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Looking Back, Looking Forward: Helping Adult Immigrant ESL Students With Voice, Identity and Agency

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

by

Allison Ann Riley

Committee in charge:

Luz Chung, Chair
Cheryl Forbes
Marcia Sewall

2013

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The Thesis of Allison Ann Riley is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2013

DEDICATION

For my husband…who could not have been a more supportive partner in this process. Thank you for listening to ideas, dilemmas, doubts and drafts, for contributing brilliant insights, for tolerating my absence and for always believing in me. Everything I do is better and more meaningful because of you.

And for my father…my first role model of a dedicated teacher and brilliant scholar…it is a great honor and joy to share my work and this field with you.

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Finally, I want to thank my students past and present, who inspire me daily with their bravery and who I hope, through their stories, will move others as well.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Helping Adult Immigrant ESL Students With Voice, Identity and Agency

by

Allison Ann Riley

Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Luz Chung, Chair

Immigrating to a new country and learning a new language require a redefining of self, often resulting in conflicts with identity, a loss of voice and power and a disconnection from future hope. These conflicts, struggles and stresses can play out in the classroom in the form of non-participation and disruptive behaviors that inhibit learning.

Looking Back, Looking Forward was designed as an extension to a regular adult ESL curriculum in an effort to address the needs, beyond language skills, that adult, immigrant English learners have. The highly scaffolded project-based curriculum guides students through the creation of a children's story based on their personal immigration story. *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was implemented in a beginning level ESL class at a southern California community college.

The effectiveness of *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was measured through the analysis of a variety of data including instructor field notes of observations and student mini-conferences, surveys, goal-setting activities and student artifacts. The results showed that throughout the semester-long implementation students began to resolve identity conflicts by incorporating the past, present and future into an envisioned trajectory. Students demonstrated personal agency and voice in their classroom behavior and through the work they produced. Students also increased participation, in both quality and quantity, inside the classroom and in schoolwork done outside of the classroom. The evidence suggests that *Looking Back, Looking Forward* can be an effective tool in the ESL classroom to resolve problems with identity, agency and voice that inhibit learning and to develop English skills.

Introduction

Since the United States' involvement in Iraq in 2003, the number of Iraqis immigrating to this country has increased exponentially. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2012), 64,174 Iraqi refugees have been admitted into the U.S. since 2007 through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). A large number of those new residents were settled in an eastern suburb in southern California. I have been teaching English to these Iraqi refugees for the past five years.

My students are considered refugees instead of simply immigrants because they have come to the United States seeking safety. Over the years, I have gained deepening insight into my students' lives. The horrors that they have experienced are immense. Acts of violence have been perpetrated on them and the people they love. They have been persecuted because of their religious beliefs and even because of their professions. They lived through periods of near starvation, grinding up walnut shells to try to make something edible that resembled bread. Some have had people literally blown up on their doorsteps. I sometimes feel tearful as I look out over my students working hard on an exercise because I know the images and memories that are floating around their heads.

Of course, their pasts were not left behind in Iraq. Trauma like that follows you. Over the years, it has not been unusual for students to get calls in the middle of class telling them that someone had died. They have often

taken everything with them during their break and parked on the edges of the school, trained by their past lives to be ready to make a quick exit. My students have migraine headaches, injuries, nervousness and trouble concentrating. And yet, with all these past and present difficulties on their shoulders, they come to class everyday and try to learn English.

Teaching this population is rewarding, heartwarming, sad, frustrating and humbling. Seeing people struggle to start their lives completely over again gives one a good sense of perspective. In addition to the traumas of war, my students' beginnings in this country are fraught with difficulties. For most, fleeing Iraq meant leaving everything behind, and so they come to the U.S. with the clothes on their backs and very few possessions. Financial assistance is limited and jobs are hard to find. Saad [1], for example, one of my former students, had been here for almost three years and after literally hundreds of attempts to get work, continued to find himself unemployed. Struggling to learn the language and frustrated because he was unable to provide for his wife and two daughters, Saad was considering returning to Iraq. That Saad, and so many others like him, feel they will have more power and promise by once again putting their lives in danger is an alarming truth. Disheartened and powerless, feeling lost and without a voice, these students' struggles show themselves in their classrooms. Put in context, it is less of a wonder that some of these are difficult students: excessively restless,

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[1] All location and learner names have been changed.

interrupting teachers, cheating on tests, and generally being disruptive in class.

The non-credit adult ESL classes at Southern California College are well-intentioned attempts to help students like these who live in the surrounding community. These classes, however, primarily focus on basic language demands. While learning English, and having survival language skills that are immediately usable is vital, teaching these language skills only addresses some of the needs of the student population. No-cost, non-credit community ESL classes are places of transition. Students are not only learning language skills and being prepared for entering the workplace or the credit side of academics, but these classes are also gateways into a new community, culture and country. They are sometimes the only places the learners interact with others outside of their home and family units. The teacher is often the most knowledgable old-timer, in terms of the new community, that the students will spend time with. Because of the unique place these non-credit ESL courses have in the newcomers' lives, it is important that those classrooms help learners with redefining themselves in their new country and culture. *Looking Back, Looking Forward* is a project-based curriculum designed to fill the hole that exists in the current curriculum. It is my attempt to aid adult, refugee ESL students in their transition to their new lives and to help begin the rebirth of their hopes and dreams.

Assessment of Need

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012) estimated the number of legal permanent residents living in the U.S. on January 1, 2011 to be 13.1 million with 25.9 percent of those immigrants living in California. Knowing that there are a number of undocumented residents in the state, one can surmise that the unofficial number of people living in California whose first language is not English is even larger. The value the state places on these immigrants learning English is evidenced by the abundance of English as a Second Language classes found in the public sector. Becoming proficient in English allows immigrants to participate more fully as members of their new country and community. Immigrants see learning English as something that enables entry into the labor market, allows for economic integration and makes social inclusion possible (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). Statistics show that immigrants who can speak English are employed more often and are better paid (Chiswick & Taengnoi, 2007).

Background on the setting for this research project

The State of California provides support for no-cost English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults at community colleges throughout the state. The ESL 1 class offered through Southern California College's Continuing Education department is one of these classes. It is aimed at serving the immigrant population in the local surrounding community. These

free English classes are offered by the college as part of its, and all California community colleges', mission to provide education that works towards the mastery of basic skills including English as a Second Language (California State Department of Education, 1960).

The ESL 1 class that I teach is a non-credit course, but it is the starting point of a pipeline feeding students into credit courses at the college. Participation in and successful completion of the class guarantees students a seat in the overcrowded for-credit ESL classes. The course simulates a for-credit class in its organization and requirements. The course textbook is chosen by the Dean of Continuing Education with input from instructors and the head of the for-credit ESL department. There are specific student learning outcomes that must be met. Instructors have a great deal of freedom with the use and supplementation of the curriculum and with the structure and content of the daily lesson plans. The instructors must, however, work within the confines of the course outline and meet the expected student learning outcomes.

Course specific student learning outcomes (SLO) are determined by the Dean of Continuing Education with input from instructors in the department and the head of the for-credit ESL department. Included in the SLOs for the ESL 1 course is one addressing student behavior. It reads, "Demonstrate culturally appropriate social and civic behavior and interaction in the classroom and in the workplace". Within the context of a college classroom in the United States, appropriate behavior includes working and completing assessments

individually without soliciting the help of others, raising a hand before asking a question, listening to other students and the instructor when they are speaking without interrupting them, and other niceties and norms for turn-taking and being respectful of others. This student learning outcome involves skills that are necessary to fulfill some of the college's institutional learning outcomes such as "apply life skills such as following directions, time management, punctuality, respect for self and others, and ability to work effectively within groups to succeed in college-level courses", "actively participate within a group and contribute to its success", "apply self-regulation", "actively participate in the learning environment" and "define their life, career, and/or educational goals, and develop and monitor an action plan for successfully achieving those goals".

Why is culturally appropriate behavior in the classroom important?

Not only is appropriate behavior in the classroom and workplace important to the college and ESL 1 classroom, but these behaviors are also an essential part of belonging to any group. Wenger (1998) pointed out that practice is always done within a social and historical context and it is that context which gives our actions meaning. He further suggested that practice includes both the explicit and the implicit. Explicit elements of practice include language, tools, and codified procedures while unspoken elements include "implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb" (p.47). Encompassed within all of these elements, both the explicit and the tacit, are

rules for what a group would consider to be appropriate behavior. These elements are distinctive signs of membership in a community of practice. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (1989) showed that the use of appropriate and relevant interpersonal and small group skills allow groups to be productive. If students do not learn how to participate appropriately within the ESL 1 classroom, they will not learn the transferable skills and behaviors needed for success outside of the classroom. As a result they could have trouble becoming part of, and participating in a positive way in, other classes at the college and even in the work place where the basic rules of behavior are the same.

While readying students for life beyond the ESL 1 classroom is vital and one reason why the learning outcome for culturally appropriate behaviors is emphasized, requiring students to adhere to these standards within the class is equally important. Not behaving appropriately, in accord with the expected norms of a U.S. post-secondary institution, interferes with everyday classroom practices. When students do not comply with expectations, excessive time is spent on classroom management. Even more importantly, a student's refusal to work alone makes assessing individual work difficult if not impossible. The ESL 1 course is modeled after the for-credit ESL courses, and thus, individual assessments are required. Students must do well on discrete-point vocabulary and grammar tests as well as be able to produce adequate writing samples, all of which must be done individually. Informal assessments are

also important, as they are tools used by teachers to get a sense of student understanding and progress and the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

After almost five years of teaching non-credit ESL classes for Southern California College, I have gathered a number of my own stories of frustration and disruptive behavior on the part of my students. Anecdotal evidence that this is a concern for other instructors beyond my classroom exists within Southern California College. At meetings and during casual daily conversations, all the non-credit ESL teachers have revealed that they struggle with the same challenges. Conversations with, and second-hand reports about, the for-credit ESL teachers reveal that they, also, struggle with this issue. Earlier this year, I attended a workshop at a neighboring community college, sponsored by the regional California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL) chapter, addressing the challenges of teaching Middle Eastern students English and this topic was discussed. It was well attended by teachers from all over the county and the question and answer session, inundated with raised hands and eager questioners, had to be cut off due to time constraints. The workshop leaders suggested that cultural differences caused any difficulties experienced by teachers in their classrooms and classroom management techniques were offered as solutions.

What is the true nature of the problem?

These behavioral issues are problematic and clearly teachers and administrators have been frustrated by them. Nevertheless, educators have done little to remedy the situation. Thus far, they have been looking at these behaviors as the problem and have been focusing on classroom management solutions. When I have asked students about the behaviors, they have explained that expected classroom behaviors in their native countries are similar to those found in the United States. If there is not a lack of understanding or familiarity with these expectations and conventions, what then is the nature of the problem? Research suggests that these problems are a symptom and once the real problem is addressed, the symptoms should resolve. Wenger (1998) proposed that we are defined as much by what we choose not to participate in as what we choose to engage in. Non-participation reflects deeper issues at work. For adult immigrant ESL students, several factors could influence the extent to which they decide to participate.

To begin with, struggles with identity can lead to low or non-participation in the classroom. Learning a new language, and learning in general, necessitates the creation of a new identity. "Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming…" (Wenger, 1998, p.215). Immigrants, and refugees in particular, have to deal with identity issues. Adkins, Birman, and Sample (1999) explain

that refugees often have to cope with migration and acculturation stress. These learners may feel that their new culture threatens their old identity. Faced with the new challenge of balancing family life with ESL education, there is often a restructuring of the family unit, which can cause stress and confuse identity (Watkins & Richters, 2012). Seufert (1999) also acknowledges that adjusting to a new culture and language necessitates redefining one's familial roles and identity. Morita (2004) showed that non-participation could be the result of these kinds of conflicts with identity. Morita studied female adult graduate students from Japan who were studying in Canada. Following the participants for a year, Morita found that the self-imposed identities along with those given to the women by their teachers and classmates had a huge impact on their level of participation. In classes in which the participants were viewed by others or themselves as younger, less able, less experienced foreigners, they remained on the periphery of the classroom activities, sometimes to the extent that they became outsiders. On the other hand, the participants who were able to redefine their identities in a positive way were able to participate more fully in the class. Having not only a positive sense of self but also an identification with the communities that one is involved with helps one to fully participate in the community and be able to learn and take advantage of all the resources that are available.

In addition to issues surrounding identity, the structure and content of adult ESL classes can promote or hinder participation. Research shows that adult learners need opportunities to exercise choice and goal-setting, and a

sense of agency, for the best results in a classroom (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larson & Smalley, 1972; Locke & Latham, 2002; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Schwarzer, 2009).

The failure of students to participate in classroom practices is the result of the above stated needs not being met. This gap in the curriculum produces students who are struggling to find their own voices and feel a sense of identity and agency within their lives and their classrooms. These immigrant students, who have lost themselves and their voices, have forgotten how to hope. They are stuck on the lowest rung of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, concerned only with safety and survival, and unable to think about love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. These students need to learn basic English to survive in their new lives, but they also need to learn how to become themselves in this new culture. ESL classes must address these aspects of learning in order to truly help our immigrant students begin to build new and productive lives in this country. This curricular innovation is one attempt to address the deficiency that exists in the current curriculum and help move adult immigrant ESL students towards a brighter future.

Review of Relevant Research

In considering a curricular innovation for an adult ESL class of refugee immigrants, a number of factors need to be taken into account, as mentioned in the assessment of need. First, research pointing to best practices for teaching adult learners will be explored. Next, special concerns regarding refugees will be addressed as will learning and motivation in a second language classroom. Issues of identity and the notion of communities of practice will then be reviewed. Finally, the principles of critical pedagogy and arguments for the use of first languages in the classroom will be discussed. This research is the basis and justification for *Looking Back, Looking Forward* and grounds the curriculum in the current literature. The link from theory to practice will be made clear in Chapter Five, which describes the approach.

Learning in Adulthood

Adult learners differ from children, and curriculum designed for adults needs to take these differences into account. Unlike children, adult learners enter a classroom with decades of experiences, life skills and, in the case of an ESL classroom, a first language. Researchers have indicated that choice, accessing prior knowledge and goal-setting are important elements of a successful adult ESL classroom.

Choice.

Schwarzer (2009) advocated a Whole Language approach for adult learners and in doing so stressed the power of choice in the adult classroom.

Encouraging students to express opinions and providing opportunities for them to make choices builds student investment and participation because they engender a sense of autonomy and personal agency. Richards and Rodgers (1986) pointed out that learners' preferences and needs should influence the learning activities in a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The focus in CLT is on effectively communicating in social settings as opposed to perfecting linguistic forms. Celce-Murcia (2001) also suggested involving adult ESL learners in planning their own learning.

Accessing prior knowledge.

Adult learners have lived lives for many years beyond the classroom and bring with them rich knowledge. This prior knowledge is useful in both adult learning and ESL classrooms. Just as Vygotsky (1978) posited that tapping into prior knowledge is an essential way to help learners learn by connecting old knowledge with new, researchers in learning and adult education also highlighted the importance of accessing this knowledge. Bransford et al (2000), when speaking of the learner-centered classroom, said that "teachers must pay close attention to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners bring into the classroom" (p.23). The authors also proposed that schools and classrooms should be student-centered for both children and adults and teachers should take into account students' cultural differences, prior knowledge, abilities and interests. Celce-Murcia (2001) presented communicative language teaching as a student-centered approach,

suggesting that teachers should draw on adult ESL students' prior knowledge and experience for use in the classroom. Cognitive methodologies for teaching ESL rely heavily on students' previous knowledge base including their knowledge of their first language and their generalized knowledge of the world (Chastain, 1976).

Goal-setting.

Goal-setting is another important aspect of teaching adult ESL students. Larson and Smalley (1972) hypothesized that "the selection of appropriate goals and their periodic reevaluation" is a good way to foster motivation in language learning settings. Similarly, Locke and Latham (2002) reviewed 35 years of research on goal-setting and concluded that goals directly influence achievement. The most effective goals were ones that had an appropriate level of difficulty, were specific, and were goals that learners felt were both important and attainable.

Offering choice, accessing rich funds of prior knowledge and doing goal-setting activities are all ways to help adult learners. If the students are also refugees, additional factors may influence their learning.

Teaching Adult Refugees

Immigrating to a new country requires many adjustments. For immigrants who are refugees the challenges of transition are compounded by

the effects of trauma. Such students have unique issues that can affect their learning and the classroom community to which they belong.

Adkins et al. (1999) talked about three types of stress associated with refugee resettlement: migration, acculturative and traumatic stress. These stresses can affect people psychologically, physically and socially. The authors explained that refugees and immigrants may have frequent absences, choose not to participate in class, have trouble concentrating and may experience symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches. Additionally, many refugees and immigrants feel that the new culture threatens their old identity. Adkins et al. (1999) considered the ESL teacher to be a "cultural broker" whose job it is to create a safe environment and to do activities that promote cultural adjustment and goal-setting.

Watkins and Richters (2012) studied Karen refugee women from Burma learning English in Australia. They highlighted the difficulties these women faced in trying to balance their ESL education with familial responsibilities. A great deal of stress arose from the difficulty of needing the education in order to properly help their families interact with needed services, while at the same time having that education take time away from properly caring for their families. Additionally, Watkins and Richters showed that posttraumatic stress negatively affects learning. Burns and Finn (2010) studied refugee survivors of torture and also found that posttraumatic stress disorder makes second language learning more challenging by affecting emotions and cognitive abilities. Survivors of torture often feel a loss of power, and building trust is

essential. Burns and Finn recommended setting short and long-term goals to help students feel accomplished and committed to future progress. Also, by making classroom and academic expectations explicit, students will more likely become more participatory members of the classroom community. Finally, allowing students to be involved and aware of their own learning paths will engender even greater confidence in these learners.

Seufert (1999) acknowledged that stress and trauma make focusing on and learning new material difficult. Additionally, cultural differences in the classroom environment may be confusing to refugees. U.S. classrooms, and ESL classrooms in particular, are often very informal and this could lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations and inappropriate behavior on the part of the students. Seufert also pointed out that the refugee students themselves and their family members may be struggling to adjust and/or redefine their roles and identities in their new culture. This struggle is an added stress on the learner. Helping students learn to set realistic goals, suggested Seufert, will help motivate students to persevere through the many challenges they will face.

Motivation in the Second Language Classroom

Motivation has been studied for many years, as researchers have agreed that it plays an important role in any kind of learning. Motivation is a particularly important aspect of learning in second language (L2) classrooms. A look at studies conducted on motivation over the past few decades sheds

light on useful approaches and techniques that can be used in a language learning setting to help foster motivation and get language learners more involved. Many of these best practices find commonality with those for teaching adults and refugees.

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) examined motivation in terms of choice, engagement, and persistence, as determined by interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes. After reviewing decades of past research on motivation and L2 learning, Crookes and Schmidt formulated suggestions for a few ways that teachers could foster motivation and the acquisition of the L2 in their students. Suggestions included opening class sessions and framing activities in a positive way, making activities interesting and relevant in a way that speaks to students' need for power, belonging and achievement, keeping extrinsic rewards to a minimum while de-emphasizing grades, and creating collaborative rather than competitive activities.

Deci and Flaste (1995) found that external, extrinsic rewards such as money and controlling praise may have a positive effect in the short run but ultimately act as demotivators. Intrinsic motivation is associated with many positive results such as experiencing things on a deeper, richer level and improved conceptual understanding, problem solving skills and creativity. Deci and Flaste put forth that intrinsic motivation must include three aspects: autonomy, a sense of competence (challenges must be difficult enough to be challenging but not insurmountable), and connectedness (people need to feel love for others and from others). While Deci and Flaste's research was not

conducted in L2 classrooms, their findings about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation complement that of Crookes and Schmidt.

Deci and Flaste also suggested four practical ways to promote autonomy, and thus motivation, that are directly applicable to an L2 classroom. First, teachers must learn to take the students' perspective. Deci and Flaste explain, "As an autonomy-supportive teacher, parent, or manager, you would be building an alliance with your students, children, or employees, and you would engage new situations from that perspective" (pp. 142-143). Second, Deci and Flaste believe that students should be given choice about what to do or, at the very least, about how to do it. Third, they state that limits must be set but should be as wide as possible. Finally, they believe that goal-setting that is individualized with the appropriate level of challenge is helpful, and that having students help create the goals is a good way to ensure that the goals are appropriate and motivating.

Dörnyei's (1994) work on motivation in foreign language classrooms led to the development of a motivation construct that includes three dimensions: the language level (the values and attitudes attached to the target language), the learner level (the established parts of the learner's personality) and the learning situation level (related to the course materials and activities, the teacher's style and personality, and the group dynamics). With this model of motivation as the basis, Dörnyei gave suggestions for motivating learners at the group level. He suggested having whole group discussions about goals and making sure to look periodically at the progress made towards the goals.

He also indicated that instructors should establish norms with the class at the very beginning. Teachers should also make sure that the norms and the reasons why those norms help learning are made explicit. Finally, instructors should also follow the norms and address any violations of the rules by themselves or any member of the class. Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994) studied 301 Hungarian secondary school students studying English and observed that language learning is a complex, social process. They argued that focusing upon and creating good group dynamics is an essential part of a positive language learning environment and that it is important for teachers to include activities that promote such an environment.

Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, and Ratcheva (2012) studied Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' self-reported learning motivation. The control group received the traditional teaching methods while the experimental group received class-time exposure to ten preselected motivational strategies over the course of eight weeks. The authors found that implementation of teacher motivational behaviors increased motivation in L2 learners. The study emphasized the important role of a teacher's classroom practices and teaching behaviors. Several teacher motivational behaviors were shown to have a positive effect on students' motivation including showing students that they accept and care about them and their progress, recognizing students' efforts and achievements and conveying a belief in the students' abilities to succeed in their language learning efforts.

