in Canada. You have been here longer now and can speak English better so I would like to learn more about your first year in school in Canada.

Study Steps

1. We will agree to meet at a time and place convenient for you.

2. I will show you the digital story you created in my class.

3. I will also interview you.

4. I will make an audio and video recording of the interview.

5. The entire process should take no longer than one hour.

6. There is no cost to you for taking part in this research.

Benefits

1. You will benefit by becoming more aware of how you adapted to school in Canada.

2. Your interview will help me to help other students.

3. I will complete the final project for my Master's of Education degree.

4. Results of my research will help improve support for ELL students.

Risk

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. I have taken steps to make sure that your interview will be anonymous. You may stop the interview at any point.

Jörg Bauer Information Letter and Consent Form May 25, 2014

Voluntary Participation

You do not have to participate in this interview. Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to be in the study, you have the right to remove any or all information gathered in your interview.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

I will use the information from your interview to finish my Master's degree. I may use the information for future research or articles. If I do I will have to get permission from the Research Ethics Board.

I will keep your interview and digital story confidential. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio and video recordings and interview transcripts. I have taken steps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

I will keep the audio and video recordings and interview transcripts encrypted and on my hard drive. After I finish my Master's degree, I will keep your audio and video recordings for five years. After five years, I will destroy them.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact Jörg Bauer at 780-9520708, or jorgbauer@shaw.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Thank you for considering this request. Sincerely, Jörg Bauer Dr. Olenka Bilash, Professor (Secondary Education, University of Alberta)

_____ _____ _____

Jörg Bauer Information Letter and Consent Form May 25, 2014

Consent Statement (circle yes or no)

_____

YES/ NO YES/ NO

YES/ NO YES/ NO

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact.

I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature Date

_____ _____ Name
(printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Jörg Bauer Information Letter and Consent Form

May 25, 2014

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol – Master's Project - 2014

7. **Introduction:** Thank you, Name, for agreeing to participate in this interview. I really appreciate you taking time for this.

8. **Purpose:** I am a masters' student at the University of Alberta. As part of my studies, I am researching what it is like to be an English Language Learner and a high school student in Edmonton. I know that you were recently a language learner and high school student, so I thought you would be the perfect candidate.

9. **Explanation of the Procedure:** First, I will ask you a few questions. Then I will play for you the digital story you created while in my ESL class. Then I am going to ask you a few more questions about your experiences as a student during your first year in Canada. I will make an audio and video recording of your replies. There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in collecting your opinions. Nobody will know who you are. I won't mention your name in any reference. I will only share the results of this interview with my professor, and I will use a fake name for my report. The interview should take around 45 minutes. If, at any time, you wish not to answer a question or not continue with the interview, just tell me and we will stop.

10.   **Agreement:** Do you have any questions about the interview or the purpose of the interview?

11.   **Permission:** Do I have your permission to continue?

Demographics:

5. How old are you?

6. Where do you come from? Is NAME your home country?

7. When did you arrive in Canada? How old were you?

8. Have you lived in any other countries? Where?

9. Have you ever lived in a refugee camp?

Linguistic Background

11.   What is your first language?

12. Besides [Language] and English, do you speak any other languages?

13. Which languages can you read and write?

14. Did you attend school in your home country? Could you please describe your schooling before coming to Canada?

15. Did you have the opportunity to learn to read and write in your first language?

16. Did you begin learning English in your home country? If yes, how did it prepare you for living in Canada?

17. When you arrived in Canada, how well could you understand English? (high medium or low)

18. How well could you speak English? (high medium or low)

19. How well could you read English? (high medium or low)

20. How well could you write English? (high medium or low)

21. I'm going to play the digital story you created in my class in June, 2012.

Transition Centre at █████████

22. Do you remember making this video? What do you remember about making it?

23. Which experiences does the video remind you of from the █████████ school?

24. You attended ESL classes at █████████? How do you feel they contributed to your English literacy? Were they useful?

25. Do you feel the █████████ program prepared or supported you for your other classes? Could you please give and example?

26. Do you feel the █████████ classes prepared you for your life outside of the classroom? Could you please give an example?

27. Thinking back to that time, did you receive English literacy help outside of the classroom? From whom? How did they contribute to your English literacy?

28. Did your friends and family help you to acquire English literacy? How?

29. Is there anything else you did on your own to help you succeed?

Education after ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ **– High School etc.**

30. Can you describe what school or schools you went to after ▮▮▮▮▮▮?

31.   Are you in school now? Have you graduated, or do you plan to?

32.   Did you feel prepared for school after ▮▮▮▮▮▮? If yes how? If not, in what way were you unprepared?

33.   Were there any programs, classes or people that helped you be ready for high school? What were they and how did they help?

34.   Did you have any challenges as an ELL in high school? What were they?

35.   Did your English language ability affect your ability to learn other subjects and pass your classes? How?

36.   Were there supports that helped you succeed in high school? What were they?

37.   Were there challenges that stopped you from being successful? What were they?

Today

38.   How would you rate your English literacy now? (high medium or low)

39.   How confident are you reading English today? (high medium or low)

40.   How confident are you writing English today? (high medium or low)

41.   Do you feel like you are a successful English Language Learner? What makes you successful, or why do you not feel successful?

42.   Do you feel you got enough support while learning English and going to high school?

43.   Do you feel the supports you received were helpful? In what way?

44.   Do you feel you got the help you needed? If not, what kind of help did you need?

45.   Are there any supports you wish you had? If so, what are they?

46.   Lastly, it's been two years since you created the video. Do you feel like your English language abilities have improved since then? If yes, has this had a positive impact on your life? Please explain. Can you give an example?

47.   How do you feel about your future in Canada?

48.   Is there anything else you would like to add?

49.   Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions? Would you like me to send you a copy of the recording?

50. **Thanks:** Thank you very much, Name, for the interview. I really appreciate your help. You've given me lots of ideas to think about. Thank you again.

Appendix D: Sample CL Lesson

The following is a possible CL lesson proposed by Janks (2010, p.9). I have quoted it below:

> If one begins to collect everyday texts to do with literacy [such as magazine advertisements]… they can be used as resources for classroom discussion. Questions such as the following may begin to help students think about how photographs, advertisements, newspaper articles, cartoons or poems portray literacy.

1. How is literacy represented? As something positive or something negative? As a problem or a solution?

2. What claims are made for literacy?

3. Who is shown reading or writing? Who is not shown? Are they enjoying themselves or not? Who is shown as unable to read or write?

4. Because all written language is situated in time and place, it is important to understand where and when the literacy event shown in the text is taking place.

5. What counts as literacy in the text? Is it only reading and writing? Does text-messaging or drawing money from an ATM or searching the internet count as literacy? (Janks, 2010, p. 9)

Janks is referring specifically to an image that she found promoting print literacy education. There is a picture of an elderly black man. Because Janks is writing from South Africa, the image raises issues of race and power imbalance.