PREPAREDNESS OF MUSLIM ESL STUDENTS TO MEET THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN AN ISLAMIC PRIVATE SCHOOL

Radi Abouelhassan

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PREPAREDNESS OF MUSLIM ESL STUDENTS TO MEET THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN AN ISLAMIC PRIVATE SCHOOL

By

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DISSEPTION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies

The University of New Mexico
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July, 2014
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother whose prayers has always been the strongest motive that inspired me to achieve my goals. I can never pay her back for the sacrifices she made for me and for my brothers and sisters. My sisters Sherifa, Kareema, Hanan, Amal and Fathya; and my brothers Barakat, Abouelhassan and Ramadan, I dedicate this work to you for your support. I was motivated to start this academic journey by you, and I was inspired to persevere for you.

Emma, the love of my life, your contribution to this work is not less than mine. It is an outcome of your dedication for our family; and it is a proof that you embrace my dreams as if they are your own. I love you.

My daughter, Sumayya, I dedicate this work to you for the happiness you instilled in my life. Today, July 14, 2014, you are 17 months old. Throughout the past 17 months, you have brightened my and your mother’s life. We will always dedicate our lives to support your dreams. I hope one day you will read this work and be proud of it.

إلى أمى الحبيبة التي دائما ما الهمتني بدعاءها وعلمني كفاحها المثابرة والاستمرار
إلى اخواتي شريفة و كريمة و حنان و أمل و فتحيه
إلى إخوتي رمضان و أبوعالحسن و بركات
اليكم اهدي هذا العمل جزاء ما قدمته لي من دعم مادي ومعنوى خلال سنين حياتي
شكرا لكم..........
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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study of four Muslim parents whose ESL children attend an
Islamic private school in the American Southwest. The study investigates the
preparedness of these Muslim ESL students to meet the Common Core State Standards-
based assessments. The focus of the study is the conceptual processes included in the
academic skills embedded in the standards. With this in mind, the study provides a
detailed analysis of these conceptual processes and an analysis of the conceptual
processes available to these Muslim ESL students in their households and in their Islamic
Studies textbooks. Next, the study highlights challenges that Muslim ESL students might
face with the CCSS-based assessments due to the discrepancies between the conceptual
processes included in the CCSS on the one hand, and the conceptual processes available
for them in their households and their Islamic Studies textbooks on the other. Finally, the
study offers recommendations for assessment consortia who design the CCSS-based
assessments about ways they can take into consideration the level of preparedness among
Muslim ESL students to meet the conceptual processes of the standards. Similarly, the
study recommends ways in which this Islamic private school can consider the needs of
their ESL students while assessing their readiness to meet the standards.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This qualitative study seeks to investigate the preparedness of Muslim English as a Second Language (ESL) elementary and middle school students who attend an Islamic private school in a large city in the southwest of the United States are to meet the conceptual processes required by the academic literacy skills included in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). One future goal is to use findings of this investigation to inform assessment practices which will be aligned with the CCSS.

The premise of the study is that in order for students to meet the standards of the CCSS, they need to develop certain linguistic skills. Each of these linguistic skills, in turn, requires the acquisition of certain conceptual processes. After investigating whether conceptual processes which are included in the CCSS exist in Muslim households and in religious studies classes, the study aims to offer recommendations on how to adapt CCSS-aligned assessment to the needs and capabilities of Muslim ESL students. If findings of the study show that there are conceptual processes included in the CCSS that students do not have access to in their homes or in their Islamic Studies classes, the study will discuss implications of these findings on assessment practices.

This qualitative study attempts to investigate the phenomenon under study in a private school in a large city in the U.S. Southwest. Data collection includes interviews with students’ parents to discover conceptual processes which students access in their households, and home visits to students’ homes to find cultural artifacts and tools used in the households in order to examine which conceptual processes can be learned or enhanced by those artifacts/tools. The researcher also examined textbooks of Islamic
Studies classes taught to ESL students in this school to discover conceptual understanding processes that students access in these classes. In addition, he examined the CCSS adopted by the public school district in the city where the study was conducted, to examine conceptual processes, which they include. Finally, he has relied on literature that explained and critiqued CCSS to identify a set of conceptual understanding processes which the standards require. Participants are four parents of Muslim ESL students from different households: two fathers, Abu Ali from Iraq and Ismail from Pakistan; and two mothers, Hafsa from Afghanistan, and Jameela from Senegal.

**Context**

Educators and policy makers who are propagating the CCSS have put significant effort into producing what they view as high-quality standards to prepare students for college academic skills (e.g. Breakstone, Smith, & Wineburg, 2013; Kendall, 2011; Long, 2011). They also recognize that in order for these goals to be achieved, there need to be concrete assessment tools to measure the achievement of these goals (Breakstone, Smith & Wineburg, 2013). In order to achieve their goals, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) intend to use the results of assessment tools to inform instruction in the classroom (Long, 2011).