Much debate exists regarding the applicability of EFL motivation studies to ESL situations. Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model of second language (L2) learning motivation included two well-known terms that have been used a great deal in research: integrative and instrumental motivations. Integrative motivation is associated with a positive disposition towards the L2 group and the desire to interact with, and even become similar to, valued members of that community. Instrumental orientation is related to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary. Some researchers argue that the influence of these motivations differ in EFL and ESL classrooms due to the fact that with ESL students, the learners are in a country that uses the target language and so exposure to the language, attitudes about it and needs for learning it are very different (Clément et al., 1994; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

In the early 1990s, Gardner's socioeducational model became the subject of a good deal of criticism by researchers such as Crookes and Schmidt and Dörnyei, mentioned earlier. While acknowledging the huge strides Gardner made in motivation research, these thinkers wanted to adopt a more pragmatic, education-centered approach to motivation research. They believed that the complex classroom dimension of L2 motivation was not addressed in enough detail, meaning the socioeducational approach was difficult for teachers to apply directly to their classrooms and students. These researchers put forth that situation-specific motives closely related to the reality of the classroom played a far more significant role in L2 motivation than

had been assumed earlier. Crookes and Schmidt and Dörnyei focused on classroom and group dynamics, and these are applicable to both EFL and ESL.

The research on promoting motivation in second language learners includes several concepts that coincide with those considered best practices for teaching adults and refugees. Motivation research suggests that relevant content plays an important role in increasing motivation (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Incorporating relevant content is also considered best practice for teaching adult learners as researchers encourage accessing prior knowledge (Bransford et al., 2000) and using students' knowledge and input for content (Bransford et al, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Relevant content is also considered an important factor in critical pedagogy, which will be discussed later in this literature review.

Students' need for power and autonomy are also highlighted in the research on motivation as is the value of fostering intrinsic motivation through choice, goal-setting and autonomy-supportive teaching (Crookes & Schmidt; 1991, Deci & Flaste, 1995; Dörnyei,1994). These notions are echoed in recommendations for adult and refugee education in terms of offering choice (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Schwarzer, 2009), setting goals (Larson & Smalley, 1972**;** Seufert, 1999) and taking students' input and opinions regarding the direction of their own learning into account (Burns and Finn, 2010**;** Celce-Murcia, 2001). Finally, all three areas of research promote creating a safe, student-centered, learning community (Adkins, Birman, &

Sample, 1999; Bransford et al, 2000; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Deci & Flaste, 1995; Watkins & Richters, 2012).

Identity

Among the many challenges that immigrants face when resettling in a new country is the sometimes overwhelming reorganization of one's sense of self. Seufert (1999) and Adkins et al. (1999) all acknowledged, in their work about refugee ESL students, that the change to a new country, culture and language necessitates a change in one's conception of one's identity. Ngo (2008) encouraged looking at identity and culture as dynamic rather than static. Ngo also saw identity construction as a combination of how we have seen ourselves and how others see us. The movement between these two identities creates something Bhabha (1994) called the *in-between,* a third identity that is dynamic. Ngo studied Lao immigrant students at an urban public highschool in the U.S. and found the in-between in the students she observed, especially in the case of Mindy.

Mindy spent a lot of time with Hmong friends at school. Mindy's Lao friends and family did not approve of her spending so much time with those friends and accused her of wanting to be Hmong and of changing negatively because of her association with them. Her parents felt that Hmong immigrants became Americanized and if Mindy became too Americanized as well it would be a threat to her heritage. This conflict between Mindy and her family and friends was compounded by a school full of teachers, administrators and other

students who kept referring to Mindy as Chinese. Ngo pointed out that these conflicting definitions and identities affected Mindy as she tried to find her own identity. Immigrants' identity struggles, whether the immigrants are children or adults, refugees or not, are complex and the identities that they may want to create may be challenged by those around them because they do not fit the definition of what others think they should be. Again, Ngo suggested that identity must not be viewed as an either or but in the realm of in-betweenness.

Within the perspective of identity being dynamic and social in nature, it is understandable that many researchers exploring notions of identity have situated their studies within the frameworks of Situated Learning Theory and communities of practice (Kanno, 2000; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001). In communities of practice, as will be discussed in the next section, identities are developed in a variety of ways within a social context.

Identity and Communities of Practice

Many ESL researchers have examined identity within the framework of Situated Learning Theory (SLT), communities of practice (CoP) and imagined communities (Kanno, 2000; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001). Similarly, classrooms themselves have been viewed and studied as CoP (Miller & Zuengler, 2011; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001; Toohey, 1996). Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that in SLT, knowledge is not seen as an absolute, a thing or as a set of facts that can simply be transferred to someone else. In SLT, learning is viewed as sociocultural and takes place by participating in

activities. One learns by becoming part of a CoP. The key to a CoP is that the members engage in a common endeavor together and over time. Some examples of CoPs are trade organizations, families, church congregations, classes, book clubs, and baseball teams. A CoP develops ways of doing things, views, values, power relations, and ways of talking. CoPs evolve naturally or can be created through community building (Wenger, 1998). There is a social order within the CoP in which the members find their place. There is also a social order beyond the CoP and the members of a particular CoP place themselves in that larger social order based on their membership in the CoP. Their CoP affects how the members see the world and understand their existence in relation to it (how they fit in). Newcomers to a CoP interact with old-timers and slowly learn the practices of that community.

Learning within a CoP happens in a particular way. First, newcomers become members of the CoP. In order to do this, they must be granted legitimacy by the existing members. Essentially, the other members have to believe that these newcomers belong in the group and treat them as though they belong. As part of the CoP, newcomers engage with the group through Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). Basically, the newcomers sit on the periphery of the activities of the group, not taking a central role, but instead engaging from the sidelines. By doing this, the newcomers can have time to observe and learn. They learn from the oldtimers who are central and knowledgeable participants. The idea is that over time, the newcomer develops knowledge and slowly takes on a more central role, eventually

becoming an oldtimer him or herself and in turn, helping a newcomer to learn. Peripherality also has to be granted by the CoP. If it is not granted, the newcomer is isolated on the edges of the group and is not a legitimate participant who is simply on the periphery.

In the eyes of SLT and CoP, learners identify themselves, and do not identify themselves, with particular communities of learning and, as a result, the way one identifies oneself impacts one's learning trajectory. It is possible to belong to more than one CoP and it is even possible to belong to an imagined CoP and these kinds of identification can also affect learning.

Norton (2001), for example, described an immigrant student who was a teacher in her native country. She identified with a CoP of professionals, which at that point was not a reality but an imagined community because she could not find employment in her new country of Canada. The fact that the woman identified with that professional community made it difficult for her to accept her ESL teacher's opinion that her English was not good enough to take a computer class that she wanted to enroll in. The student left that ESL class and joined another one that she felt brought her closer to the CoP that she identified with. Through this example, Norton showed how powerfully one's self-concept affects learning and participation in the classroom. The student, Katarina, did not feel like a member of the classroom community nor did she feel that the teacher's view of her matched her own. This conflict led to Katarina not fully participating in and eventually leaving the class. This is an example of Wenger's (1998) argument that we are defined as much by what

we choose not to participate in as what we choose to engage in. The example of Katarina suggests that classroom situations can be difficult for adult immigrant language learners because they are experts in certain CoPs, such as their professions in their home countries, and are newcomers when it comes to language and the classroom CoP.

Norton also explained that it is possible to belong to more than one CoP at the same time. It is sometimes difficult for students to reconcile multiple memberships, especially when it comes to immigration and language learning. Membership in a CoP requires identity construction and, for some learners, becoming a member of a new CoP, or learning a new language, necessitates (or feels like it necessitates) leaving behind an old identity, language and community (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999).

Kanno (2000) relayed a similar story of imagined identity through the story of Rui, a Japanese teenager. Even though Rui spent two-thirds of his life in English speaking countries, he strongly self-identified as Japanese. He later discovered that his imagined community of Japan was very different from actual Japan. That his imagined community was not accurate and lived in his imagination made it no less of a reality to Rui and this identification strongly influenced his learning path.

Morita (2004) focused on identity, participation and adult learners who speak other languages in her year-long study of six female graduate students from Japan and ten of their teachers. Situating the study within the framework of a CoP allowed Morita to view the native speakers, older graduate students,

doctoral students and professors as the old-timers, while the visiting graduate students were seen as the newcomers.

The findings, based on in-depth interviews and observations of the students and teachers, demonstrated how complex the process of joining and negotiating access in a CoP is. The women who were the focus of the study had a difficult time becoming legitimate members of their classrooms. Legitimacy was strongly influenced by the instructors but was also granted or denied by classmates. Individuals' need for power was often a large factor involved in whether or not they would grant legitimacy to the students.

The study also showed how much the focal students' identities influenced their access to the classroom community. Identities were assigned to the students by their classmates and teachers and those impacted how they were treated in the classroom. It also influenced how they saw themselves and either adapted or gave in to the identity assigned. Self-imposed identities were also a huge factor in how the students behaved. One student who saw herself as less knowledgeable and less experienced, basically feeling like a child in the class, kept silent most of the time. One who self-identified as less capable in English was scared to participate in group discussions. Another student, who initially saw herself as a detriment to the class based on her self-identity as a foreigner, was able to change to a more positive self-concept in which she saw herself as a person who was an asset to the class, able to offer a different and interesting perspective. This shift in identity allowed her access to the CoP.

Kanno (2000), Norton (2001), Morita (2004), and Toohey's (1996) studies argued that identifying with and being legitimized as a member of a CoP are essential aspects of belonging to one and becoming an active participant in it. They also showed that not identifying with a CoP can lead to nonparticipation in it and can even cause one to leave the CoP. It follows that when a classroom is viewed as a CoP, it is important for students to identify themselves as members of the classroom community in order to ensure their full participation and learning. Moreover, the CoP can help students build their new identities. Wenger (1998) put forth:

> As a trajectory, an identity must incorporate a past and a future. Learning communities will become places of identity to the extent that they make trajectories possible – that is, to the extent they offer a past and a future that can be experienced as a personal trajectory. In this regard, a community can strengthen the identity of participation of its members in two related ways:
>
> 1) by incorporating its members' pasts into its history – that is, by letting what they have been, what they have done, and what they know contribute to the constitution of its practice
> 2) by opening trajectories of participation that place engagement in its practice in the context of a valued future. (p.215)

Wenger further explained that schools become relevant for more than just the content they teach. They are also important for the opportunities they provide for students to explore identity. Furthermore, students need to be able to engage at school, have experiences and utilize materials that foster the construction of a world view and image of self, and they need to be provided ways to explore personal agency. These can be given to students through

social interaction and authentic activities and by enabling multiple entry points and legitimate peripheral participation so that all learners regardless of L2 proficiency or life situations may engage.

As just discussed, helping adult, refugee ESL students learn and develop a sense of self involves helping them reconcile identity conflicts and place past, present and future within their self narrative. It also requires giving students opportunities to explore their personal agency and find ways to situate themselves in tangible and valued futures. Approaching a learning community from the perspective of critical pedagogy is one way to accomplish this.

Critical Pedagogy

From the vantage point of critical pedagogy, all curricula are created with a certain theory about and view of learners and learning; they are never neutral. According to Freire (1970), schooling has been dominated by the banking model of education. Also called problem-solving education (Freire, 1970), the banking model approach places students in, and prepares them for, subservient roles in society. In this model, educators believe they must intercede in order to help their students solve their problems. Curriculum developers are seen as the experts who determine students' needs and decide the best solutions for those problems. A teacher's job is to deposit this predetermined knowledge or skill into the empty receptacle, the student, in order to solve their problems in a way that fits into society thereby ensuring

compliance with expected norms and a lower, powerless position in society.

For Freire, the value of education is in its ability to give people the power to liberate themselves. Critical pedagogy and problem-posing education challenges the banking model and serves to empower students rather than prepare them for menial, oppressed positions in the world. As opposed to being fed predetermined problems and solutions, students are able to recognize and analyze the circumstances in which they find themselves by becoming literate and developing critical-thinking skills. Students identity the problems themselves and engage in the process of seeking out their own alternative solutions. Rather than learning to regurgitate responses and solutions prescribed by society, learners think for themselves and as a result are empowered to challenge and change those circumstances. This approach emphasizes the development of learners' conceptual abilities over language forms.

Approaching a classroom through the lens of critical pedagogy means analyzing the assumptions and the historical context in which the school, policies and curriculum have been built. Curriculum should revolve around authentic, real-life issues of importance to the students and the determination of value ought to come directly from students rather than having that imposed on them by an instructor or textbook (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987). Teachers need to see themselves as teacher-learners who are partners with their students rather than as all-knowing holders of knowledge who deposit said knowledge into the students. Seeing

themselves in this way allows instructors to be open to the authentic questions, problems and realities that students want to pose and work toward solving. Freire (1970) worked in rural Brazil helping poor adults develop literacy. Believing that illiteracy is the result of unjust social conditions, Freire saw education as creating an opportunity for illiterate and semi-literate adults to experience democracy and self-determination, possibly for the first time. People illiterate in their first language, like those Freire worked with, are marginalized. Those who move to a new country and are not literate in the new language, are in the same position.

Immigrant ESL students with little to no English language skills find themselves in a powerless position when they immigrate, left with few tools in regard to accomplishing tasks requiring literacy and often in poor socio-economic conditions. This lack of agency, and the immigrant's subordinate role in society, is often perpetuated in ESL classrooms, which are organized in a way that removes power from the students. In addition to the fact that classrooms are typically set up with rows of students facing the teacher/knower, many classes are held in borrowed spaces with limited resources and even child-size chairs and desks. These settings immediately marginalize students and reinforce immigrants' child-like status along with a sense that their education is not important (Auerbach, 1995). Classrooms that do not attempt to address this lack of agency and inequality, perpetuate these relationships and can become places of conflict with students actively resisting authority and classroom practices (Giroux, 1983; Ogbu, 1991).

Given the lack of agency that immigrants and ESL students deal with, it is no wonder that critical and multicultural pedagogies are used in ESL classrooms. As the conditions for these students are not as extreme as those explored by Freire, educators have adapted Freirean principles to better fit the circumstances. Wallerstein (1983) used a Freirean-based approach in her ESL classroom. Among other suggestions, she said that it is vital for ESL teachers to understand their students' histories and personal lives by observing their lives first hand and by talking with students about their immigration stories and comparing their lives before and after the move. She further recommended that the information and understanding gathered should then be used in the curriculum. Auerbach (1992) departed from Freire by giving examples of empowerment that were personal and individual and less about larger social change: An overworked mother in her class joined a softball team to gain some personal enjoyment; students built up their waning self-esteem that had been depleted by their dependency on their children for language assistance; and others gained a sense of value for their native language and culture. These changes were smaller, and more localized than those idealized by Freire, but still showed positive effects on those students' daily lives.

Other authors have suggested ways to incorporate critical pedagogy in the classroom. According to Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008), a multicultural curriculum should tap into students' diverse and rich funds of knowledge to honor those roots and challenge the ethnocentric assumptions

that are present in most curricula today. The authors also suggested, like Vygostsky (1978), that students can gain new knowledge much more efficiently by building on prior knowledge. Finally, Worthman (2008) looked at fostering empowerment in adult literacy and ESL classrooms in relation to students' pasts. He found that projects that viewed adult learners' past experiences as something to contemplate and understand, rather than something to overcome and get beyond, had an emancipatory quality that was freeing. He suggested that rather than simply helping students to become insiders in the new culture and move beyond their pasts, we need to emancipate students by using their pasts and giving them tools to critique power structures and find their own place in the world. This suggestion is in line with the literature on identity discussed earlier that suggested incorporating and reconciling the past with the present in order to open up a future trajectory.

First Language Use in the Second Language Classroom

A liberatory classroom raises issues surrounding the use of students' first languages while learning a second (or third, or fourth) language. The predominant philosophy in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is exclusive use of the target language. This view is purported to be best practice by the Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching, and Task-Based and Content-Based approaches (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Classes taught in the target language became popular 100 years ago via the

Direct Method (Howatt, 1984), and Auerbach (1993) argues that the popularization of the Direct Method was greatly influenced by politics. Yu (2000) explains that the Direct Method requires a classroom setting that simulates a first language (L1) learning environment. Critics have questioned whether this is possible citing the fact that creating a learning environment that simulates all the conditions of first language learning would require an enormous amount of control including the dramatic limiting of class size. Despite this and other criticisms, the Direct Method had a great influence on second language (L2) teaching, and its influence can still be seen in today's classrooms.

Research, however, has shown that L1 use in the L2 classroom can be beneficial in a number of ways. First, the L1 can help with the learning of the L2. Cummins' (1984) notion of a Common Underlying Proficiency states that L1 helps L2 learning in that skills and metalinguistic knowledge learned for the L1 provide a base for learning the L2. Learners draw from their L1 when learning a new language. Moreover, as the L1 develops, the L2 does also. Cummins (2000, 2007) explains that conceptual knowledge that we have developed in one language helps us understand new information we take in from another language. Anton and DiCamilla (1998) showed that a learner's L1 can be used as scaffolding to help the student perform at levels that he or she would not be able to otherwise. They also showed that use of the L1 helped students discuss problem-solving strategies and stay interested in the task at hand. Furthermore, Anton and DiCamilla found that utterances in the

L1 help students to comprehend semantic forms in the L2. Allowing learners to use their L1 enables them to access forms and meanings that they would otherwise be unable to grasp (Alegria de la Colina & Del Pilar Garcia Mayo, 2009).

Prohibiting L1 use in the L2 classroom has been shown not only to have negative effects on the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening but also on personal relationships (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Auerbach, 1993; Scott & De la Fuenté, 2008). Conversely, allowing L1 use helps psychologically, emotionally and with social interactions within the classroom. In studying adult ESL learners in North America, Auerbach (1993) found that “L1 and/or bilingual options are not only effective but necessary for adult ESL students with limited L1 literacy or schooling and that the use of students’ linguistic resources can be beneficial at all levels of ESL” (p. 9). Use of the L1 helps students feel more secure and able to express themselves in ways that they could not in the L2. Subtractive models of education in which L1 is not seen as important not only affects learning but can also make students feel their culture and language is unimportant (Yamauchi, 2005). Tse (1998) argues that use of the native or heritage language can help learners work through problems with identity and also helps promote multiculturalism and aids in acceptance of the new culture.

Conclusion

In order to successfully help adult immigrant ESL students begin to build

or redefine their identities in the new language and culture, best practices for teaching adults, refugees and ESL can be combined with activities and approaches that create a strong CoP within the classroom. The research shows that it is important to help students find legitimacy as members of that classroom community. In order to help resolve or avoid conflicts with identity, it is also vital that we help students reconcile past identities with present and to understand that it is possible to have membership in more than one community at the same time. Wenger (1998) suggested that we cannot stop there. Helping students with identity necessitates aiding each individual in creating a possible future path for him or herself, completing a trajectory that includes the self in the past, present and future. The literature suggests that by taking CoP, its related notions of identity and best practices in adult immigrant ESL teaching and learning and combining them with the tenets of critical pedagogy, it is possible to help students take strength from their pasts, use those pasts to inform their present and help set them on a path towards freedom, action, and personal agency. Together, this research points to a classroom curriculum that goes beyond language learning to nurture the learner and support his or her personal growth in terms of identity, voice and agency.

Review of Existing Curricular Approaches

The theories about teaching and learning supported in the review of research include principles of using goal-setting and choice to enhance motivation and learner autonomy and building communities of practice to promote identity construction and a sense of belonging. Research also suggests that accessing students' prior knowledge, and promoting critical thinking, meaning making and personal agency through the use of a critical pedagogical approach, and allowing some L1 usage in the classroom are also in the best interest of adult, refugee ESL learners. These constructs can be used as the basis for reviewing existing curricular approaches. First, Communicative Language Teaching, one of the most prevalent approaches for teaching ESL today, will be discussed. Then, the textbook currently used in the ESL 1 course at Southern California College will be reviewed. Finally, a textbook commonly used in the adult ESL world, that employs many strategies from Communicative Language Teaching, will be analyzed.

Communicative Language Teaching

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, approaches to language teaching made a shift. Theorists started to believe that language competence involved more than simply linguistic competence. Widdowson (1978) noted that it was possible for students to understand linguistic rules but still not be able to use the language to communicate successfully. Slowly, definitions of competence

began to include the ability to perform social functions such as making, accepting and declining invitations (Wilkins, 1976). Knowing what, how, when and to whom one should say something, in essence, being able to take linguistic rules and use them appropriately in a social context, was eventually seen as a more accurate measure of communicative competence than simply having mastery over linguistic structures (Hymes, 1971). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) came about as a result of this shift away from linguistic structure-centered approaches toward more communication-centered methods. Today, CLT methods are used in ESL and EFL classrooms around the world.

In CLT, the primary goal is to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Teachers act as facilitators and do their best to create authentic communicative tasks for students to perform. Due to the approach's focus on authenticity, the communicative practice must involve purpose and choice. A CLT classroom is student-centered and encourages students to share opinions and ideas under the premise that such sharing enhances motivation. Students work together in small groups doing cooperative learning activities that require both a positive interdependence and individual accountability. Language functions are emphasized over forms and culture-specific subtleties such as body language are part of lessons.

In many ways, CLT supports the constructs discussed in the review of relevant literature. Opportunities for choice in how to communicate during

activities are abundant because function is valued over form. The strong focus on effective communication provides a backdrop for goal-setting before activities. By placing an emphasis on understanding social contexts, CLT provides a potential framework for students to explore their identities and roles within the new culture. The frequency of student interactions and opportunities for sharing can help to build and maintain a community. This approach promotes the sharing of ideas and opinions and has learners engage in activities that involve authentic communication, which promotes true meaning making as opposed to rote memorization. This also allows more opportunities for students to choose which problems and solutions they focus on, which, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, is empowering. Focusing on relevant, real-world tasks helps prepare students to be effective in their real lives beyond the classroom.

CLT can be a useful approach for teaching ESL to adult, immigrant and refugee students, but the challenge is in creating a curriculum that operationalizes its tenets. While CLT provides a framework that supports important teaching and learning elements such as goal-setting, choice, the exploration of identity, problem-posing and community building, the principles of CLT are an approach rather than a curriculum and must be applied to specific activities in order to carry them out. For example, CLT encourages a great deal of student interaction but an ESL teacher still must develop the activities that enable that. To bring out the potential aspects of critical pedagogy in CLT, the onus is on the instructor to create authentic

opportunities for his or her students to interact with each other and to identify problems they deem valuable and discuss solutions for them.

Current ESL 1 Curriculum: *Excellent English 2*

Excellent English (Velasco, Forstrom, Sherman, MacKay, & Pitt, 2009) was designed in the same way many non-credit adult education ESL books are. The influence of CLT is visible in the text and is combined with specific content that meets state and national standards. These standards are as follows:

CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System): The competencies included on this assessment identify over 30 essential skills that adults need in order to succeed in the classroom, workplace and community. Funding for non-credit adult education programs are often tied to the inclusion of these competencies and students' performance on this assessment.

SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills): These competencies were developed by the U.S. Department of Labor and are workplace skills that help people compete in today's global economy.

EFF (Equipped For the Future): These standards were developed by The National Institute for Literacy and are for adult literacy and lifelong learning. These competencies focus on the major roles adults assume responsibility for in their lives: as workers, parents and citizens.

Like many adult education ESL textbooks, *Excellent English* is organized into thematic units involving such authentic, real world topics as family and education, daily activities, and finding a job. *Excellent English* is more grammar-oriented than most adult ESL books and thus, has a greater number of grammar lessons than most books in this genre. Also, the grammar is presented more explicitly than in other texts in this field.

Each unit is organized in the same way. Lesson one contains a picture dictionary introducing thematic vocabulary, scenarios and the new grammar point. The lesson then goes on to give an explicit grammar lesson and discrete-point practice. Lesson two is more grammar practice, building upon the initial grammar lesson. If, for example, lesson one introduced statements in the simple present tense, lesson two might work on questions in the simple present tense. This lesson also contains a big picture with speaking activities related to it that give practice with the new grammar and vocabulary. Lesson three involves listening and conversation practice with highly scaffolded activities using sample conversations. The second half of the unit begins with a new picture dictionary and more grammar and vocabulary building further on the theme of the unit. This leads, again, into more grammar practice and a pronunciation exercise. Content starts to come together in lesson six, where students apply their knowledge to reading, listening, speaking and simple, real world math problems. Finally, students do some reading and writing in lesson seven. At the end of the chapter, a page called *Career Connection* shows a picture story, loosely related to the theme, of a workplace happening and a

chance to discuss personal connections to the story. There is an opportunity to check one's progress at the very end of the chapter in the form of a simple review and chart to mark one's score for each language skill learned.

Goal-setting is almost non-existent in this text. Other textbooks often begin a chapter with an outline of the chapter and items to be learned, such as *Stand Out* (Jenkins & Johnson, 2009) reviewed below, but this text does not have an outline. Such a preview creates an easy opportunity for goal-setting for the chapter. Without it, the onus is on the teacher to guide his or her students in creating appropriate goals for the unit ahead. The only other direct opportunity to talk about goals in the textbook comes, sometimes, in the *Career Connection* section. After the captioned picture story, there is usually a discussion question. Often, these questions are goal-oriented such as "What things can you do to get a new job?" and "What new skills do you want to learn?". The progress check provided at the end of the units is a wonderful way to help adults feel some control and responsibility for their learning. It could be more effective if it were combined with goal-setting activities at the beginning of each unit.

The concept of choice is also missing in the *Excellent English* text. None of the exercises offer a choice in what to do or even how to do it. A few opportunities exist for choosing between grammatical forms, and occasionally function rules over form and students can choose how to communicate. But, for the most part, the text does not provide the teacher with the motivational tool of choice.

The exploration and formation of identity in the new culture and language is primarily promoted through the pictures and examples presented in the book. Immigrants from all over the world are used as examples in the text and their stories are told in different ways. These immigrants are also shown starting new lives in terms of the community resources, schools, and work. These are indirectly addressing the issue of forming a new identity, but there are not explicit opportunities for discussing the transition immigrant students are going through. The text offers students opportunities to answer questions about their own lives and also gives several prompts in each unit to talk or write about themselves in the *What about you?* exercises. These offer some chances to build and share identity and also to create a sense of community in the classroom. These opportunities, however, are too few and simplistic. In unit seven, for example, after listening to some simple exchanges about people's first memories of arriving in the country, the text asks the students to share how old they were when they came to the country and how they felt. No scaffolding is provided to help students express themselves beyond a simple "happy" or "nervous", nor has a community been built previous to that to make sharing such potentially personal feelings easier. In unit five, one of the *What about you?* sections prompts students to write four sentences about themselves using sentence starters. The directions read: "Talk. Read your sentences with a partner" (p. 77). With no turn-taking scaffolding or additional prompts to aid the conversation, this could be a very awkward and superficial activity.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, the text is lacking. The book meets the criteria of what Auerbach (1985) called *survival ESL*. Auerbach claimed that this genre of materials contains a hidden curriculum that affects students' lives beyond the classroom. For example, due to language ability constraints, authentic communicative scenarios are oversimplified to the point that they are no longer realistic. On page 75 of *Excellent English,* there is a sample phone conversation setting up a doctor's appointment, showing the caller easily getting a doctor's appointment for the next day. This does not reflect the truth of an immigrant's socioeconomic situation. First, new immigrants often visit clinics or emergency rooms for health care as opposed to private doctors' offices. Second, it is rare that a doctor, even in a private office, will see a non-emergency case the next day. For these reasons, the sample conversation is misleading and unrealistic for the audience. Thus, it does little to help these students' ability to truly communicate in a similar situation in their own lives nor does it prepare them for the reality of what they may face. In *Excellent English's* unit on finding a job, not only is the job-hunting experience oversimplified, but also a great opportunity is missed. Many immigrants are confronted with the distressing truth that, though they may have been professionals in their home countries, they may be forced to start over again in terms of position and pay. A discussion of this truth as well as the possible deeper reasons for it could be pursued here, offering students meaningful opportunities for understanding, expressing themselves and their frustrations, and exploring solutions.

Excellent English focuses on adult immigrant students as its target audience and has obviously taken steps to meet accepted standards within the world of adult ESL. Used on its own, however, the text falls short in the areas of goal-setting and choice, which research shows to be two important areas for enhancing motivation in this population. It also does little to foster identity development, barely touching upon elements of students' pasts, presents and futures that together formulate a trajectory, which is another important area that needs to be addressed with immigrant students. Though the text makes an attempt to have learners share personal experiences and become part of a classroom community, not enough is done to truly create such an environment. Without these tools to help students connect to the material, the examples, and the scenarios in the text, and without the foundation of a community in the classroom, students could feel disconnected and unmotivated. Finally, the curriculum lacks in helping students with meaning making and developing the ability to think critically about their new culture and their position in it. It oversimplifies real-world problems and truncates opportunities for students to explore true problem-posing and solution finding. *Excellent English* has some good exercises and content, but must be heavily supplemented by a knowledgeable instructor to address the needs stated above.

Popular Adult ESL Curriculum: *Stand Out 2*

Another book used in the adult ESL world, and one previously used at Southern California College as part of the non-credit ESL program, is the *Stand Out* (Jenkins & Johnson, 2009) series of books, in particular *Stand Out 2*. Like *Excellent English,* these books are presented as competency-based in that they aim to address the CASAS, SCANS and EFF standards and competencies. *Stand Out 2* includes the claim that the book can “facilitate active learning while challenging students to build a nurturing and effective learning community” (p. vi). Though the series does not mention CLT, it clearly adheres to many of the tenets of the approach. Subject matter is striving to be authentic and communicative, pair and group activities are part of each unit and while grammar is taught, function seems to be valued over form.

The theme-based units address goal-setting by beginning the different chapters with a list of goals presented as bullet points. As one moves through the unit, the target goal for that unit and section is written at the top of each page. Many opportunities exist for pair and group work and personal sharing, but once again the activities are too unstructured. One group activity simply says, “In a group, ask classmates for personal information” (p.3). As with the *Excellent English* books, this offers no scaffolding for students. While the openness of the activity allows for choice, it is unlikely that students at this level will be able to have meaningful and balanced give and take without structure. Each unit ends with a team project, which offers another opportunity

for community building. These activities have more structure. They assign roles to the different group members and provide steps to follow. The directions show what to do, but not how to do it, and this allows for some creativity and negotiation amongst the student groups. Other positive aspects of the book are the learner logs at the end of each unit. After a review, students are given the opportunity to note what they have and have not learned from the chapter. This is a chance for students to assess progress and feel some sense of autonomy with their learning. It also presents a chance for goal-setting as students notice areas that still need work.

Stand Out 2 does a better job of addressing the important constructs discussed in the review of literature, but still falls short of serving all the needs of adult immigrant ESL students. Not enough is done to truly create a community in the classroom, and while the themed units have some useful material for everyday life, most of them do not provide opportunities for students to explore, recreate and resolve issues with identity in any meaningful way. The text also suffers from many of the same ills as *Excellent English* in terms of critical pedagogy. Unrealistic, oversimplified content does not reflect the lives of the learners. On page 108, in an example similar to the one in *Excellent English,* there is an unrealistic sample phone conversation showing the caller easily getting a doctor's appointment for the desired day and time. This kind of oversimplification combined with an approach of problem-solving (the text imposes both problems and solutions on learners) rather than problem-posing (allowing learners to identify relevant problems

and explore possible solutions), results in a text that does not adequately develop meaning making and critical thinking in the learner.

Stand Out 2 does not encourage a problem-posing approach nor does it help learners develop communicative skills that can be used in their real lives. Meaningful, critical thinking skills are not developed either. As a result of these deficits in the text, the book can, even unintentionally, reinforce power relationships and prepare these students for roles in society in which they are subservient.

Conclusion

While Communicative Language Teaching offers a promising approach to teaching ESL to adult refugee students, the application of the approach as it appears in two commonly used texts falls short of the promise. *Excellent English* and *Stand Out 2* offer a number of activities and approaches that are supported by the research, but they still leave large gaps that must be supplemented by the instructor. If left unsupplemented, the texts would be insufficient at enhancing motivation, building a community within the classroom and promoting meaning making, identity formation and personal autonomy and agency. This analysis reveals the need for a new curriculum that better employs the constructs of motivation through goal-setting and choice, communities of practice, and critical pedagogy to create a language learning environment that not only teaches the target language but also

motivates students to develop their identities and participate more fully in classroom practices and from a more powerful position in their lives.

The Approach

Overview

The review of current research in Chapter Three showed several important things. First, we saw that learning a language involves more than acquiring grammar and vocabulary. Becoming proficient in a new tongue necessitates a redefining of self. A person must find his or her new identity in the new language and culture. The research also showed that participation and learning can be influenced by problems with identity and conflicts with how one views oneself, how others view you, and whether or not you feel part of a learning community. Finally, in regard to adult learners and refugees in particular, the structure and content of the classroom and the presence or absence of motivating factors such as goal-setting, choice and chances to feel a sense of agency can all affect how much learning takes place.

Examining current approaches and curriculum in ESL in Chapter Four revealed several concerns. The materials that were reviewed focus on language skills with little attention given to nurturing and developing the person using the language. Few opportunities are given for the exploration of identity, to access prior knowledge, to share and build community, make choices and set and evaluate goals. Additionally, popular adult ESL books do not adequately develop meaning making and critical thinking. This happens because of unrealistic and oversimplified content that does not reflect the lives of the learners. These texts also tend toward problem-solving, feeding the

learner pre-determined problems and solutions, rather than problem-posing (Freire, 1970) approaches, which allow the learner to choose issues of concern as well as develop possible solutions. Problem-solving texts teach students to give prescribed responses to a limited number of problems and do not teach critical thinking or language skills that would allow them to communicate in a larger variety of real-world issues or to bring about change in their lives. As a result, the texts work to reinforce power relationships and prepare these students for roles in society in which they are subservient. This does nothing to empower and give hope to new immigrants.

For recent immigrants to a country, an ESL class is the bridge to their new life. If opportunities for personal development are not offered there, where will they be found? Given the gap that exists between what adult immigrant ESL learners need, and what is provided for them in the current curriculum, I have developed *Looking Back, Looking Forward.*

Looking Back, Looking Forward is a project-based curriculum that guides students through a highly scaffolded process of creating their own children's stories based on their personal immigration story. The project helps students develop their English language skills while, at the same time, having them do internal work towards resolving some of the struggles with which immigrants, especially refugees, must deal. These problems include conflicts with identity arising from difficulty with multiple membership in different CoPs and failure to reconcile past with present and create a tangible future trajectory. Through this curriculum, I also attempt to address the loss of voice

and power that students may feel in the new country and classroom as a result of students' limited language skills, low socioeconomic status and the perpetuation of inequality in the typical ESL classroom setting and curriculum. A lack of participation, both in and out of class, can result from these conflicts, and this project attempts to address this as well.

Using curriculum that revolves around authentic, real-life issues relevant to students is important. Relevance is considered to be motivating (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) and best practice for teaching adult learners (Bransford et al, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Relevance is also a fundamental aspect of a curriculum based in critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987). This need for authenticity is at the very core of this project and gave rise to the idea of having students use their personal journeys as the content. The project is made even more relevant to a group that is, generally speaking, extremely family-oriented, by adding the goal of sharing the recorded story with future generations. The curriculum begins by showing students model stories and having them dissect and discuss the elements of stories. It then guides students through exploring aspects of their lives.

Students begin by sharing stories about their pasts in their home countries, their immigration journey, and their arrival in the new, current country. Students are given prompts to help them prepare to tell their story and then, in small groups, the sharing is done orally in whatever language the students choose. Home language use is allowed in this activity, and

throughout the project, in order to help students feel more comfortable, express themselves more fully, and to enable students to find ways to express themselves in written English (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Auerbach, 1993; Cummins, 1984; Yamauchi, 2005; Tse, 1998). A critical pedagogical approach is employed as students then start to think critically and share insights about their current circumstances (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987; Wallerstein, 1983).

Students also begin to explore questions of personal identity. In their work about refugee ESL students, Seufert (1999) and Adkins et al. (1999) put forth that the change to a new country, culture and language necessitates a change in one's conception of one's identity. Refugees often have difficulty feeling that the past and the present can coexist and sometimes believe that embracing the present necessitates disassociation from the past, causing conflict in personal identity (Kanno, 2000; Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Activities in the curriculum help students explore the different roles they play in their lives in an attempt to help begin to reconcile past with present and to help students explore what it means to be members of multiple communities at the same time.

Learners also work on activities that help them connect the positive and negative effects of the past on the present. They are encouraged to think critically about their current circumstances and to identify what they see as problems and challenges. Given an opportunity to vocalize those concerns, learners are encouraged to find their own solutions. Students are then led

through activities that help them think about the future and how they might apply those solutions to their own lives. This work also helps to connect students to hopes and goals as a way of helping them envision and complete a trajectory that is possible and achievable through their own power (Wenger, 1998). These connections and insights are fostered to help students start to resolve identity conflicts. The goal is not assimilation, but to aid students in finding their own voice, agency and sense of self as they work to establish a new life in a new home.

The work from all of these activities is then turned toward their books, in which students reinterpret the content into a story that they would want to share with younger friends and members of their families. Students build linguistic skills through the meaningful and authentic task of writing a children's book. Additionally, the process of sharing part of their identities that they may have kept separate from their children and younger family members will also help students with the challenge of understanding and balancing membership in multiple communities of practice. The project culminates with a gallery style presentation with invited guests consisting of family, other students, teachers and administrators.

The curriculum was designed as an extension to an ESL classroom's curriculum and was implemented once a week for eleven weeks. While lessons and skills will have direct correlations to many common ESL lessons, and teachers could easily align this project with their curriculum, *Looking Back, Looking Forward* can also stand alone and function as an intensive multi-week

project. More details of the curriculum and its activities can be found in the Appendix. *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was implemented in a class of Iraqi refugees, but the curriculum was designed to benefit any immigrant student.

Goals, Questions and Constructs

Several questions and goals guided the development of *Looking Back, Looking Forward*. Goals of the project included helping students start to resolve conflicts in identity by developing an understanding of membership in multiple communities of practice, and by developing a trajectory that incorporates their past, present and future. Other goals included helping students attain a greater sense of voice and personal agency, and having students participate in class and in their personal development outside of class. These goals arose from the research of relevant literature as detailed in Chapter Three. While I hoped that *Looking Back, Looking Forward* would move students in positive directions in terms of the above stated goals, the question of how the project affected students' sense of self, voice, agency and participation was my guide throughout the implementation and evaluation process.

Goal one: Students will begin to resolve identity conflicts, seeing themselves as members of multiple communities, and as people with a trajectory that includes past, present and future.

First, I wanted to help students resolve identity conflicts within themselves. One sign of resolution is the ability to see oneself as a member of multiple communities simultaneously. For refugee ESL students, a change to a new country, culture and language necessitates a change in one's conception of one's identity (Adkins et al., 1999; Seufert, 1999). Ngo (2008) talked about the dynamic nature of identity and the necessity to be flexible with definitions of self rather than trying to fit oneself into prescribed identities that may not work. Furthermore, there are negative effects of not seeing oneself as a member of the current community and the failure to reconcile or conceive of the possibility of membership in multiple communities (Kanno, 2000; Norton, 2001). Being on the outside of a community can lead to non-participation, which, in terms of my students, could affect their learning in class. Failure to pass this class means my students will be unable to continue on to other classes and government support will be cut off. If students have been unable to find work, this government funding is their sole means supporting themselves and their families. On a broader level, if students fail to learn English not only will they be unable to continue their education but also their chance of finding work that can sustain life in this country will be limited. Students' ability to connect to English speakers in the community will also be curbed.

Wenger (1998) said that these identities should also incorporate each individual's past, present and future and the students who are building these identities must be able to see those three parts of their lives as being connected. He further explained that communities of practice and learning communities can help individuals with identity formation by making a trajectory possible and by helping individuals recognize themselves in the different periods in their lives. Any conflicts that exist in this arena, especially in terms of membership, could be helped by building a trajectory because it causes a person to reconcile his or her past self, and all those associations, with the present self and everything he or she presently relates to. Continuing the trajectory into the future gives a person the opportunity to place the present self into an imagined future that feels tangible and appropriate to who the person is. A well-developed trajectory helps one see a cohesive life story and that, in turn, strengthens a person's sense of self and increases comfort with multiple membership. I included this trajectory as part of this first goal not only to help with identity conflicts but also to help students connect to hopes and dreams for the future. I wanted this hopefulness to result in them feeling more powerful in their ability to achieve these goals and to be able to be more critical in their approach to deciding what they can achieve in the future, going beyond, perhaps, their own initial expectations.

Goal two: Students will develop a sense of voice and personal agency.

The second goal was to help students develop a sense of voice and personal agency so that they would be able to express themselves and feel that they have the power to affect positive change in their lives. As mentioned above in my discussion of the first goal, helping my refugee students with identity conflicts and issues is one step towards helping them gain a sense of self. Assisting them in finding a personal trajectory that includes the past and present and that leads them into the future also serves this purpose. Identity and personal voice and agency are closely related. Therefore, work on identity also helps one develop in other areas such as developing voice and a sense of agency. By adding a critical approach to this project, I attempted to empower students. When people are able to think critically about their past and present and are able to see the positive effects of the past, they will be better equipped to find their place in the world and change their circumstances for the better (Freire, 1970). Worthman (2008) wrote about helping students contemplate and understand their past rather than looking at it as something to overcome and leave behind. In addition to helping resolve conflicts in identity, being able to incorporate one's past in this way has an emancipatory effect. This kind of work allows students to make real choices about their present and future actions. Because I wanted my curriculum to help students transition from the past into active and happy futures, having them develop a sense of voice and personal agency became a vital goal.

Goal three: Students will participate in class work and in meeting goals for growth outside of the classroom.

A final goal was that during the implementation of *Looking Back, Looking Forward* students would participate in class work and also work to meet goals for personal growth outside of the class. As mentioned in the needs assessment in Chapter Two, student behavior and lack of participation was interfering with learning in my classroom. The research outlined in Chapter Three showed that lack of participation can be the result of a number of things including conflicts with identity (Morita, 2004; Seufert, 1999; Watkins & Richters, 2012; Wenger, 1998) and migration, acculturative and traumatic stress (Adkins et al., 1999; Burns & Finn, 2010; Seufert, 1999; Watkins & Richters, 2012). Other contributing factors could be a lack of choice and goal-setting in a classroom (Bransford et al., 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larson & Smalley, 1972; Locke & Latham, 2002; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Schwarzer, 2009) and materials that are not authentic and relevant to students' lives (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987). Participation is needed for learning to take place, so having students participate in class was an obvious choice for a goal. I decided to also work towards having students participate outside of class because this worked hand-in-hand with empowering students. If I could get my class to take more action on their own outside the walls of my classroom, I thought I would be better preparing students to take action to improve their lives.

The goals for *Looking Back, Looking Forward* are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Goals, Constructs and Activities

Goal #1	Students will begin to resolve identity conflicts, seeing themselves as members of multiple communities, and as people with a trajectory that includes past, present and future.
Theoretical Constructs	Identity Construction and Communities of Practice (CoP), including working with students on: • Multiple CoP membership • Legitimate Peripheral Participation • Imagined communities • Building an image of self incorporating past into present and a tangible future
Activities/ Lesson components/ Approaches (See Appendix for complete lesson plans)	Creating a CoP in the classroom as a whole by: • Co-constructing class rules • Whole class goal-setting, sharing, and establishing terminology for use on project Creating a CoP in smaller project groups by: • Having students choose their own groups • Weekly group work & feedback sessions Enabling Legitimate Peripheral Participation by: • Allowing use of L1 • Having more experienced “old-timers” help “newcomers” • Allowing students to choose level and method of participation (ie. Allowing students to practice active listening without talking if they are not ready to speak) Identity work: • Helping students complete a personal trajectory that includes past, present and future through worksheets, activities and discussions *Worksheets:* • *The roles in my life* – Students explore their membership in multiple CoP (including imaginary CoP) by thinking and writing about the different roles they play in their lives • *Affects: Good and bad* – Students think critically about their past and current situations and write about the effects the past has had on their present lives • *Future timeline* – Students choose goals for the future, discuss ways to achieve them, and use them to complete a timeline

Table 1: Goals, Constructs and Activities, Continued

Goal #2	Students will develop a sense of voice and personal agency.
Theoretical Constructs	Critical Pedagogy • Encouraging critical thinking • Problem-posing education • Rejecting the banking model of education • Encouraging and allowing choice • Incorporate the past as valuable experience
Activities/ Lesson components/ Approaches (See Appendix for complete lesson plans)	Teaching using the principles of Critical Pedagogy to strengthen students voice and agency: • Develop students' critical thinking about their own lives: including how the past affected the present, present circumstances, future possibilities • Problem-posing education: Having students identify their own problems and solutions rather than presenting them with pre-chosen ones • Rejecting the banking model of education: View student/teacher relationship as partnership as opposed to knower/empty vessel • Encouraging and allowing choice – Having students play a role in guiding their learning • Authentic, relevant tasks • Helping students to incorporate the past into present and future rather than negating the past • Homework assignments involving using English outside of class and other small goal-setting activities to help students practice taking action in small ways *Worksheets:* • *The roles in my life* – Students explore their membership in multiple CoP (including imaginary CoP) by thinking and writing about the different roles they play in their lives • *Affects: Good and bad* – Students think critically about their past and current situations and write about the effects the past has had on their present lives • *Future timeline* – Students choose goals for the future, discuss ways to achieve them, and use them to complete a timeline • *Semester personal goal-setting* – Students set a goal to accomplish outside of the classroom. Check in on the goal periodically and at end of semester.

Table 1: Goals, Constructs and Activities, Continued

Goal #3	Students will participate in class work and in meeting goals for growth outside of the classroom.
Theoretical Constructs	Building motivation to move students to action and participation through: • Choice • Goal-setting • Accessing prior knowledge • Sense of membership in the CoP • Authentic tasks
Activities Lesson components Approaches (See Appendix for complete lesson plans)	Using best practices for teaching adults, refugees, second language and for building motivation, including: • Encouraging and allowing choice – Having students play a role in guiding their learning • Authentic, relevant tasks • Problem-posing education: Having students identify their own problems and solutions rather than presenting them with pre-chosen ones • Using students' real past lives and knowledge in the storybooks • Homework assignments involving using English outside of class and other small goal-setting activities to help students practice taking action in small ways • Beginning each project day by setting goals and ending by reflecting on those goals • Building a CoP and finding ways for everyone to participate and feel membership • Giving encouragement throughout the process *Worksheets:* *Semester personal goal-setting* – Students set a goal to accomplish outside of the classroom. Check in on the goal periodically and at end of semester.

The Implementation and Revision of *Looking Back, Looking Forward*

Background information: Who and Where

The learners.

Since 2007, over 60,000 Iraqi refugees have been admitted into the U.S. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). A large number of those new residents were settled in a suburban area of southern California where the local population is now approximately one third Iraqi. This suburb looks very different today than it did five years ago when the largest immigrant population was from Mexico. As a result, new arrivals are not the only ones going through growing pains. Long-time residents are having to adjust to neighbors whose cultural norms may feel very foreign to them. As someone who not only works in that area but also lives there, I have been privy to conversations that outsiders may not have been. My experiences have shown me that misconceptions and prejudice exist on both sides and these negative factors influence daily interactions. This adds to the burden of resettlement for refugee students, negatively affecting everything from completing daily errands to constructing new identities.

When students are first relocated to the area, they typically take ESL classes at the local adult school, or somewhere within walking distance, because they are very often without a car. After some time, and as they gather resources, many of these students make their way to the community college and the ESL classes offered there. By the time they enter my

classroom, learners have generally been in the U.S. for at least six months. Every semester I have a few students who have been in the U.S. for a couple of years, but who waited some time before they made the transition from adult school to the community college either for practical reasons or because they needed more time to improve their basic English skills.

I have taught English as a Second Language (ESL) for almost a decade in southern California, but spent the first five years at language schools with Intensive English Programs (IEP) teaching students English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Those schools served students from around the world who were visiting the U.S. to improve their English skills for school or work and planned to return to their home country after a few weeks or months. When I joined Southern California College's Continuing Education department, I started working with a new population: immigrants studying English as a Second Language (ESL). This was a marked change, as the concerns, goals, experience and attitudes of people resettling in a new country were very different than those of college students visiting for three months. When the college's demographics changed from primarily Mexican immigrants to Iraqi refugees, the change was again very noticeable.

My students are considered refugees instead of simply immigrants because they have come to the United States seeking safety. While all immigrants share certain challenges, refugees have their own unique struggles. In addition to the huge adjustments in culture and socio-economic situation, and the prejudices and ignorance they face daily in their new home,

most of these students carry with them dark memories from the past. These traumas were not left behind, but are carried by my students everyday presenting as migraine headaches, injuries, nervousness and trouble concentrating.

The population I teach is comprised of adults ranging from their early 20s to late 60s. Some of these students are college-educated professionals and most went to secondary school. Many of them had good jobs and homes. A few left school young and worked with their hands. Regardless of any differences in their backgrounds, all of them now have in common the struggle to start their lives completely over again. In addition to suffering the effects of the traumas of war, my students generally find resettlement to be challenging. For most, fleeing Iraq meant leaving everything behind and as a result, they arrive in the U.S. with the clothes on their backs and very few possessions. Financial assistance is limited and jobs are hard to find. Some consider returning to Iraq to be the only viable solution even though going back could very well put their lives in danger.

Since they first arrived in the U.S., my students' hopes have been dashed, and many feel disheartened, powerless, lost and without a voice. My students are probably not what one thinks of when conjuring a picture of a typical college student and all these factors are present and real in the classroom.

The college and the class.

The ESL 1 class that I teach through Southern California College's Continuing Education department is one of many no-cost ESL classes for adults that can be found at community colleges throughout the state of California. The class is a non-credit course, but it is the starting point of a pipeline feeding students into credit courses at the college. Participation in and successful completion of the class guarantees students a seat in the overcrowded for-credit ESL classes. Matriculating into the credit side of education is a goal for many of my students for several reasons. First, non-credit ESL classes only teach beginning and intermediate language learners. In order to improve English skills into the advanced levels, students need to move into the credit program. Credit classes are also a goal for many students because enrollment in them guarantees students additional financial aid. Finally, for others, credit ESL courses are the pathway to content courses that are needed to start or restart a career.

ESL 1 is the lowest level class in the program, but all of the students enter with some English skills having learned English either in school in their native country, at home from other family members, in refugee camps, or from an adult school class taken when they first arrived in the U.S. Students must have enough basic English skills, as demonstrated on a placement test, to be enrolled in the class. The class meets four days a week for three hours each morning for a total of 150 hours. Classes are held on the community college campus in a room used for math and science classes in the evenings. If

students cannot afford to buy a textbook, or their financial assistance does not cover the cost of one, a book is loaned to the student free of cost, for the duration of the class. Students' motivations for taking the class vary, as do their goals for after the completion of the class. Some are, at least initially, motivated by the financial assistance that they receive in exchange for attending classes as part of their resettlement agreement. Sometimes this is the only income a family has. Most have some, if not a great deal, of interest in improving their English. Students generally recognize that being proficient in English can potentially make their lives much easier. Some of my students hope to find work as soon as possible and believe learning English will help them do that. Others want to continue on to other classes at the college and possibly to a certificate or degree program. A number of students, particularly women, are choosing careers for the first time in their lives. This large variety of ages, education and experience levels, goals and motivations converge in one room at 8:30am to learn English. It was with this group that I implemented my project.

Implementation

Preparing the class.

Prior to implementation of the curriculum, it was important to begin to establish a community within the classroom. This proved to be somewhat challenging, as the beginning of the semester was full of changes for these ESL classes at the college. For the first week of the semester, there were two

ESL 1 classes with 15 students in each class. Due to required enrollment minimums, one of the ESL 1 classes was closed and students were put into one class of 30 students. This change happened at the beginning of the second week of school, after communities had already been formed in both classes. The change and transition was difficult, especially for the students who had lost their teacher, and the first few days as a new class were challenging.

As a community building exercise and as a way to provide students with opportunities for choice and for expressing voice and agency, the students and I co-constructed rules for the class including expectations for both students and teacher. The rules included items such as being kind and respectful to each other, listening when someone was speaking, trying one's best everyday, and making the classroom a safe place to make mistakes. These rules were typed up, printed on construction paper and distributed to each student. One copy was put on display in front of the class everyday.

Another activity that was implemented to help students get to know each other was pair interviews. As a class, we discussed possible interview questions. Students were then paired with a classmate that they did not know. Students had time to talk and then we came back together as a class and each pair introduced each other. This allowed everyone to meet each other and to learn a little bit about them.

One other formal pre-implementation activity was completed that first week: the semester-long goal-setting worksheet (see Appendix). Students

were prompted to offer definitions and examples of goals. We discussed some general examples as well as some of their real goals. I then asked students to think of possible goals for using English outside of class. I made a list of the goals on the board and students offered opinions about why using English outside of class was important. The entire class verbally agreed that this was an important thing to try to do. They then worked individually to choose one or more goals that involved using English outside of class that semester. They filled out the worksheet, writing their goals like promises to themselves. I made a photocopy for myself and returned the original sheets to the students for them to keep and refer to throughout the semester. I explained that at the end of the semester we would revisit the goals and see if they had been able to achieve them and why they were or were not able to.

Looking Back, Looking Forward was an extension to the regular ESL 1 curriculum, and as such, the rest of the week was spent with other activities and learning. Although I was not exclusively implementing *Looking Back, Looking Forward* pre-implementation curriculum for that first week, I strove to continue to build community and cooperation amongst the class whenever possible. By building the beginnings of a strong community, my hope was that the class would be more comfortable with each other and me and in a better position to begin the in-depth and personal work that was about to start.

Introducing the project.

The focus for the first week of implementation was to introduce the project. I began the discussion by writing the word ‘immigrant’ on the board and soliciting definitions. Several students asked about the difference between immigrant and refugee and we talked about that. I told them that I was an immigrant who came to the U.S. from Australia when I was a child. I also shared with them that my mother was born in Latvia and immigrated to Australia when she was eight years old. I told them more about my mother’s immigration story, including some details of the hardships she went through in leaving her home country, learning English, and adapting to a new culture.

I transitioned into a discussion about whether or not they thought it was important for their children and younger generations to know these stories. Almost all students felt that it was good for children to know the stories, though some felt that they should not know everything about it. I explained that we would be working on a project in which they would write their immigration stories in a book for children.

Reactions varied. More than half of the students showed instant excitement about the project with verbal cues. Everyone, even those who were excited, expressed nervousness about not being able to write a story and were worried about spelling and other logistics. Reassurance and further explanation about the process that we would go through to write the stories seemed to calm most nerves. Four students expressed resistance to the idea. One expressed that she felt her story was not special enough to be the subject

of a story. Two made jokes about using Google to translate their story and challenged the need to actually make a book. One woman said that she did not want to write about her immigration.

These reactions, and a general sense of nervousness throughout the classroom, prompted some instant revisions to the curriculum. I asked the students to please give the project a try, and I expressed the opinion that everyone was special and each person's story had value. Though I was not sure where all the nervousness stemmed from, I decided to try to alleviate any fears that may have existed amongst the students about the topic by telling them that if they really did not want to write about their immigration story, they could pick some other story from their life to tell. While designing the curriculum, I had wondered if any of my students would feel uncomfortable with the topic. The reactions of this small group of students suggested to me that they might have been uncomfortable and somewhat fearful and I thought it best to offer an alternative right away. This is something instructors may want to plan ahead for in case they encounter the same reaction, and the lesson materials found in the Appendix have been revised to reflect this.

After taking a break, I read to the class a sample children's story, *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007), that told the tale of two girls at a refugee camp on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. They each find one half of a pair of sandals and decide to share them. Through this act of sharing, they develop a strong friendship that lasts until they must part ways when one girl leaves for the United States. I projected the book on a screen in

front of the class, and as we read through the book, students helped each other understand the words through translation. For the most part, students sat upright in their chairs, listened closely and had audible reactions such as sighs and exclamations to events in the story. Several people teared up. Two of the young men who had objected to the project made jokes about the book and the Muslim characters, including making a joke about one man calling him Osama Bin Laden. Storytelling was suspended for a few minutes to address the jokes and the idea of prejudice. We then proceeded with the story until it ended.

I had originally planned to discuss multiple roles in different communities and have students work on a worksheet, but students were displaying behaviors that suggested they were tired. I had had to talk so much that first day, I decided that I needed to get back to something that allowed the students to be more active and that was also less emotional. I wrapped up the work on the project by saying that we would do more on this next week, and then we returned to the regular curriculum.

Building knowledge.

The next phase of the project involved accessing and building upon students' prior knowledge of stories and offering them some examples of immigration related books.

In the second week of the project, I taught the class about the most common parts of a story and the goal was to have them apply that knowledge

to a sample story. I began the lesson by humorously referring to the students' fearful reaction to the project the previous week, and the entire class laughed. The laughter helped ease some tension and allowed for an easy transition to a brief discussion reminding students that they would be led through the entire process and also that they would be in control of what story they told and how many details they included in their story. This was done to help alleviate fears and to give students a sense of control, choice and autonomy. I explained that the requirements I had for the stories were that they included something about the past, present and future and that they were the main character in their own story. Nods and "uh-huhs" followed from the students and the atmosphere felt calm and positive.

Next, I introduced the *Parts of a Story* worksheet that I created (see Appendix) to explain the most common elements of stories. As we went through the parts, I elicited examples for each part (characters, place, time, plot, reasons for actions) from the class using *Cinderella* as the example story because they all expressed that they knew the story. I told them that understanding the parts of a story would help them plan their own stories. I gave additional examples for each part using my personal immigration story to model how they could apply this to their own stories in the future. This process took just over an hour, but by the end of it students starting asking questions such as: "Can I be the main character in my story?", "Can my whole family be characters in mine?", "My place would be Iraq, right?".

After there seemed to be a solid understanding of the parts of a story, we reread the story from the previous week, *Four Feet, Two Sandals.* The class was much quieter during the reading this time, but some students helped make sure everyone understood. As I read, I had the story projected on the screen in front of the class, and I also acted it out as much as possible. This week, there were no inappropriate jokes told. After reading the story and taking a break, students continued with the parts of a story handout, this time analyzing *Four Feet, Two Sandals* in terms of the elements.

Students formed their own groups and worked together on this exercise. After the intensity of the previous week, I decided to have the group formation be much more casual than I had originally planned. Before implementation, I thought I would have people choose groups and group names. I thought I would tell them that this would be their group and support for the whole semester. Given the tendency for this class to get nervous and feel stress, downplaying the group formation and letting it happen more naturally seemed a better choice. The best way to form groups is something that each instructor would have to decide based on the personality of the students and class.

While I circulated to help the groups, I noted that all students were actively participating in the task, with most groups having lively conversations that mixed English and Arabic. After group work, we came back together as a class and shared our answers. This brought us to the end of our three hours.

I told the class that we would continue with the project next week when we would read another book and analyze the elements of the story.

The following week, we began by reading *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan* (Williams, 2005). The book was long and had a lot of writing, including some vocabulary that was too difficult for most of the students, so I asked for volunteers to come up in front of the class with me to help translate as we went along. Three students volunteered and took turns coming to the front of the class, two of whom had expressed resistance to the project in the beginning. The process of going through the story with translation took an hour and a half and students were clearly tired and getting a little restless as there was some fidgeting in the seats. Despite this, the class kept mostly quiet and attentive, only adding comments when clarification was needed or to express emotion or understanding.

Towards the beginning of the book, the main character, an eight-year-old boy named Garang, takes on the responsibility of tending cattle. One day, while he and the other boys are out with their herd, their village is attacked. The book describes the flames and explosions and explains that when the boys returned, their village was completely destroyed and everyone and everything was gone. Right after that description, one student said, “That is what happened to me; my village was burned.” Another student added, “Me, too, that is my story!” Soon, many students were vocalizing agreement. Yet another student said, “This is all of our stories.” Everyone agreed. I told them

that was why we were reading it. The students smiled, seemingly happy to see their stories being told. After the long story we took a break.

After the break, I had students use the *Parts of a Story* worksheet to analyze the elements of the *Brothers in Hope* story. I instructed the students to work in groups and told them they could work in the same group as last time. One man, who had worked alone previously, turned his chair around to work with the group behind him. One of the students who had been oppositional early on, moved across the room and worked with a different group with whom he had never worked. This was a group that represented itself as serious and hard-working. Later, the same student went back to his old group and shared some of his answers with them. I looked around the classroom and it was alive with activity. Every single student was actively participating with their group as they discussed the story and filled out the worksheet. As I walked around, I noticed that students, in addition to doing the assignment, were looking at the next page where they would be putting the parts of their own stories, and talking about it. A few asked me if that was where they would put their own story and I said yes.

After working in groups for about twenty minutes, we came back together as a class and shared answers. I wrote their ideas down and projected them in front of the class. Then, I explained that next week, they would start thinking about what stories they wanted to tell, and that next Thursday, some of them would share their stories in their group. The students smiled and nodded their heads. I heard some positive and excited utterances.

Hussam, who had been vocally opposed to the project, smiled and said, ""All the stories will be different, is that OK?" I say that that would be one of the wonderful things about it, because everyone was special and different and while all the stories would have things in common, everyone's would be different. With that, class was over for the day and week. I told the class that over the weekend, they could start thinking a little bit about what they might want to write about. The class packed up and left shouting "Goodbye, teacher", "Have a nice weekend", and "Thank you, teacher."

This phase of the project ended with several things accomplished. Students had an understanding of the elements of a story and had been moved and excited by the sample stories. The class and I had established terminology that we would continue to use throughout the project. This would not only make communicating about the project easier but also served to strengthen our learning community by giving us common language. The preparation had been laid for students to share and write their own stories and they had started thinking about these next steps without my prompting.

Sharing stories: Revisiting the past.

In the next phase of the project, students began to think about, share and write down their own stories. This part of the curriculum was designed to lead students through an exploration of their past to do some personal internal work towards the project's goals, the content of which could then be used as

the first part of their books. These were the first steps in developing a trajectory that would eventually include the past, present and future.

In week four, the main objective was for students to share their stories orally and to begin thinking about and planning the elements of their written story. On Monday, we started with an activity that we did not have time for on the previous Thursday: *The Roles in my Life* worksheet (see Appendix). I explained the idea of the different roles we play in our lives and, on the overhead for all to see, I filled out my worksheet using my own life as an example. We then discussed how some parts of your life feel connected to each other and how some other parts might feel very separate. We also talked about the fact that whether or not we feel they are connected, all of the roles are parts of us and make us who we are and that they all exist at the same time. Students then filled out their own worksheets about themselves. Some put the names of the roles such as: daughter, father, student, construction worker, poet. Many also included adjectives like “hardworking”, and still others wrote feelings and interests such as “I love my family” and “I like soccer”. Then, I led a discussion to tie the worksheet into the story project. As a class, we discussed how certain parts of ourselves would be shown in the immigration stories and other parts would not be. I suggested that they think about what parts they wanted to share in the story.

Next, I gave students the *Sharing my Story* handout (see Appendix), which was filled with questions designed to act as prompts to help them talk about their immigration story. On the second page of the handout, I also

included more generalized prompts for any students who did not want to talk about their immigration. Students were not required to write responses as this would be very challenging for their English. The intention of the handout was to help students think about, in advance, what they would share. It could then also be used during the actual sharing activity to help move the story forward.

Three days later, story sharing began. I allowed the students to choose groups that they would feel most comfortable in and six groups formed. Before they started sharing, we discussed how to give positive feedback to each other. I decided not to use the written feedback forms. Even if allowed to write the feedback in Arabic, which would have made the task easier, I realized that the nature of the emotional and personal content required the students to be able to give immediate, verbal feedback that was supportive and would help students move forward in their storytelling. So, I opted for the more personal and immediate alternative, but made clear the importance of making the feedback positive and supportive rather than critical. Students were instructed to take turns sharing and then to have the group help the storyteller fill in the elements of their story, in English, on the *Parts of a Story* worksheet. The intention was to get students to start thinking about how they would transition their story from the verbal form to written.

For the next hour and a half, groups engaged in lively and intense conversations. Students were told that they could use English or Arabic, whatever helped them express what they wanted to say. There was sometimes laughter from each group, sad faces at other times, and some

tears as well. Group members listened quietly and intently to each other's stories and then asked questions and gave words of support. Everyone talked about their immigration rather than choosing a different story. Most groups filled out the *Parts of a Story* worksheet. The most visibly emotional group, consisting of seven women, told me that they did not fill out the worksheet but that they all talked and asked me if that was OK. I told them it was. One young woman cried during other people's stories. When the group asked her to share she started crying more. I walked over to her and she shook her head and said "I can't" and started to pack up her things to leave. I told her that she did not have to talk about it today if she did not want to and the group gave other words of encouragement and support. She stayed but did not share her story.

After a break, I thanked everyone for sharing such difficult stories and for being so supportive of each other. After the emotions of the first half of class, I thought it was important to do something different, and so we worked on past tense verbs. I solicited verbs that they might want to use in their stories and I wrote them on the board and they gave me the past tense of them. Some of the verbs offered were: move, leave, shoot, die, freeze, and starve.

The end of the three hours arrived and, as we had spring break the following week, I gave the class an assignment to use English one time during the week in a situation where they normally would not. For example, if they usually went food shopping at a store where they could speak Arabic, I

suggested they go to a different store and use English. I told them that I would check in with them the day they come back to see if they had achieved their goal.

Putting the past onto paper.

On Monday, the first day back after spring break, I gave students an exit slip to fill out. An exit slip is a small piece of paper that requires some kind of short response from a student. On this exit slip, I asked the students to tell me if they had achieved the goal for spring break and, if they had not, why they had not.

Later that week, I showed the class the scrapbooks that we would be using for their storybooks. I decided to tell them that I would be buying the books for them. I chose to do this for a few reasons. First, I did not want them to worry that they would have to buy them as spending extra money was difficult for them. I also thought that by letting them know that I was the one buying the books, rather than the school, they would get a sense of how important this project was to me and I hoped that it would also make them feel that I thought they were important. When I told them this, Sana immediately said, “We can share”. I thanked her for offering that but explained that I thought it was important that they each had their very own book and that they could keep it forever. I also suggested that over time, as their story continued, they could add new pages to the book. This comment resulted in smiles from many of the students.

Next, as a class, we talked about how they could divide up the 20 pages that came with the scrapbook. I reminded them that their stories would include the past, the present and the future and asked them how many pages they would need for each time period. The class decided that, while it might be slightly different for each person, they could use certain numbers as a guide. Ten to twelve pages could be used for the past, five or six pages for the present, and two or three pages for the future. I then showed them the *Storyboard* handout (see Appendix) and demonstrated how it aligned with the actual scrapbook. I also filled in a few pages on the storyboard as examples.

As a final topic for group discussion, we talked about different ways that the students could add pictures to their stories. The class's ideas included drawing, painting, having their children draw pictures, copying or printing new or old photographs and finding images in magazines, newspapers and online. I demonstrated how to find and save images online. One of the students asked, "How do I start writing my story?". Another student, Hanna, who had been very enthusiastic about the project but also very quiet and emotional during group work, said that she had an example that I could share with the entire class. She had written out her story on her own over spring break. I verified that she really did not mind me showing the whole class and she confirmed. I put her story on the overhead and, as she did not want to read it, I read it aloud for everyone. It talked about her life in Iraq and her mother dying. She started to get emotional and asked me to stop. We all thanked her profusely for sharing and she said that she had been glad to.

Immediately after that, several other students held up papers saying "Read mine!" I read aloud two paragraphs from Nadin's story, another student who had been participatory but shy and emotional in group work. Her story talked about a terrible accident that happened to one of her relatives in Baghdad.

After that, it was time to let the class start working on their stories. So, students got into their groups or worked alone and, using their *Parts of a Story* handout along with the story telling prompts that they had used the prior Thursday to tell their stories, began putting their stories into writing.

The young woman who on the last implementation day had almost fled the class when she became emotionally overwhelmed, called me over. With tears in her eyes she told me that she did not want to be sad and tell sad stories. I reassured her that she could tell any story that she wanted as long as it was about her. She exhaled and was visibly relieved. She wrote "My Story" on the top of her paper and drew little hearts around it. Later in the class, she came up to show me her first paragraph. It was about her life in Iraq and how her father had been kidnapped and they had to pay a lot of money to get him back. I told her she was doing a wonderful job with her story and she flashed a huge smile at me. As I walked around the room and glanced at papers, I saw words like explosions, bombs, death, and kidnapping.

At the end of class, we talked about the plan for the project for the next few weeks and through the end of the semester. We were ready to move on

to the next phase of completing more of their personal trajectories by connecting the past to the present.

Connecting the past to the present.

In the sixth week of implementation, students continued to work on their stories and storyboards, continuing to tell about the past. They also began to incorporate the present. After reviewing the number of pages the class had estimated for the past, present and future parts of their stories, I asked them how they might transition from the past to the present in their books. Sana suggested that they write about the past up to today, and that the past part of their story include moving to the U.S. and the first days, weeks, months or years that they lived here. I said that was a great idea. I also suggested that a way to connect the past to the present would be to talk about how the past had affected the present. I then guided the students through a discussion of this concept.

Projecting the worksheet *Effects: Good and Bad* (see Appendix) on the screen, I gave examples of how events might effect one in a positive and/or negative way. I decided to use the personal example of my parents' divorce. I did not want to be overly disclosive about my own life but, at the same time, the students had been sharing so many extremely personal stories that I thought it could add to the sense of community if I discussed something real and personal. So, I shared the divorce as the past event and then showed how something bad could have both positive and negative effects on the

present. We talked about how the past made us all who we were in the present and that even when past events seemed like another life, those experiences lived inside of us and were connected to our present lives. Students were then given their own copies of the worksheet and were allowed to work alone or with a partner or group to complete the worksheet and continue with their stories and/or their storyboards.

Giving students the freedom to work with whomever they chose had resulted in different choices than I had imagined. I had originally planned to have students choose groups that they would work with throughout the entire project. In an effort to give students more autonomy and control, I decided to be less rigid about this. As a result, students were able to go with their personal preference each week and work in whatever way made them the most productive and comfortable. Many students chose to work in the same groups each time, including this week. Others made different choices. One man, who sometimes worked with others and moved around to different groups, worked diligently by himself on the effects worksheet. A few individuals broke from their usual groups in order to work one on one with other students who needed help. Aided by the students' choices, everyone in the class moved forward in their work.

Nazar had told me the previous Thursday that he needed the quiet and comfort of home to write. I had suggested that he write some things at home and bring them in the next Thursday to edit with his group. To my surprise, he brought in two single spaced pages of his story written in English. Nazar, in

addition to not writing much in class for this project, had been resistant to writing all semester. During everyday classes, he would refuse to write things down, saying that he did not like to write and insisting that he did not need to anyway. He shared his writing with his group. Matti, another man in that group, had also had a pattern of resisting writing, usually explaining that his wife, who was in the class, would write things for him. He spent the class, in addition to helping Nazar, working on the effects worksheet and putting his story into the storyboard. Even Ayad, the third member of the group, who struggled at an extremely low English proficiency level, made an effort to try to do the worksheet.

Walking around the room, I saw that students wrote about the effects that the war, the deaths of friends and family, their separation from family because of immigration, and their immigration to the U.S. had had on them. I then encouraged each student to take these things and include them in their story as part of the present.

We concluded the class with an overview of what the next few weeks of the story project would entail.

Thinking about the future.

At this point, much important work had been done. Students had delved into the past, which was filled, for all of them, with great trauma, and had explicitly connected it to the present. The next vital step was to extend their trajectories into the future. So, in week seven of the project, we turned

our attention forward. In a class discussion, the students and I talked about how the past and the present were connected and how people carry both of those with them into the future. We talked about goals, hopes and dreams for the future. I projected the *Future Timeline* worksheet (see Appendix) and demonstrated how to fill it out. The class and I worked together on reviewing the grammar they would need for writing about the future and how they could take the items on their worksheet and transfer them to their storyboards. I then handed out the timeline worksheets and again told students they could work alone or with another person or group. The class divided into groupings similar to the previous week. As they began working on the future worksheet, however, students ended up working alone more than they had before. Many of them completed the worksheet by themselves and then turned to a classmate or two to share some of their dreams.

The classroom had a positive and energetic feel throughout the day. Students were eager to show me their hopes for the future and I saw more smiling faces this day than any other. Students wrote about finding good jobs, speaking English well, owning businesses, buying houses and seeing their children graduate from college and get married.

At the end of the day, I collected the storyboards. I went through each one checking the spelling and grammar. I used correction symbols that I had used with the students all semester for all writing assignments. The writing correction symbols told the students the type of error they made but did not fix the error for them. The students then correct the mistakes themselves. Most

students did quite well using their own words and current grammar knowledge. A few students made a huge number of errors. At the beginning of the next week, I returned the storyboards to the students and had mini-conferences during class time to help students who had difficulty expressing themselves in English.

Students were reminded to email me photographs that they wanted me to print out for them to include in their books. This was done in preparation for the next phase of the project. Since they had finished the drafts and storyboards, the class was ready to start physically making their books. Students had done a lot of internal work and completed their personal trajectories from the past to the future. They had shared their stories and made difficult decisions about what to include in their books. They had done the challenging task of actually writing things down in English. I thought that bookmaking would simply involve students transferring their writing from storyboards to storybooks and that development of the material was basically over. I had not imagined the amount of creativity and creation that would still take place. The next phase was, unexpectedly, where the project changed and students took ownership over it.

Bookmaking.

On the first day of bookbuilding, I started by showing students a sample storybook that I had created. I did not write my complete story, but did several pages to give students ideas of how they could display their stories and

themes using paper, glue and pens. I then showed them the craft supplies that I had brought in and placed them on a central table for the class to share. I had piles of the scrapbooks in six different colors at the front of the room. To once again give students power and choice, I asked students what they thought would be the fairest way to give out the books. They suggested that I choose names from a bag (something that I would do sometimes to have people answer in class) and when someone's name was chosen, they could come up to the front and choose the color book that they wanted. Everyone agreed on this method. So, we started the lottery and one by one students came up and chose a book. The class cheered as each name was read out and students smiled as they picked out a book and held it tightly going back to their seats. I told them that if they were not happy with their book, they could trade with someone else who was not happy, but no one did.

The class was then given the remaining two hours to start making their book pages using their storyboards as their blueprints for the final product. The central supply table became a flurry of activity as students huddled around it taking brightly colored and patterned card stock, stickers, scissors and pens. Within minutes students were back at their seats working away. Every piece of paper was gone, but each student had several pieces. Students with artistic talented were quickly employed as illustrators for other students' books. Students for whom I had printed out images, shared the pictures with other friends in class. Pens were passed around, students cut out shapes for each other from the colored paper, and those with good

handwriting helped others with their title pages. At one point during the class, I looked around the room and noted that all students were working intently and alone on their books.

At the end of class, I gave the students a choice between leaving their books in the classroom or taking them home and everyone said they wanted to take them home. When I asked why, many said that they wanted to show their families. Others said they wanted to work on them over the weekend. We reviewed our plan for the following week, which was primarily more bookmaking. As they left, Sana came up to me and said, “Thank you so much for the book. I love it.”

Bookmaking continued the following week. I brought in more supplies and added them to those left over from the previous week. After laying out the supplies on a central table and reviewing them with the class, everyone was given the freedom to work on their book. Once again, the supply table was swarmed with students. Soon after, the class was alive with activity. As I walked around, I saw that almost half of the students had brought in some of their own supplies of stickers, pens, and photographs. I also observed that a great deal of work had been done on the books since the previous week, which meant that students had worked on their books at home. Another thing I noticed was that many of the students had added additional content that was not in the storyboards that they had given to me at the end of week seven. They had expanded on ideas and expressed them in more detail and in creative imagery. Additionally, while everyone had been participating to a

certain extent over the last few weeks, there had still been a few students who were very slow in making progress on the actual bookmaking. Two of those students came in with half of their books made and proceeded to work on the remaining pages in class. Nazar had added personal photographs and a self-written poem to his book. Another, who had not wanted to start on the book, began making the pages by drawing lines and transferring his writing to the book.

Like the previous week, students helped each other by sharing their talents for drawing and writing in beautiful handwriting. In addition to helping other students with their projects, most spent a good portion of the time working alone on their own books. This kind of individual work was something that had started during the previous week's implementation and continued into this ninth week project day. Some students finished their books before the end of class and they began to move around sharing their work with others and helping classmates who were not yet finished. Every student was present for class that day and every single one was engaged in the book project in one way or another.

Before ending the day, we gathered as a class to review our progress and discuss the week and a half remaining in the semester. One student asked a question to verify that they were going to get to keep their books. I reminded them that the books were theirs to keep and to share and enjoy for years to come and that I hoped they would add pages to it in the future. The students all chose to take their books home over the weekend and many of

them took extra construction paper so that they could work on completing the pages on their own.

The implementation day in the tenth week was the last day students could work on their books in class. As with the previous week, it was evident that students had done work on their books at home. More students came in with completed books. Others had added photographs and paragraphs. Nadin, who had, in prior weeks, refused to include hopes for the future in her book, had added four pages with things she wanted for the future. She had created cut outs of a new car and a big house with a garden. Another student, who had been slowly working on one story, came in with an entirely new story. He said he had decided that he wanted to write it differently. I went through the story with him. He wrote in some detail about life in Iraq and how it changed. He wrote about how everyday, when he left the house, he would see dead bodies. He never knew when death would come to himself or someone he loved. He wrote about what he is doing now and his hopes for a happy life in the future. He included a hope that his child would grow up to serve this country that had given his family peace.

I spent the class walking around, observing, and sitting down with individual students. They wanted to show me their books and photos. This individual time provided the opportunity to ask students questions about their stories and their experience with this project. A few students asked me to show them photos of my family and life.

The final assignment for the day was to revisit the goal-setting worksheets that students had filled out the first week of class. Students read the entries they had made almost three months before and wrote about whether or not they had accomplished their goal and why. They also chose a new goal for themselves and wrote that down as a new promise to themselves.

At the end of class we discussed next week's activities. The following week was the last week of the semester. We made a plan for the last day of class that included a potluck and time to share their books with each other. I asked the students who were finished with their books to leave them for me so that I could look at them over the weekend. A handful were not quite finished and took their books home, along with supplies, in order to finish them over the weekend.

Bringing it all to an end.

The final day of class for the semester was also our last implementation day for *Looking Back, Looking Forward.* I had originally thought I would have an event to share the students' work that included inviting students from other classes and my students' family and friends. My vision was to have a gallery style setup and have guests walk around and look at the different books while asking students questions about them. I still believe this would be an effective way to end the project. Having students do this kind of presentation would give them experience using their English in a new way and build confidence

that they could successfully do this. Also, sharing their story with interested people could help students' voices feel validated. The benefits could be great, and so I have included a presentation event as part of the final day of implementation in this curriculum in the Appendix.

As for my implementation, there were a few reasons I decided not to do a final presentation event. First, the calendar for the semester changed and our final week was shortened by one day. As the last week of the semester was always filled with testing, this change made the reality of a big event nearly impossible. Another factor I considered was my students' feelings. I was surprised by how shy and private my students became in regard to their books. While students wanted to share them, the idea of sharing them with strangers was both frightening and unappealing to them. This is definitely something for instructors to consider when implementing *Looking Back, Looking Forward.* If this public sharing is part of the instructor's plan, students should be told this early on in the process. The danger, I think, is that it will inhibit students if they are told too early. On the other hand, enough time should be given to allow students to become more comfortable with the idea. Additionally, preparation will be extremely important. Weeks should be spent preparing students for sharing their books. Students could make posters for the presentations and do rehearsals in which they practice answering questions they might hear at the event. I did not prepare my students early enough for a big event because I did not think I would be able to do one. As a result, they were not ready for a public presentation.

So, instead of a big, more public event, we celebrated the students' accomplishments within the community of our class. First, I asked students to fill out a final reflection questionnaire (see Appendix). In it, I asked them to write about what they thought of the project, their favorite and least favorite parts, and if they learned anything about themselves from their projects. I also asked them to tell me if they thought they would share their book with anyone, and if so, who. Students took the questionnaire very seriously, and though it was difficult for many to write their responses in English, everyone took time to fill out every question. I was surprised by the effect of the questionnaire. The process of filling it out caused students to reflect on the project and what they learned from it in a new way. Several students came up to me to share their responses, saying that they had realized new things.

Then, I talked about the semester, summarizing the class's journey and accomplishments. I gave each student a medal, a toy medal that is something like an olympic medal, that I bought from a party store. This is something I traditionally do each semester to acknowledge the hard work the students went through during the semester. The response from students has always been extremely positive and so I decided to continue the tradition this semester as well. I walked around the classroom and placed a medal over each student's head and shook their hand, congratulating them on their achievement. Students smiled and held up their medals. Almost all of them had another student take a picture of them receiving their medal from me. Next, we set up the buffet from food students had brought in and I gave them

time to walk around and look at each others' books while eating. Finally, after taking a group photo, we made a short video where students walked up to the camera to show their favorite page of their book. We watched the video as a class and laughed and commented on each person. At this point, class was drawing to an end. We cleaned up and said goodbye. Students shook my hand and hugged me and left.

Revisions to *Looking Back, Looking Forward*

During the implementation of *Looking Back, Looking Forward,* I encountered problems or situations that surprised me. Some of them simply needed to be worked through in the moment and seemed the result of a few particular students' needs. A few other items prompted me to make revisions to the original curriculum. The first change came about in the first week of implementation. Students' resistance to the idea of writing about their immigration caught me off guard. I knew, because my students were refugees, that they had lived through terrible events and carried with them vivid memories of horrors. My experience over the years indicated that, despite this fact, students wanted to share their stories. So, when I first presented the project, I was not fully prepared for the strong negative reaction that a few students had. At the time, I felt it was very important to make students feel safe and in control and that that would continue to be necessary in future implementations. Therefore, I decided to add a caveat to the curriculum that allows highly resistant students to choose to write about a

different story. This protects students and teachers from being forced to deal with emotional issues that are perhaps, more appropriately handled by a mental health professional. By providing the choice to avoid certain topics, students can guide the curriculum to a place that they are equipped to explore. During my implementation, the act of allowing student choice seemingly made students feel safe enough, that all of them decided, to some extent, to explore their immigration. Still, I believe there is power in treating students like thinking, feeling, independent adults and allowing them to draw limits that benefit them.

Another revision came about at the end of the seventh week when I collected the storyboards. Some students had completely finished their stories, others were still in the process of transferring their rough drafts onto the storyboards. I went through each one checking the spelling and grammar. I used correction symbols that I use with the students all semester for all writing assignments. The writing correction symbols tells the students the type of error they made but does not fix the error for them. The students then correct the mistakes themselves. Most students did quite well using their own words and current grammar knowledge. A few students made a huge number of errors. Despite discussing the importance of using their own words and not translating, these students put Arabic sentences into Google Translate and ended up with completely inappropriate and unintelligible English. I confirmed that this is what the students had done and spoke with them about it. The students who used the translation webpage were some of the students with

the lowest proficiency levels. Although they understood that they were to use their own words and writing, they explained that they felt that they could not express what they wanted to in English. This is something that the instructor should keep in mind. Once students are invested in the idea of these stories, they may have deep desires to communicate ideas and feelings that are beyond their current linguistic capabilities. While work on learning and using English is important, the major goals of this curriculum involve issues of identity, agency and voice. Given this, I would encourage teachers to allow students to use their first language for portions of the books in which they feel incapable of expressing important feelings in English. This is a revision that I have made to the curriculum.

The Evaluation of *Looking Back, Looking Forward*

Looking Back, Looking Forward had three main goals. First, I wanted to help students resolve conflicts they may have been experiencing in terms of their identities. Whether their difficulty was about themselves as Iraqis, new Americans, students, workers, professionals, parents, spouses, or about membership in other communities real or imagined with which they identified, I wanted to help them envision themselves as valid participants in those communities. This necessitated that I try to help students see that they could be members of multiple communities simultaneously and that they did not necessarily have to lose one identification because it seemingly conflicted with another. Incorporated into identity conflict resolution is the need for finding a way for each individual to connect his or her past, present and future. Discovering a trajectory that incorporates a complete timeline is important work that facilitates an understanding of multiple membership because a person's past self, and all that he or she identified with in the past, is reconciled with the present self and everything he or she presently relates to. The present self is then imagined into a future that feels tangible and appropriate to who the person is. If this trajectory is developed well, a person's sense of and comfort with a multifaceted self becomes possible. The second goal was to help students develop a sense of voice and personal agency so that they would be able to express themselves and feel that they have the power to affect positive change in their personal and professional lives. A final goal was that during and after the implementation of

Looking Back, Looking Forward, students would participate in class work and also in meeting goals for personal growth outside of the class by doing homework and using English in new situations and settings.

In order to evaluate the effects of *Looking Back, Looking Forward* in regard to the research questions and goals, different kinds of data were collected. Data collection was conducted throughout the implementation process and data sources included: field notes taken from my observations and from my mini-conferences with students, exit slips and surveys, goal-setting activities and classroom artifacts including the immigration storybooks and project activities. The data sources and their alignment with curricular goals are summarized in Table 2. A more detailed explanation of the data sources follows.

Table 2: Data Sources Used for *Looking Back, Looking Forward*

Data Source	**Goal #1:** Students will begin to resolve identity conflicts and build a trajectory with past, present and future.	**Goal #2**: Students will develop a sense of voice and personal agency.	**Goal #3:** Students will participate in class work and in meeting goals for growth outside of the classroom.
Field Notes on Mini-Conferences	X	X	X
Field Notes on Observations	X	X	X
Exit Slips/Surveys	X	X	X
Goal-Setting Activities		X	X
Artifacts: Story book, worksheets	X	X	X

Data Sources

Mini conferences.

While all three goals can present themselves in students in an externally visible and measurable way, the first two goals involve complex processes that can also take place internally and without observable external changes. For this reason, I decided that interviews would be an important aspect of the evaluation for this project. I requested a translator to help interviewees express themselves in their first language, as their English was likely not to be of a level that would allow them to discuss complex and emotional issues. Unfortunately, a translator was unavailable. Without this assistance, I had to decide whether or not to proceed with the interviews. Another factor that had to be considered was the practicality of getting students alone for interviews. A majority of the students in class came to school in a carpool, either with students from the same class or family and friends in other classes. Asking a student to stay after class for an interview affected an entire carload of people. Additionally, many students were on tight schedules because of other classes, children, daycare, work and other familial obligations. In the end, I determined that the most effective way of speaking with the students given these constraints would be to hold mini-conferences during class time whenever possible. These allowed for short conversations, usually spurred by something the students was engaged in at the moment. Though limited due to language challenges, these mini-conferences yielded data that provided insights into students' thoughts and feelings. I was able to

ask pointed questions that explored their self-identity, sense of agency and voice and that gave me more information about their goal-setting and activities outside of class.

Observations.

I conducted observations of a small pool of students to evaluate the effectiveness of all three goals, especially goals two and three. I decided to focus on a smaller group of students for a few reasons. First, the class size was too large to attempt to record observations of the entire class. Also, the internal processes and emotions involved in this project do not lend themselves to large population tally charts and similar measures. I needed to keep more in depth records to record the trajectory and journey the students went through as they interacted with the activities in the curriculum. In choosing the students to observe, I attempted to create a representative sample. I wanted to have both men and women in the sampling. I also chose students to represent the age range in the class, with students in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Additionally, I wanted students who began the semester with different feelings about the class and the project and so chose some who displayed disruptive behaviors and vocally objected to the project, some who were cooperative and seemed to enjoy the class but who were not interested in or excited about the project, and some who were both cooperative and excited about the project. I also chose some students who were quiet and less participatory in class and some who were more active. This variety could

be found in a six-student sample and I tracked their individual journeys from the beginning to the end of the semester

While focusing on those six students, I wanted to make sure that I did not miss any other important happenings in the classroom. Over the semester, I took field notes including detailed notes about the six pre-chosen students and observations of other events and students as time allowed. I conducted intensive note-taking on the weekly implementation day, but also made notes throughout the week as noteworthy happenings occurred.

Over the months, unexpected events and changes in students started to happen, and my focus expanded to a larger number of students. Students whom I did not choose to focus on ended up attracting my attention because of the dramatic changes they were experiencing. Additionally, one of the pre-selected students had to leave class because of work demands. So, in the end, I had many more field notes and had followed many more journeys than I had originally intended. I noted students' behaviors, participation, and comments and later I examined the notes for patterns and insights using simple coding systems. My coding distinguished patterns such as participation/non-participation, previously seen behaviors/new behaviors, working alone/working in groups, and the nature of comments in terms of whether they were optimistic/pessimistic and about the past, present or future. After implementation was complete and I had found patterns through my preliminary analysis, I chose three students to serve as case examples who were illustrative of results seen throughout the class population. The

demographic information on these three students is shown in Table 3 and their journeys through the semester are explained in this evaluation chapter.

Table 3: Demographic Information on Case Examples

Name	Age	Marital Status/ Children	Home Country	Attitude at Beginning of Semester
Nazar	40	Married / 3	Iraq	Non-participatory Reluctant learner Not oppositional but sometimes disruptive
Sana	21	Single / 0	Iraq	Openly oppositional Not interested in project but showed interest in other classroom activities and lessons
Nadin	30	Married / 2	Iraq	Cooperative Quiet Showed interest in classroom activities and lessons

Surveys.

Throughout the semester, I constructed and administered several surveys to get measures from the entire class of all three goals. One survey (see Appendix) contained ten questions exploring students' sense of agency, voice and sense of identity in terms of belonging to the communities of practice at the school and in regard to envisioning oneself in a future. I created the survey myself, using the goals of the project as the basis of the statements included on it. Students were then asked to choose a number from one to seven based on how strongly they agreed or disagree with the

statement. Due to my students limited English abilities, a Likert scale was a tangible way to measure students feelings. Once they understood the statements, they could express feelings about them without being required to write extensively. This survey was given half way through the semester and then again, in its unaltered entirety, at the end of the semester. The original intention was to give the survey as a pre and post survey, the first to have been given at the beginning of the semester. Due to unforeseen circumstances and changes in the class structure, the beginning of the semester was not conducive to giving a survey. Instead, the initial survey was given half way through the term.

Goal-setting activities.

Both long-term and short-term goal-setting activities were done to both help students start building a future trajectory for themselves and also to measure the degree to which they were participating beyond the classroom.

A pre-implementation activity for *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was a semester-long goal-setting activity. Students chose a goal for using English outside of the classroom and wrote it down on a worksheet, promising themselves that they would accomplish this goal by the end of the semester. All students filled these out and chose one or more goals for themselves. Students kept the original contract with them, and several times throughout the semester, the class was directed to check in with their goal. At the end of the semester, the students revisited the contracts and the goals and wrote about

whether or not they achieved the goal. They also were asked to write about how it felt to do the task they had set for themselves, and if they did not accomplish their goal, why they did not.

Additionally, several short-term goal-setting activities were done. Three times during the semester, students were asked to set a goal for themselves for using English outside of the classroom. This activity was done prior to the weeklong spring break and, on two other occasions, before a weekend. Students were directed to choose a way that they could use English over the weekend (or the break). They were told that they should choose an activity or situation in which they usually did not use English. The Monday following the assignment, students were given an exit slip. An exit slip is a small piece of paper that requires some kind of short response from a student. Students filled these out as the last task of the day. Once they turned it in, they were allowed to leave class. These exit slips asked them what their goal was and whether or not they had accomplished it. If they had accomplished the goal, the slip asked for a short description of how it felt to do it and if they had not achieved the goal, they were asked to explain the reason for this.

Artifacts.

Throughout the semester, I collected artifacts of student work. The largest artifacts collected were the students' final products: their storybooks. Each week of the implementation involved activities that served multiple purposes. These activities helped students do the internal work of building

identity, exploring membership in multiple communities, sharing and reconciling past experiences, melding the past with the present, and setting goals and exploring dreams for the future. These activities were also used as steps in the storywriting process. Some activities helped students with planning for their stories and other activities helped them develop actual content for the stories. Copies were made of these artifacts.

Findings

In evaluating *Looking Back, Looking Forward*, I was, of course, interested in whether or not the curriculum achieved the desired goals. As this was an inquiry project, the evaluation did not end there. Another important step in the evaluation process was to look closely at how the goals were achieved. The research foci are not mutually exclusive, in fact, they are quite the opposite. Strengthening personal voice goes hand in hand with having or building a defined sense of self. Work on identity conflicts, therefore, help strengthen voice. In this way, agency also benefits. Voice and agency are closely related and are sometimes considered to be facets of the same thing, as they are both tied into expressing oneself and having the power to have an effect on one's own world. Participation follows as a natural extension of the strengthening of identity, voice and agency. In a way, the acts of expressing oneself and making choices are kinds of participation. Due to the interdependent and intertwining nature of these, it seemed unnatural to try to separate them when discussing my findings. It also seemed insufficient to

simply say, for example, that students strengthened their voices when students expressed voice in different ways. People are unique and complex beings and so, identity, voice, agency and participation can be enacted in a multitude of ways. For these reasons, I chose to present my findings through the discussion of case examples. First, I describe a case example's journey through the semester-long project and then I discuss the findings and implications in a holistic fashion that complements the nature of my research questions and findings. This pattern is followed for three case examples.

Case example #1: Nazar.

Background and beginnings.

Nazar, a 40-year-old married man with three children, had arrived in the United States eleven months prior to the start of the semester. Born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq, Nazar moved to Syria when the war began in 2003, then to Turkey and finally to the U.S. Nazar started the semester in a different class. For the first week, there were two ESL 1 classes. Due to class enrollment minimums, his class was cancelled and he and his fellow students joined my class. Both classes went from 15 students, to one large class of 30. Two men, who were in his original class with him, also became part of the larger class, and everyday the three sat together in the back of the class. The teacher who had lost her class told me that Nazar was a difficult student and said that he, along with the group of men he sat with, encouraged other troublemakers and made the class difficult. Nazar was not oppositional to me,

but was sometimes disruptive as he talked and joked with his friends. Nazar said he wanted to learn but never did homework and failed to take part in in-class activities. He refused to take notes or write anything down saying that he hated writing and that he did not really need to do it anyway.

The first surprise with Nazar came with the semester goal-setting worksheet. He took it very seriously, focusing on filling it out rather than talking with his friends. He wrote that he wanted to try to speak English with his family at dinner time each night. He said this was something he did not like to do because it was hard but that he knew it would be good for him.

In the weeks following, it was sometimes difficult to discern how engaged Nazar was. He seemed to be listening but he still refused to write or turn in homework.

The turning point.

During week four of implementation, when groups started sharing their stories, I noted that his group of three talked very intensely with each other. Following that week, when students started turning those oral stories into writing, Nazar sat chatting with his group. I went to them and asked him why he was not writing. He explained that it was hard for him to focus in the class, especially about his story. He said that he likes to write at home where he can sit alone and have it be totally quiet. He said it in a dismissive way and signaled with his gestures that the conversation was over. I told him that I wanted to find a solution that worked for him. I suggested that he use the class time to work on other school work and that he take time over the

weekend to write his story. He could then, I suggested, bring in what he had to share and edit with his group the following week. Nazar smiled and thanked me.

The following week, Nazar brought in two single-spaced, handwritten pages of story in English. He wrote not only about his poor childhood, the war and fleeing Iraq, but also of a first love, whom he was unable to marry because she had a different religion. I read through it with him and helped him correct some of his grammar. From then on, Nazar's behavior changed. He started turning in homework. He took notes during class, not everyday, but more than he ever had before. He quieted other students who interrupted me while I was teaching. Basically, he began engaging in class. The next implementation day, Nazar barely spoke with his friends, and instead transferred his story onto his storyboard.

The first day we started making the actual book pages, Nazar grabbed paper and pens and began creating. At the end of the day, he had made a lot of progress. When given the choice to take the books home or leave them in the classroom over the weekend, all the students, including him, chose to take their books home.

In the end.

By the next implementation day a week later, it was evident that Nazar had been working on his book at home. He called me over and showed me a self-written poem that he had added, photos of his first home and of the war, and cut out hearts ripped in two. He had added detail about a time as a child

when his family was nearly starving and they shared a small house with a couple. He had added pages about how he still missed his first love. His book had doubled in size and become profoundly more personal.

On the final questionnaire, Nazar wrote that he had trouble expressing himself in English and that was frustrating, but that he was glad we did the project. Throughout the semester, Nazar was someone who was not very expressive or emotional. He said that he probably would not come on the last day, but he did. When I handed out medals of achievement, as I do each semester to acknowledge their hard work, Nazar raised his over his head and flashed a huge smile at the class.

Case example #1 discussion: Changing participation.

Nazar's change in behavior seemed to be the result of several factors. First, he became engaged whenever the subject matter was personally relevant to him. Research on learning in adulthood stresses the importance of using learners pasts and prior knowledge as class content, and critical pedagogy emphasizes the use of authentic tasks that revolve around real-life issues. The goal-setting activity was the first thing to command his attention and get him to write. This is not surprising given the research on the motivational benefits of goal-setting (Larson & Smalley, 1972; Locke & Latham, 2002) and because the activity involved a real-life goal that was personally relevant to him.

The power of offering students choice, as suggested by relevant literature (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Schwarzer, 2009), also seemed to be an important factor in Nazar's change in behavior. The book, once Nazar realized he could be in control of the content, became a vehicle for him to express his voice, memories and themes that were important to him and he became more invested in his work. His choice to discuss his lost first love was completely his own and helped make the book personally relevant. A marked change in participation was observed once I gave Nazar choice in how to do his work, allowing him to write his story at home. Not only does this speak to the power of choice in the classroom but it also is a reminder that refugee learners may have difficulty focusing in class and learning in traditional ways (Adkins et al., 1999; Seufert, 1999). If teachers are able to provide alternatives for these learners, they may be in a better position to engage and succeed.

In choosing not to accept the label of "difficult student", and instead really listening to Nazar and his concerns, I honored him as an autonomous adult. Viewing him in this way gave him the power instead of taking it away as a punishing authority figure. Nazar responded well to these things, investing in his learning when allowed some power and freedom in choosing how he was to do it. This again speaks to the notion of choice being an important factor in helping adults learn and also to the idea of immigrant and refugee students' lack of agency in their circumstances in their new country. Seeing

the positive results of giving back some power demonstrates the benefits of approaching such a population from a place informed by critical pedagogy.

Nazar's increased participation both in and out of class is reflective of a shift noted in the entire class. In class, the nature of participation changed. Several students expressed resistance to the project at the beginning, and by the end every single person had created a book and observations showed that all groups were on task suggesting that the last three weeks of implementation fully engaged all students. Throughout the rest of the school week, changes in class participation were also noted. Quiet students began volunteering and sharing answers. While most students had always worked with others freely, I noted that the way they were working together went through changes. Students began taking time to help each other understand content at times when, in the past, they had simply provided answers.

Outside participation also increased. Average homework completion rates for the class, for all homework not just assignments relating to the book project, ranged from 76-85% at the beginning of the semester and increased to a range of 94-100% at the end of the semester. Students' involvement with the bookmaking project also showed evidence of outside participation. Between implementation days during the last four weeks, students made progress on their books outside of class time. At home, Nazar added photographs, poetry and other content to his story. Changes in book content from week to week showed that all students took time at home to add photos, drawings and other artwork to their books. They also added story content

including narration, poetry, and captions for illustrations. Some bought additional stickers, pens and paper to use in their books. The increased quantity and quality of work being produced suggested not only an increase in participation in terms of time but also a deeper investment in the project. This change in depth of investment was seen in the students' other classwork as well as students began to go beyond the minimum expectations. One example of this was a writing assignment asking the students to write a paragraph about themselves. In past quarters, students consistently answered the prompts provided as scaffolding for the writing exercise but added no other content. This semester, almost half of the students went beyond the prompts, adding sentences and sometimes entire paragraphs of personal information of their choosing.

Nazar's decision to express private details of his personal life, using almost half of his book to remember his first love was unexpected. Throughout the project, he had completed worksheets and focused on his life in Iraq, the war and his immigration to the United States. While he kept those items in his book, in the last few weeks of the curriculum, it seems that he gave himself permission to explore other parts of his life. Nazar took ownership over his book and used it to express what he needed or wanted to. This was a pattern seen in the rest of the class population as well. While everyone explored their immigration story and did the worksheets that had them connect the past to the present, not everyone explored those things in depth in their books. As the worksheets turned into storyboards and the

storyboards became actual book pages, content changed and developed and students, like Nazar, slowly took ownership of their storybooks. Some chose not to include gruesome memories because their children would be reading their stories and they did not want to them to know the horrible details. Others wanted to use the book to showcase their talents and passions, like one student who made the book into a portfolio of sorts for his fashion design career. A number of others honored the memory of loved ones who were left behind because of death or the student's immigration (see Figure 1). Many focused on their families, and used large portions of the books to include family photographs and cut out hearts proclaiming "I love my family" (see Figure 2).

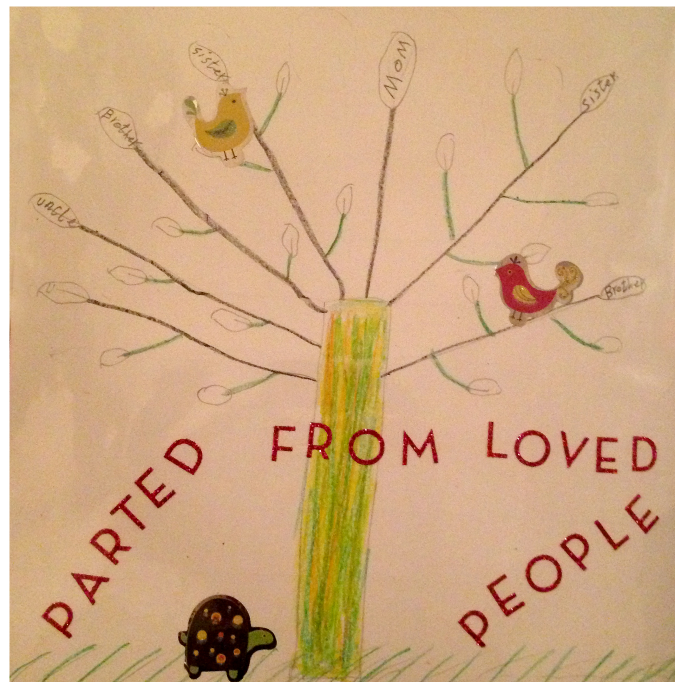


Figure 1: Student Storybook Sample: Loved Ones Left Behind

Figure 2: Student Storybook Sample: Family

Taking ownership of one's work is a way of enacting voice and suggests that students felt empowered to make the decision to take control of their book content. The first week of class, my students and I intentionally worked to co-construct the classroom rules. In a less formal way, we did the same with this project. We began with the project that I had designed and over time co-constructed new rules for it. A central tenet of critical pedagogy was enacted as power shifted from me to my students.

Case example #2: Sana.

Background and beginnings.

Twenty-one-year old Sana was born in Iraq, but like many others fled her country after the war began in 2003. After spending time struggling in Syria, the family contacted the United Nations. They were granted refugee status and immigrated to the U.S. She became part of my class when the

other ESL 1 section was canceled. I decided to take careful notes on her after the first day of implementation because she expressed great opposition to the idea of the project, proclaiming loudly, “My story is not interesting, I do not want to tell it.” For the next week and a half, Sana worked only with her one female friend, with whom she always sat.

On the second implementation day, I began by acknowledging students discomfort with the project and by explaining more about it. When I discussed the plan for the books and that they would include not only the past but also the present and the future, Sana looked visibly relieved. Later in the class she called me over to show me a picture she had drawn of a house she wanted to own one day. That day, she started working with some other young women in the class, expandng her pair to a group of five. I was surprised that her attitude had begun to change so quickly, and there were more changes to come.

As this pattern of positive change continued, Sana quickly became a leader in her group and class. She volunteered to come up and help translate one of the sample stories. She shared her work on story days and throughout the week. In week four, Sana came up to me at break to share that she felt that she was learning a lot and that she did not want to be a waitress all her life. In the face of all these encouraging changes, there was still one big obstacle. Sana continued to be resistant to revisiting the past.

The turning point.

When the day came to share their immigration stories aloud, Sana expressed that she was nervous and did not like to think about what had happened in the past. Once again, she reiterated that it was just full of bad experiences and that her story was not special. Sana expressed a desire to leave the past behind her explaining that she was an American now, and Iraq was not part of her anymore. I told her that everyone's story was special and important and that the past helped to make us who we were today. I also reminded her that it was her choice about what to share. Despite her protests, Sana helped her group join another to become a large circle of seven women. They each took time to tell their stories and all listened respectfully to the descriptions. About halfway through the day, Sana took her turn to share. The group listened closely and then, as they had with the others who had spoken, asked questions, gave hugs, cried and laughed. She called me over to show me photos from her life in Iraq and to talk about her mother. When we worked on the worksheet connecting past experiences to the present, she helped others understand the worksheet and then took time alone to work on hers as well.

In the end.

In her final completed book, Sana dedicated fourteen out of twenty pages to the past. In the final day questionnaire, she wrote the following:

> I learned a lot of stuff about myself I didn't know before the story. I learn anything in past is important to my life. I learned I am strong because in past a lot bad things in Iraq and Syria. I want to share my story with my family and friends.

Her book contained wishes for the future about falling in love and building a family. Her career goals changed over the course of the semester from getting a better shift at her waitressing job, to becoming a manager, to having a career at a bank.

Case example #2 discussion: Connecting to the past.

At the beginning of the semester, Sana, like many of the students, felt very uncomfortable with the idea of exploring her past. She did not want to spend time thinking about horrible events and would have been very happy to deny the past and leave it as part of a separate life that had nothing to do with her present. For some learners, becoming a member of and identifying with a new Community of Practice (CoP) feels like it necessitates leaving behind an old CoP or identity (Adkins et al., 1999), and Sana exemplified this belief. Giving her the choice of whether or not to share her story relaxed her and gave her a sense of control. Feeling in control seemed to make it easier for Sana to do the task of talking about the past. Once she began to share the details and connect the impact of those events on her present through worksheets and discussions, she no longer felt that she had to completely reject the past in order to have a new life in her new country. Wenger (1998) said that learning communities can become places of identity when they make

trajectories possible and that is what happened here. As a result of her work connecting the past with the present, a trajectory began to form. Suddenly, her goals for the future started to expand and rather than denying the past or only seeing the negative in it, she began to attribute some of her strength to the fact that she had gone though it. Past, present and future existed simultaneously within her.

Other students were also able, like Sana, to complete the first part of a life trajectory that connected the past with the present. On an in-class worksheet, students connected the past to the present by addressing the positive and negative effects of the past in writing (see Figure 3). This worksheet was designed to help students think critically about their lives and analyze both the good and bad that had resulted from their life events.

How has my life and immigration affected me?

"Because of traveling around the world, I have good skills."

"Because I lost my parents, I have a great relationship with my brothers."

"Because I am in the U.S.A., I have difficult with language."

"Because I moved to U.S., I can make life better for my children."

"Because I am here, I can't see my family."

"Because no war here, I can sleep good every night"

"Because I moved away from my family, I am stronger."

"Because I don't have a good job here, I am tired."

Figure 3: Sample From Student Responses on Worksheet About the Good and the Bad Effects of Their Immigration

While not all students chose to include these items in their books, the work done through this exercise could have contributed to the change in feelings of personal value and the desire to share their stories with others. It also demonstrates that students were able to turn a critical eye to their own lives and their comments are illustrative of the complexities of being an adult immigrant.

Along with Sana's ability to connect the past to the present came the realization that her story was important and a desire to share her story with others. Similarly, throughout the course of the semester, more students began to believe that their personal feelings and opinions were important (see Figure 4). Additionally, more students said that they wanted to share their stories and that they believed people would be interested in them (see Figure 5). These shifts in students' feelings supports the view that there is a close relationship between identity, voice and agency. As students worked to connect to their pasts and incorporate them into their presents, students' identities strengthened.

One student selected ratings that were lower on the second survey (a rating of two on question #5 and a rating of one on question #9 – down from ratings of four on both questions previously). I spoke with the student and asked her why her rating went down on these questions. She expressed that after hearing so many shared stories in class, she realized how many other people have experienced equally difficult challenges. Feeling that her story was no more important than the other students', she chose a lower rating.

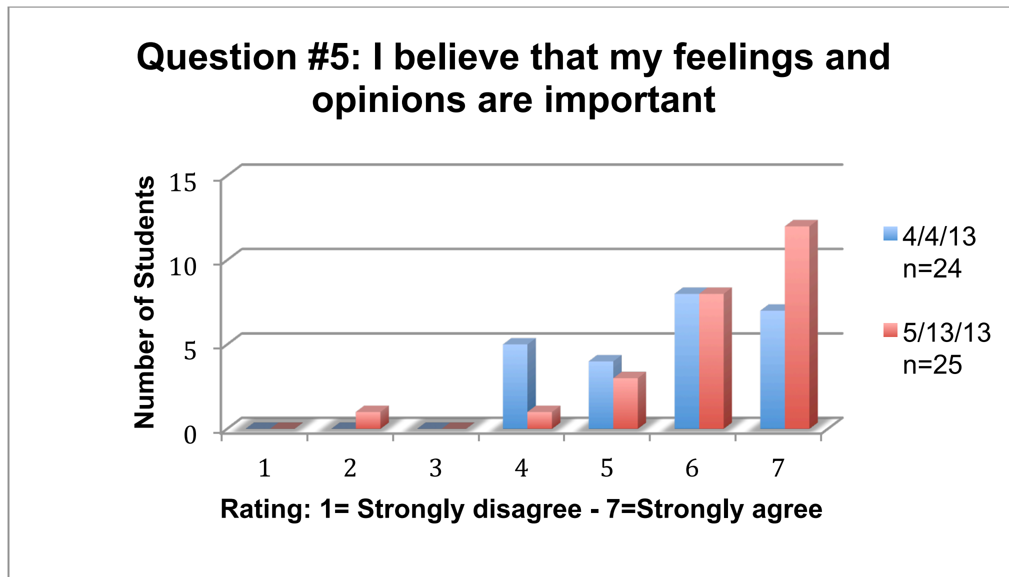


Figure 4: Student Survey Response to Question #5: I Believe That My Feelings and Opinions Are Important

Figure 5: Student Survey Response to Question #9: I Want to Share My Life Story With People and Believe They Will Be Interested in It

Students also began to think crtically about what happened to them and what effects those events had on their lives. They were able to acknowledge the difficulties that resulted from the trauma and from their immigration. Despite these painful experiences, they were also able to find positive effects. The trajectory that connected the past to the present could then extend into the future and students identified wisdom and hope that they could take with them into the future. At the end of the semester one student wrote:

> It was sad to write about losing my mom, but I'm glad I did. Losing her made me stronger, made me who I am today. Because I lost my parents, I have a close relationship with my brothers. Now I feel like nothing is impossible.

Another included the following on his questionnaire:

> My life very hard. Very hard. Last seven years, very hard for me. But, I want in my book for my children see. Future will be very happy very good. I will have my business and my family will be happy.

While many students were challenged by thinking about and revisiting the past, doing the work of connecting it to the present was an important part of the curriculum. Exploring the past seemed to bring about an increase in the perceived value of one's past experiences. It also helped students to gain a stronger sense of self and in turn, brought about changes to the future outlook. Nadin was a student for whom thinking the future presented a challenge.

Case example #3: Nadin.

Background and beginnings.

Nadin, a thirty-year-old married mother of two, was born and raised in Iraq. She and her family stayed in Iraq for several years after the war began in 2003. Eventually, they felt they had to leave and after several more years in temporary homes in neighboring countries, they immigrated to the U.S. Nadin was enrolled in my class from the very beginning of the semester and was a cooperative member from day one. She would stay on task in class, but never volunteered to answer questions and required strong encouragement in order to participate in pair or group work. She consistently sat on the end of the back row by herself. Nadin was not one of the students I had originally chosen to follow, but the noticable shift in her behavior attracted my attention prompting me to include her in my observational notes and mini-conferences.

During the first week of the project, Nadin began sitting with two other women. She had a visible emotional reaction to the first sample story we read *Four Feet, Two Sandals.* The story about friendship and generosity touched Nadin, particularly the ending in which the two girls were parted. She worked with the two women to complete the parts of a story worksheet about the book. From then on, she sat and worked with the two other women on implementation day and throughout the rest of the week. Throughout the quarter, she slowly required less pushing to participate in pair and group work, eventually jumping into exercises without hesitation.

In the fourth week of the project, students began to share their personal immigration stories with each other. The class was allowed to form groups in any way they pleased, and Nadin joined a large group of six other women. This group did not include her two usual partners, which was quite a surprise. The students she aligned with on that day had shown themselves to be more vocal and disclosive as well as more visibly emotional. For an hour and a half, the groups orally shared their stories. Nadin's group took turns speaking. While someone was sharing, the other members leaned forward listening intently, often with tears in their eyes. Nadin took her turn to speak, sharing in Arabic with the large group of women. As had been the case with the other students, she and the listeners welled with tears, but she continued talking through the emotion. A week-long spring break followed that implementation day.

Early changes.

When classes restarted a week later, students were given storyboards and we discussed strategies for turning their verbal stories into storybooks that included the past, present and future. One student asked "How do I start?". The question prompted one student, who had been enthusiastic about the project but also very shy and emotional about it, to offer her story to be used an example. She had worked on writing her story over the break and we put her paper in front of the class and read some of it aloud. At a certain point, the student became emotional and asked that we stop. After she was thanked by the entire class, Nadin and another student shouted out, "Read mine!". To

make sure there were no misunderstandings, I asked if she wanted me to show the entire class her story and she said that she did. I put it on the overhead and we read through a few paragraphs about some events that had changed her life. She had written about her uncle and how, once the war had begun and money and fuel was scarce, he started selling gas on the streets of Baghdad in order to support her family. The story went on to explain that one day he accidentally caught himself on fire and died. Though once again emotional, Nadin made no move to stop the story. Many students turned to her to express sympathy and she just nodded and said “Yes, it was bad.” She was able to complete the worksheet about the positive and negative affects of the past on her present, and once again dove into emotional material in that exercise.

By halfway through the semester, Nadin had increased her participation in class and on project days and throughout the rest of the school week she had begun volunteering to write her answers on the board and to read aloud. On project days, she mostly worked with her two female classmates with whom she usually sat, but sometimes shared with and helped students in front of and behind her. Her storyboard took shape and reflected many personal choices in the content. Knowing that she wanted to share her book with her two girls, Nadin chose not to include the story of her uncle and other traumatic events in her story. She said that she did not want them to know about those things and reduced the horrors of the war to a sentence about how life was hard and she could not leave the house. Most of her story focused on her

good relationship with her father in her childhood and about meeting her husband.

When we started to work on the future part of the stories, students were given a timeline activity to complete, which asked them to write down goals and wishes for the future. From the beginning of the project, students had been told that the future would be a key ingredient in their stories. While the rest of the class was engaged in completing the timeline, Nadin worked on other things. I gently encouraged her to think about the future and all the things that were possible for her. When I checked on her later, the worksheet was still blank. When asked why, she said that she did not want to do the timeline because none of us know what will happen in the future and then she quickly ended the conversation. The only activity that included the future that she had participated in was the goal-setting worksheet at the beginning of the semester, in which she set the goal of finding a job. I told her that she did not have to include the future if she did not want to, but that she could always add it later if she changed her mind.

In week eight of the project, students began building the pages of their books. Nadin built her entire book in one day and showed it to me. As had been the case with her storyboard, it had no future in it. The book ended with a picture of her daughters and a drawing of a big red heart with the words "I love my family." She had several blank pages left at the end of the scrapbook.

The major turning point.

At the beginning of the following week, Nadin told me a huge smile on her face that she had an interview for a job at a fast food restaurant and would have to leave early the next day. The following Monday, she came up to me during the break and told me that she had gotten the job. During that week's implementation day, students spent another three hours building pages for their books. As this was the final day for construction, most students were working on the end of their books, which focused on the future. Some of the students who were finished, like Nadin, started sharing their books with others as well as helping other students with their books. Nadin flipped through the pages, showing her work to her classmates. I heard a few ask her about the future, which was answered by an "I do not know". Nadin then helped her friends complete their books, cutting out paper to add to their pages of future hopes and dreams.

At the end of that week, I collected the books. Flipping through Nadin's book, I discovered that she had added drawings to some of the pages, and that she had added four pages to the end of her book. The pages were about the future and expressed her desire to learn to drive and to have a car and a house (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Student Storybook Sample: Future Hope

In the end.

As our final week began, I had students revisit their goal-setting worksheet from the beginning of the semester. They were asked to report on whether or not they had achieved their goal and to make a new goal for themselves. Nadin's original goal was to find a job, though on the worksheet, she had expressed doubt about the possibility of actually being able to do it. In her end-of-semester update she wrote "I've found a job to support my family and I like my work so much." Her new goal was "I want to learn to rely on myself more." On the last day, Nadin called me over to show me the future pages she had added. I told her that I had noticed them and was excited for

her. She said that she still had some blank pages and that she would add to them later as she came up with new goals.

Case example #3 discussion: Envisioning a future.

Nadin's journey through the semester showed many changes in her behavior and outlook. First, it is clear that the nature of her participation in class changed. In the beginning of the semester, though always on task in class, Nadin never volunteered to share her work or answers and group or pair work was reluctantly performed. As the semester went on, Nadin began working in groups more readily and became a consistent volunteer sharing academic and personal work. When given a choice between working alone and working in groups, she started choosing to work with a group. Not only was she sharing more with the class as a whole, but by the end of the semester, she had started seeking out my attention separately to share updates on her life as well as background information about her and her family.

Nadin showed a strong sense of voice and identity in her decisions about the content of her book. By choosing not to include traumatic events from her past, she exercised her voice as a mother and protector of her children. The fact that she wrote about those events in the early stages of the book and was able to share them, as well as do work to show the effects her past had had on her life, demonstrated that she was able to connect different roles and timelines in her life. This suggested that she did not feel a need to

reject the past in order to be in the present, but instead made a conscious choice not to burden her children with her past.

Her voice and power were also demonstrated in her initial refusal to write about the future. Though encouraged to explore future goals and desires, she went against the grain and was the only student who did not write about these things. Perhaps the most interesting part of Nadin's journey was the change in her outlook about the future. The timing of her getting a job and the appearance of future hopes in the pages of her book seems to be more than a coincidence. Certainly, in addition to being an example of the enactment of personal power and voice, her initial refusal to write or even think about the future spoke to research in the field that acknowledges the difficulty refugees typically have in this arena. An unstable and traumatic past made her feel uncertain about the future. Powerlessness in the present, evidenced by her comment that she did not think she would be able to find a job, made her feel hopeless about the future. Perhaps her increased participation had helped her build her comfort and confidence to levels where she felt she could finally apply for a job. Once she was able to find employment, Nadin began to feel a greater ability to have an effect on her future and was able to consider possibilities and envision a future. Seeing everyone around her think and write about what they wanted for their lives may have also had an impact.

I gave a questionnaire on the last day of class asking students what they would tell a friend about the project. Nadin responded, "I wrote my story about my life and the past and the future. I learned more English and I can

have happy life." These comments reiterated the shift that was evident from her work. The fact that she chose to add hopes for the future to her book showed that had started to believe they could happen and that she wanted to share that sense of hope with her family. Her intention to add even more to the end of her book, as time went on, showed that she was able to connect her past and present to the future and that the trajectory was growing further and further into the unknown.

Changes in Nadin's view of the future were shared by others in the class. Nadin was the only student who completely refused to dwell in thoughts about the future, and was also the only one who seemed to have great difficulty in envisioning the future. She was not, however, the only one who had trouble seeing a positive, self-fulfilled destiny. Data showed that from the middle to the end of the project, a greater number of students came to believe that they would have a happy future. By the end of the semester, more also believed that they could have a positive effect on their own lives. The changes in these two areas were measured in a survey administered a month apart and are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7: Student Survey Response to Question #3: I Feel Like My Future Will Be Happy and Good

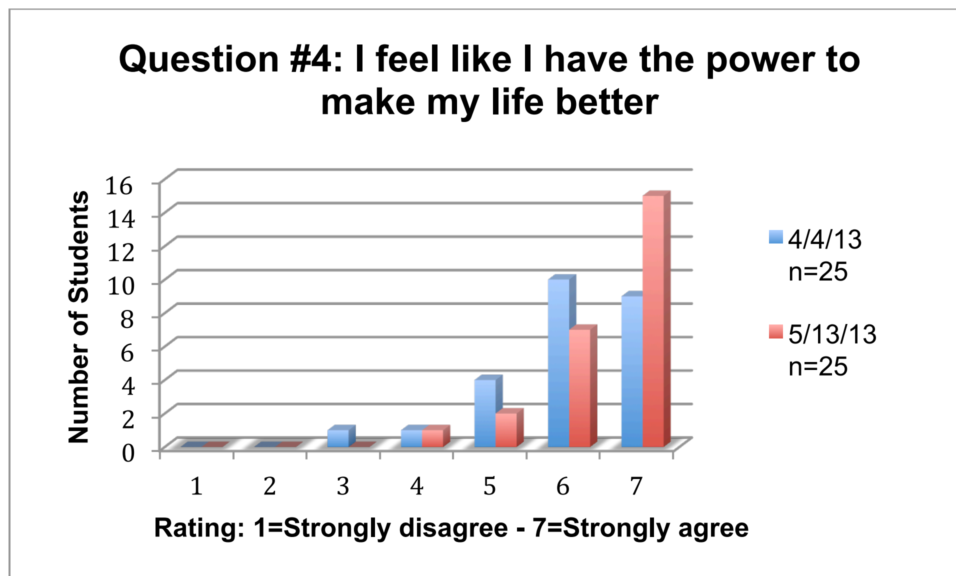


Figure 8: Student Survey Response to Question #4: I Feel Like I Have the Power to Make My Life Better

Not only did students become more hopeful and feel more effective, but in-class work showed that they also had a sense of the tools needed to achieve those future goals. On a worksheet about the future, students filled in

a timeline of hopes and goals with their own desired achievements and dates for accomplishing them. Students set realistic goals, showing incremental steps in the process. One student, for example, who wanted to start a business, showed himself learning more English, taking some business classes, getting a driver's license, earning several small promotions at work, getting a small business loan and slowly working his way up to opening his own store.

Optimism about the future also showed in the final day questionnaires that students filled out. In response to the question "Did you learn anything about yourself from this project, and if so, what?" students explicitly connected the project to a change in outlook. One student wrote, "Now is hard too but I learn future can be good", and another put, "I learned a lot of stuff. I can get a good job and have a good life." Yet another wrote, "I like the stories we did. It really help me know what going to be in my future."

Conclusion

The evidence I found suggests that *Looking Back, Looking Forward* can be useful in a classroom to help adult immigrant ESL students develop their English skills and resolve personal struggles with identity, voice and agency that can hinder learning. The students in this inquiry took steps toward resolving identity conflicts by connecting their pasts to their presents and by using those to create visions of tangible and hopeful futures. They slowly took ownership over the project and created books based on their personally

chosen content, expressing their voice and agency in the process. By the end of the project, the students had become more participatory both inside and outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

Years of working with Iraqi refugees at Southern California College brought to light the challenges and joys of working with that special population. It became clear to me that my students were carrying with them the effects of war along with the challenges of immigrating to a new country and learning a new language. Initially, frustrations with classroom behavior that my colleagues and I had experienced piqued my interest, as did teachers' reactions to these behaviors. I believed that the culturally inappropriate and disruptive classroom behaviors were a sign of a deeper problem rather than simply a matter of classroom management. My research showed that refugee students bring with them special challenges in terms of establishing identity in the new culture and language, reconciling their pasts with the present and future and feeling a sense of voice and agency. Additionally, the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) make concentrating and learning particularly difficult for survivors of war and trauma. The struggles in these areas can show themselves in problematic classroom behavior including non-participation. With great respect and devotion for these students, and with research findings as my foundation, I designed *Looking Back, Looking Forward* in an attempt to help my students resolve some of these struggles and assist them in moving towards a more positive future full of self-efficacy and promise.

I learned a great deal about my students from the implementation of my curriculum. It afforded me the opportunity to get to know them on a deeper

level and, in hearing so many people's stories, helped me become even more aware of the emotional histories my students carry with them everyday.

The evidence I found suggests that *Looking Back, Looking Forward* had a positive effect on the student participants. The students made progress on the path to resolving conflicts with their identities by making connections from their pasts to the present and by looking forward to the future. Students asserted their personal voices and agency through the creation of books about their personal stories, all the content of which was ultimately of their choosing. They slowly took ownership over the project and became more participatory both inside and outside of the classroom.

Looking Back, Looking Forward was not, however, a panacea for all the problems of my students nor did it eliminate all disruptive behaviors in the classroom that interfered with learning, though these behaviors were greatly diminished in frequency. Going through this process made the depth and breadth of the emotional, psychological and physical wounds refugees bring with them even clearer. What also became clear is that one course, one semester's curriculum, cannot fully combat that. Still, *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was a step in a healing direction, though I am certain these students and their teachers will continue to work on these issues for some time to come.

Another challenge was and will be integrating the project with established and required curriculum. I realized that in the future I will need to spend more time aligning grammar lessons that are needed for the course

learning outcomes and the writing tasks in the story project. Making a more explicit connection between these aspects of the class will make the story project more manageable and successful for the students. Additionally, I did not predict how much my students would want to express their feelings and the difficulty that arose when their English abilities fell short of their needs. I discussed a possible solution to this at the end of the implementation chapter. I suggested allowing students to communicate sensitive and complex information in their native language if they cannot fully express themselves in English in these specific parts of their stories. This brings to light the difficult balance of addressing both the linguistic and the emotional needs of refugee immigrant students. I still believe both goals can be met, but some careful planning and integrating of this project into one's classroom must be done.

The implications for my teaching, and I hope, for other ESL teachers, are great. Tuck (2009) called for an end to deficit-centered research. Surely this notion can be applied to our teaching approaches as well. *Looking Back, Looking Forward* speaks to the power of a desire-centered outlook (Tuck, 2009) rather than a deficit or damage-centered approach. By looking at this refugee population, who brings with it broken lives and the horrors of war, as more than just their deficits, we can help them see themselves as beings who are greater than the sum of the worst parts of their histories. As Tuck (2009) explains, "Desire, yes, accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities" (p.417).

Appendix

Looking Back, Looking Forward: *Immigrant Students Writing Themselves into their Futures*

A Project-Based Learning Curriculum

By Allison Riley

Dear Fellow Educator,

If you are reading this, you are most likely an instructor working with immigrant, and possibly refugee, students and are interested in helping them deal with the complex issues of resettlement in your country. I was drawn to create this curriculum from deep feelings of compassion and empathy for what my students are going through as they adapt to life in a new country. I was also motivated by the realization that most adult ESL classes do little or nothing to nurture the human side of the student population. Struggles with motivation, identity, and a sense of agency are common to immigrants from all countries, cultures and languages. While it is true that refugees bring with them special circumstances and needs, those three struggles are linked to learning a new language and living in a new culture, regardless of the situation that brought one there. It is for this reason that I believe *Looking Back, Looking Forward* can be used and useful in classrooms of immigrants from differing circumstances.

Similarly, immigrants of all ages deal with these same challenges and they are not exclusively concerns of adults. So, while *Looking Back, Looking Forward* was implemented in an adult classroom, the curriculum could be successfully implemented in an elementary, middle or high school setting. Indeed, young people have just as strong a need to find themselves anew as adults do. I brought *Looking Back, Looking Forward* into my ESL class, as a supplement to the existing curriculum. The activities and lessons that make up *Looking Back, Looking Forward* can quite easily be aligned with other language learning goals if desired. That being said, the curriculum can also stand alone

and could be done as a several week long independent project and could even be tied in to other disciplines such as history.

One more note should be made about the final product. For the first implementation of this curriculum I wanted to do something special, and have the books professionally printed and bound. The results of having this done can be beautiful but not inexpensive and thus, depending on your particular situation, may not be a possibility for you in the short or long -term. For me, circumstances arose that did not allow me to pursue this option. Although I had no other choice, I came to realize that the project could be just as meaningful if done with a less expensive and more homemade approach. The work of building the books and exploring self are the most important parts. The final presentation of the material helps to validate and give the project weight. This would be true if the books were gold-leafed or hand-pasted.

It is my great hope that you find this project useful as you work to help your students become themselves in a new language and culture.

Best wishes and happy teaching.

Sincerely,

Allison Riley

Looking Back, Looking Forward – Weekly Lesson Plans

Week 0 – Preparation

As a class, discuss possible goals for students involving using English outside of the classroom. Have students choose one or more goals and fill out the worksheet (**Handout: My goal for the semester**) as a promise to themselves to accomplish the goal. Make a copy for yourself and return the original to students.

Handout: My goal for the semester

My goal for this semester

~~~~~~

Today's date:_____________
In class we talked about different goals for using English outside of the classroom. These goals are things that we really want to do but that might be a little scary to try. For example, maybe you would like to talk to your child's teacher. Maybe you want to go into Kohl's and ask them for a job application.

Today, I want you to choose a goal for yourself. Think of some way that you would like to use your English outside of class that you haven't tried yet. After you choose your goal, write it down here, like a promise to yourself:

I, ______________________________, will ____________________________

____

____

You will keep a copy of this goal and your teacher will keep a copy. You can look at it whenever you want to. Sometime during the semester, when you feel ready, you can do it! At the end of the semester we will talk about what you did and how it felt. **Good luck! You can do it!**

~~~~~~

Today's date:_____________
We are now at the end of the semester.
Did you accomplish your goal? _______Yes _______No
How did you feel when you did it? *or* Why didn't you do it? *Explain*:_________

____

____

____

____

Set a new goal for yourself: **I will** ____________________________________

____

____

Week 1

Goals for the week:
This week the project will be introduced and the hope is that students will have a good understanding of what the project is and will have shared and thought about some reasons why telling these stories and why working on a writing project could be useful and important.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. What is the project? --- explain and discuss

2. Read sample story – *Four Feet, Two Sandals*

    Class discussion: Why is it important to tell these stories? Why are our pasts important?

    Some prompts that may be useful:

    - What do your children, younger family members already know about your immigration story?
    - Who has children who remember the move to this country?
    - Do you ever talk about your immigration?

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Week 2

Goals for the week:
This week, the class will begin to analyze and discover the parts of a story. By the end of the lesson, students should understand the parts of a story and be able to analyze a sample story in those terms. Also this week, students choose (or are put into) a group that they will be working with for the whole semester. Some activities can be done to help students get to know their group and feel more comfortable with them.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Form groups: This can be teacher-chosen groups or student-chosen groups based on the judgment of the teacher.

Possible group/trust building exercises

- Students choose a name for their group
- *Activity*: the group designs a logo for their group and a name card that they will place whenever the group is working together
- *Activity*: Students exchange contact info and get to know you information from other students.

2. Work on ***Handout: Parts of a Story***
   - Discuss the different elements that go into most stories (not all stories contain these or have them in the same order, but they are a good general guideline). Elicit examples using a story that all/most of the class is familiar with, for example, Cinderella. Teacher may also wish to give examples using what could be his/her own story
   - Read the same sample story from last week – *Four Feet, Two Sandals*
   - Groups work to put the parts for *Four Feet, Two Sandals* into the worksheet
   - Class discussion: groups share their answers – teacher creates a master document
   - Leads to class discussion:
     - What should be the parts of your stories?
     - Do they need to be the same?
     - What should all of them have?
     - Are there things you wouldn't tell your children (multiple roles)?
     - (Want to include past, present and future in the story)

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout: Parts of a Story

The Parts of a Story

Parts of a Story	*Four Feet, Two Sandals*	*Brothers in Hope*
Who: The Characters		
Where: The Place		
When: The Time		
What: The Plot Beginning Middle End Problem and Solution		
Why: The Reason		

Parts of a Story	***My Story***
Who: The Characters	
Where: The Place	
When: The Time	
What: The Plot Beginning Middle End Problem and Solution	
Why: The Reason	

Week 3

Goals for the week:
This week will build on the knowledge from the previous week. Students will apply what they learned about the parts of a story to another sample story. Students will also think about and identify the different roles they play (identities they have) in their lives and discuss implications of those memberships in different communities. This work is intended to help with reconciling multiple memberships that may be in conflict and to help spur thought and conversation about what aspects of their stories students want to share with their children, other family members, friends, etc. Finally, students should leave class knowing what they need to prepare to tell their own story to their group next week.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Read another sample story – *Brothers in Hope*

2. Review parts of a story – use ***Handout: Parts of a Story*** again.
    - The same groups from the previous week work to put the elements of the story from *Brothers in Hope* into the worksheet

3. Transition to multiple identities and roles in life. Our pasts may feel separate from who we are today or who we are with our children, but there are lessons they can learn from your past. The past has made you who you are today. The purpose of this discussion is to help students decide what story they would like to tell. By thinking about the different roles and aspects of their lives, the hope is that it will help them see that the different roles can coexist and also help them decide which ones they would like to overlap and which ones they would like to keep separate.

Work on ***Handout: The Roles in My Life*
- Explain handout, possibly by modeling filling out the worksheet.
- Students then work individually to fill out their worksheets.
- Students are paired and share what they wrote down.
- Class discussion: On the board, the teacher writes down some of the roles students wrote down. Discussion about what it feels like to be these different things at the same time, etc. (eg. Discomfort that comes from it, conflicts, positive aspects)
- Leads to discussion about how their stories may be combining different roles. Also, about how the students will be choosing what information to include in the story and what to leave out. Can discuss the book samples that were read in class as they are children's stories that include some sensitive information in a way that children can handle.

4. Class discussion: Set goals for the story project
    - Go over timeline for project, goals for the next few weeks

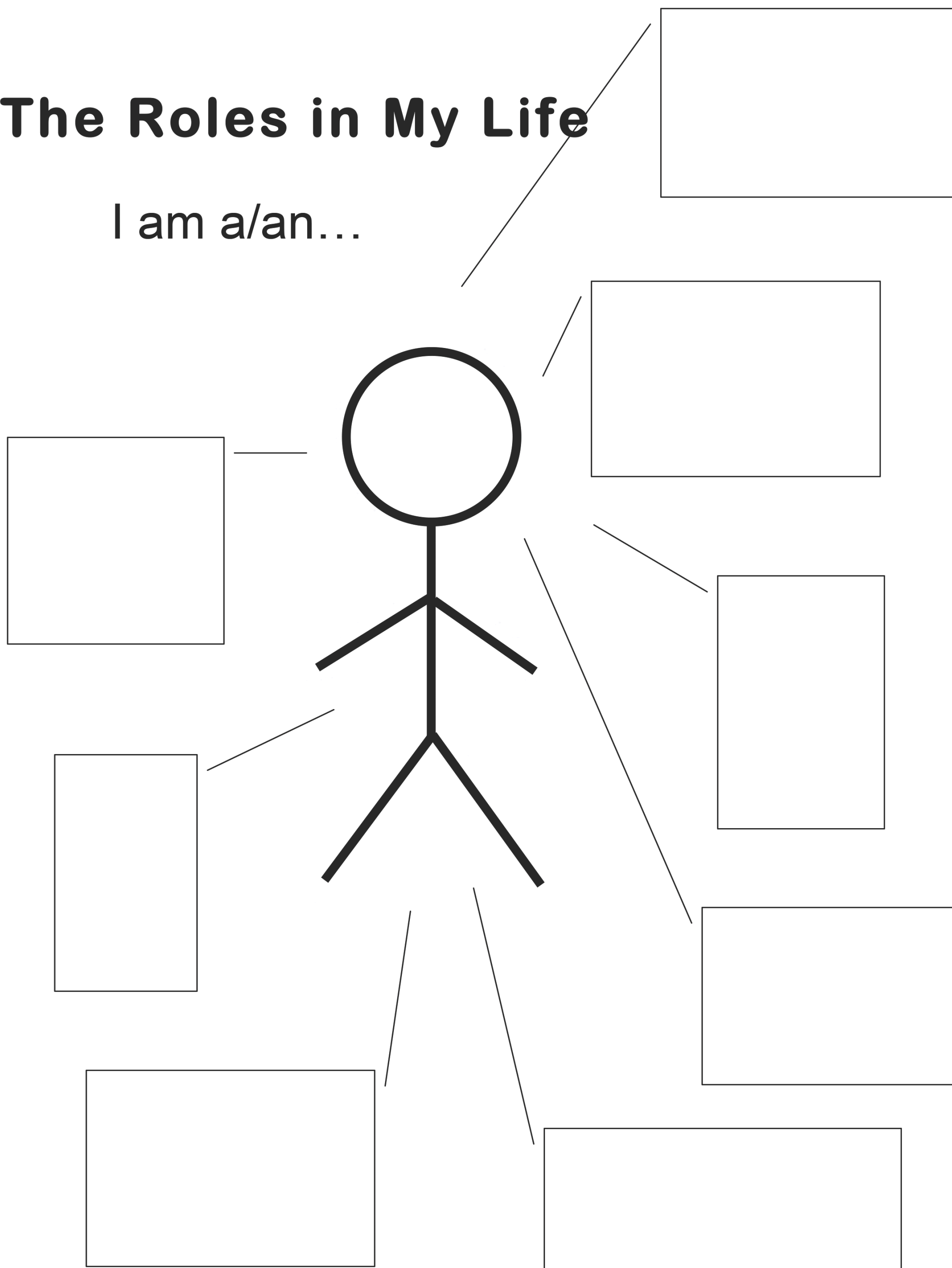
5. Groups: Pick two people (this depends on the group size, but ideally groups should be three to four people) to tell their stories first, they will go next week. The other two people will share their stories the following week. At this point, students don't need to worry about following the elements of a story they just need to think about what details they would like to share with their group.

    Handout: Sharing My Story contains guiding questions that prompt the telling of their stories.

    - Groups look over the handout, make sure everyone understands. Students take the worksheet home. They can use the worksheet to help prepare to tell their stories (Homework).
    - The second page of this worksheet contains more general prompts for stories that are not specifically about immigration. The teacher can go over this page in case anyone chooses not to talk about their immigration. This can relieve the pressure felt by any students who are resistant to the idea of talking about their immigration. Sometimes, just offereing an alternative makes the original task more appealing and comfortable.

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout – The Roles in My Life



Exit Slips – The Roles in My Life

The roles in my life

We all have different parts to our lives. We have family, home, work, school, friends, hobbies, religion, clubs. We have different roles in those different parts, for example: mother, father, daughter, uncle, worker, teacher, student, friend, cook, nurse, team member, leader, etc.

I am interested in the roles that you have that are important in your life. **Please take a moment to write down the roles you have in your life.** Write down as many or as few as you like.

My roles:

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________

Handout: Sharing My Story

<u>Sharing My Story: My Immigration</u>

Sometimes it is hard to know where to begin when you share a story. Here are some questions for you to think about to help you prepare to tell your group about your immigration to the United States

What was your life like in your home country when you were a child?

What was your life like in your home country later?

Why did leave your country? Who decided that you would leave?

How did you leave? What was the journey like? Who went with you? How did you feel about leaving?

Where did you go? Did you come straight to the United States or go somewhere else first?

What did you think life in the United States would be like before you came here?

What was your journey to the United States like? Describe the trip.

What was your first day in this country like? What did you do? How did you feel?

How is life in the United States different than you expected?

How has your past affected you? What positive things did you learn?

What do you want for your future?

What do you want your children (or younger family members) to know about the past?

What do you NOT want your children (or younger family members) to know about the past?

Handout: Sharing My Story, Alternate Version

Sharing My Story

Sometimes it is hard to know where to begin when you share a story. Here are some questions for you to think about to help you prepare to tell your group about your story:

Who is this story about? You and who else? Name the people.

What was your life like before or in the beginning of the story? Tell details about your daily life and the people and places in it.

What happened? Explain each detail about the events: what you and others did, how you felt…

How has this event affected you? What positive things did you learn from it?

What do you want for your future? Where will you go from here? How will this story continue?

What do you want your children (or younger family members) to know about this event?

What do you NOT want your children (or younger family members) to know about this event?

Survey: Sense of Agency and Belonging

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 7.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

1. I feel like a member of the class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. I feel like a part of Southern California College.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. I feel like my future will be happy and good.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. I feel like I have the power to make my life better.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I believe that my feelings and opinions are important.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. I want to use English outside of class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I believe that I can use English outside of class successfully.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I feel that my personal life story is important.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. I want to share my life story with people and believe they will be interested in it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. I am interested in participating in class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Week 4

Goals for the week:
This week students will learn how to give positive feedback to each other. Some students will share their stories and then their groups will give positive feedback to them. Students will then analyze their own and others' stories and apply their knowledge about parts of a story to them.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Discuss Q& A time – How to give positive feedback, go over handout for feedback and what is expected. Students could also give feedback verbally using the handout as a guideline.
2. Groups meet: Two people tell their stories
    - Q&A for each: Group discussion/note-taking

      Handout: Feedback/Notes for Each Storyteller
    - Group helps the students who shared their stories to work on the *Parts of a Story* handout. The last page has a place for inputting information about their own stories.

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout: Feedback/Notes for Each Storyteller

Story Feedback

My name ________________________________

Feedback for _____________________________

1) I liked

____

____

because

____

____.

2) You could

____

____.

3) A question I have is

____

____.

Week 5

Goals for the week:
This week students will review how to give positive feedback to each other and get another chance to practice doing this. Remaining students will share their stories and then their groups will give positive feedback to them. Students will then analyze their own and others' stories and apply their knowledge about parts of a story to them. Additionally, students will leave class understanding a storyboard and how to start planning their books.

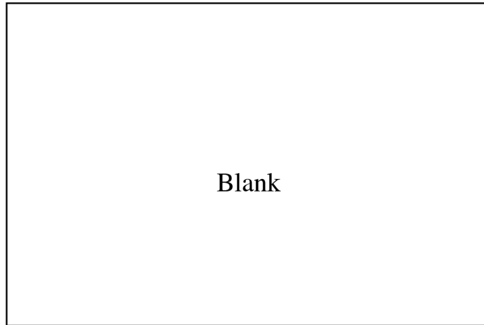
Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Review procedures for Q& A time and how to give positive feedback, review handout for feedback and what is expected.
2. Groups meet: Two more people tell their stories
    - o Q&A for each: Group discussion/note-taking
    Handout: Feedback/Notes for Each Storyteller
    - o Group helps the students who shared their stories to work on the *Parts of a Story* handout. The last page has a place for inputting information about their own stories.
3. Tell students that it is now time to start planning their books. (Rough drafts: Start sketching out your story)
    - o Group/class work:
        - What parts of your story do you want to include?
        - What parts of your story do you *not* want to include?
        - How should/can we divide up the pages?
        Handout: Storyboard

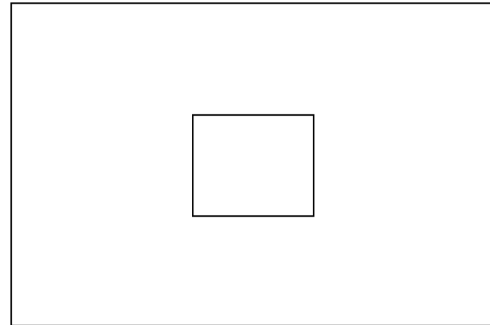
End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout: Storyboard (page 1 of 4)

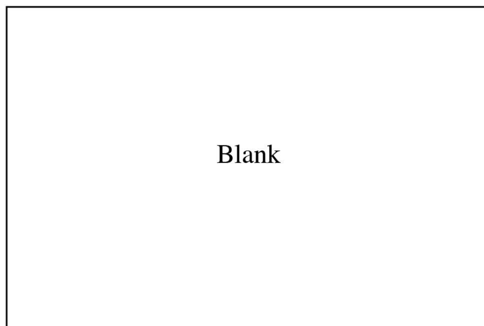
My Story…



Back cover



Front cover



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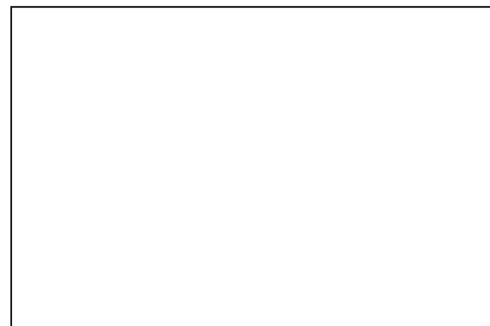
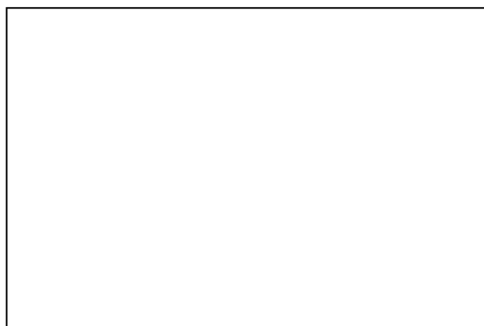
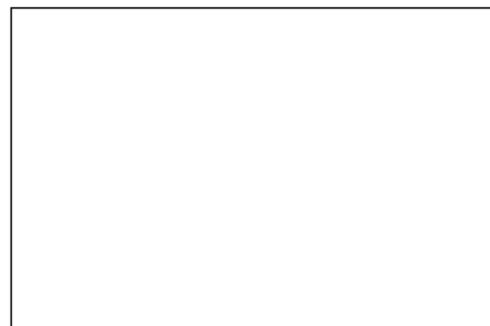


Page 1: Title page / Dedication page



Page 2:



Page 3:

Week 6

Goals for the week:
This week, students will start planning and writing their books. Students will use their storyboard to plan the first half of their books about the past – life in home country, why left, how left, arrival in U.S., first months, years in U.S. In a class discussion, students will share ideas for using images in the books so that they can start thinking about how they want to do that in their own book.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Lead a class brainstorming session thinking about what kinds of images they can use in their books. In addition to thinking about *what* images (pictures of people, places), discuss the format of these images (photos they take, drawings or painting they make that they take a photo of, etc.).
    - Demonstrate on computer for whole class to show ideas for images.
    - Demonstrate how to collect images.
    - Review the discussion from last week about how many pages to use for the part of the story set in the past so that students have a clear understanding of what and how many pages to work on today.
2. Have groups gather. As individuals, students start writing out their storyboards. This is done in groups so that they can ask each other questions and share ideas as needed. Students write the story and draw or write ideas for images to go with the pages.
    Handout: Storyboard

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Week 7

Goals for the week:
This week, students will use their storyboard to plan the second part of their books about the present. They will think critically about their present lives including questions such as: Where are you today? Who are you today? How has your immigration story affected you? They will then think about how to use that information in their book.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Class discussion. Teacher leads class through worksheet on *Effects: Good and Bad* and gives examples.
2. Groups meet. Individuals work on worksheet about present situation. ***Handout: Effects: Good and Bad*** Then groups discuss/share answers and think about how to include this in their books.
3. Groups/individuals continue to sketch story using ***Handout: storyboard***

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout: Effects: Good and Bad

How has my life and immigration affected me?

	The Good		The Bad
☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.	☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.
☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.	☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.
☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.	☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.
☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.	☐	**Because**___________________, I can't/I don't/I am not _________ ___________________________.
☐	**Because**___________________, I can/I have/I am_____________ ___________________________.	☐	**Because**___________________, I can't/I don't/I am not _________ ___________________________.

Can you include any of these ideas in your book? These good and bad things might be good lessons for the children who read your book. Put an **X** in the box next to any sentences you would like to include in your story.

Week 8

Goals for the week:
This week, students will use their storyboard to plan the third part of their books about the future. They will work to identify and share goals and dreams for the future and then work to incorporate that into their book.

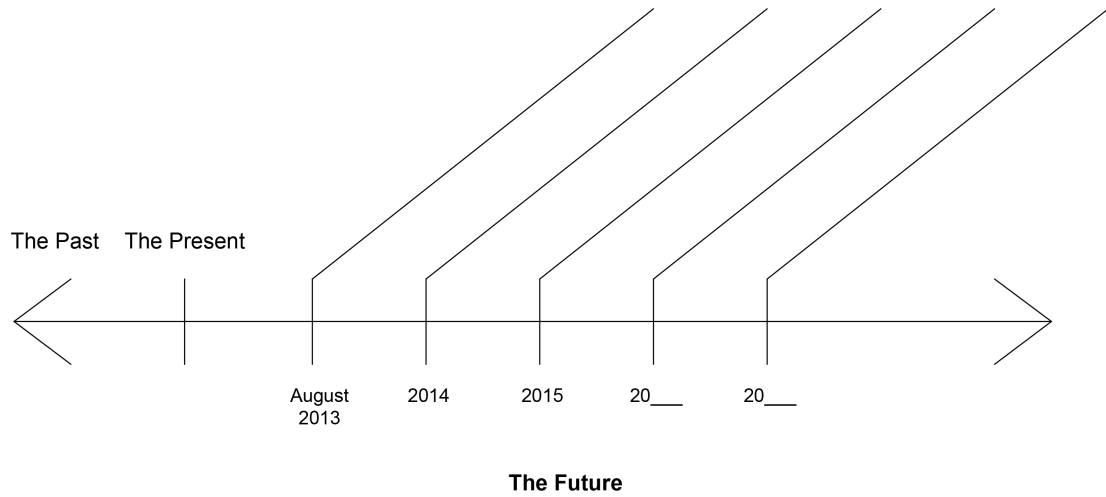
Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Class discussion. Teacher leads class through worksheet on *Future Timeline* and gives examples.
2. Groups meet. Individuals work on worksheet about future dreams, filling in things they want to do at future points in their lives. ***Handout: Future Timeline*** Then groups discuss/share answers and think about how to include this in their books.
3. Groups/individuals continue to sketch story using ***Handout: storyboard***
    a. This may be a good point for the teacher to collect the storyboards to check spelling, grammar, etc. as next week, students will begin assembling their scrapbooks and making pages.

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Handout: Future Timeline

In the future, I want to…



Week 9

Goals for the week:
This week students will begin physically building their books. Supplies will be brought in and students can start writing and illustrating their books.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Supplies can be put on a central table for students to use as needed. Groups/Individuals work on creating pages using their storyboards as guides.

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Supply List
- Scrapbooks
- Scissors – regular and scrapbooking
- Glue sticks
- Cardstock – solid and patterned
- Pens, crayons, paint
- Photopaper for printing out photographs

Week 10

Goals for the week:
This week students will continue building their books and brainstorm ideas for the gallery walk presentations.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Supplies can be put on a central table for students to use as needed. Groups/Individuals work on creating pages using their storyboards as guides.
2. After packing up supplies, groups work on ideas for gallery walk (food, posters, questions they should be prepared to answer). Then, class discussion sharing group ideas, deciding how the event will work (ex. Will you have food? What kinds of posters should the students make? Etc.)

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished.

Week 11

Goals for the week:
This week students will finish their books and prepare for the event next week.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Supplies can be put on a central table for students to use as needed. Groups/Individuals work on finishing their pages using their storyboards as guides.
2. Class discussion about next week's event. Students make small posters for the event.
3. "Mock" event: Half the students stand by their books and other half walks around and asks questions. Then, students switch roles and repeat.

End class by checking in on the day's goals and what was accomplished as well as reviewing plans for next week.

Week 12

Goals for the week:
This week students will share their books with invited guests in a gallery walk style event.

Begin the class by writing the student version of the goals/agenda on the board and going over it with the class.

1. Students set up the event: Put food on tables, set up posters and books, etc.
2. If possible, give students some time to walk around and talk with each other, practicing, getting out nerves.
3. Guests arrive and enjoy the event.
4. Perhaps have free mingle time when students can eat and talk with guests and each other.
5. Meet once again as a class to share about the day's events. This is a wonderful time to acknowledge their accomplishments and celebrate. You may want to give the ***Questionnaire: Final Reflection*** to get feedback on the project and to afford students the opportunity to reflect on the process one more time before they leave.

Questionnaire: Final Reflection

Name ____________________

I am interested in your feelings about the story-writing project. Please answer the questions below. Tell me as much as you can and please be honest. Thank you so much.

What did you think of this story project? If you talked to your friend about it, what would you tell him/her?

____

____

What was your favorite part of it?

____

____

What didn't you like about it?

____

____

Did you learn anything about yourself from doing this project? What?

____

____

Will you share your book with anyone? Who?

____

____

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