States which adopt the Common Core State Standards launch initiatives to prepare schools, teachers and educators to apply the CCSS in their teaching (Breakstone, Smith & Wineburg, 2013). For assessment purposes, states have the option to choose from assessment models to be developed by two different consortia contracted by the US Department of Education in 2010 for this mission: the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balance Assessment
Consortium (SBAC). Two important factors taken into consideration by these two consortia are, first, making the assessment relevant to instruction, and second, providing schools with assessment results and feedback in a timely manner (Long, 2011).

In order to include formative assessment tools to inform instruction, the International Reading Association (IRA) asked a professor from the University of Maryland to offer suggestions to both consortia on using formative assessment in their models (Long, 2011). PARCC “will have a two-part summative assessment (a performance-based assessment and an end-of-year assessment); two optional components (a diagnostic assessment and a midyear assessment); and one required non summative assessment in speaking and listening” (Doorey, December 2012/ January 2013, p. 30). The CCSS for English language arts and math will be assessed by the two summative assessments, while the performance-based assessment will be used to assess standards which are hard to measure, such as those asking students to synthesize data from several sources. Performance-based assessments will be given towards the end of the school year and scoring will be done partially by computers and partially by humans (Doorey, December 2012/ January 2013).

PARCC has stated that its goal is to prepare students for college by providing “well-structured, high-quality assessments given throughout the school year to help educators determine where extra focus and support must be placed and when students are ready for enrichment” (Hain, 2011, p. 24). Hain noted that the goal of the PARCC assessment tools is to produce useful data that can inform instruction. It is also noted that both Consortia “are working on how to address issues related to students who are English language learners” (Long, 2012, p. 24). This contradicts the structure described in the
previous paragraph; PARCC relies heavily on summative assessment and it offers formative assessment only optionally.

SBAC, on the other hand, is designing an online summative exam to be “administered during the last 12 weeks of the school year in grades 3-8 and high school” (Kendall, 2011, p. 54). Other formative assessments are optional and can be given during the school year and should be administered by the school. These formative assessments do not contribute to the final score of the student, but are meant to give teachers insights on the strengths and weaknesses of each student (Kendall, 2011).

Even though they recognize that English language learners (ELLs) have their special teaching and assessment needs, the CCSS hold them to the same standards as native speakers of English (Application of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners Document, n.d.), and “the developers initially left the question of how to implement the standards for this student population up to the states” (TESOL International Association, 2013, p. 4).

According to the ASELL document, CCSS state that ELLs will benefit from CCSS-based instruction that enables them to be as equally equipped for college and career settings as native speakers of English are. Furthermore, the document indicates that ELLs can meet the standards, in addition to developing their English linguistic skills, if teachers build on students’ background literacy skills which they developed in their first language and on their cultural talents and background knowledge. To better serve ELLs, as the document explains, there is a need for “ongoing assessment and feedback to guide learning” (p.2).
English language learners (ELLs) will be held to the same standards but are expected to be taught in a manner appropriate to their needs (Application of Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners, n.d.). Muslim ESL students in Islamic private schools come from diverse households where English is not the language of communication. If the CCSS are taught and assessed in ways not made appropriate to the linguistic and cultural needs of these students, achieving the goals of the CCSS will not be an easy task. This premise is based on findings of previous research that indicate that standardized exams challenged ESL students because the tests did not meet students’ linguistic and cultural needs (e.g. Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2005; Corson, 1997; Ernst-Slavit, Moore & Maloney, 2002).

Definitions

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is an initiative that intends to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them” (Common Core State Standards Mission Statement, n.d.). The initiative developed “a set of English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Standards that would ensure that all United States students were prepared for college and the workplace” (McLaughlin & Overtuf, 2012, p. 154). The goals of the initiative include guaranteeing that all students graduate from high school with the skills required for success in college. The standards include skills and knowledge that students would accumulate starting from kindergarten and continuing through high school; this competence would enable them to succeed in college (TESOL International
Association, 2013). The Introduction to the Common Core State Standards document on the official website for the CCSS (2010) indicates that the standards:

- are aligned with college and work expectations;
- include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- are informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and,
- are evidence and/or research-based.

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative Frequently Asked Questions document (2010), the CCSS will allow states to collaborate on their efforts to develop teaching materials, offer insights about how to change policies in a way that ensures that students are helped to meet the standards, and “develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the CCSS that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing” (p. 3).

It is worth mentioning that adopting the CCSS is optional for the states; the state where the study was conducted is one of the 48 states which adopted them.

Academic Literacy

Schoenbach (2003) defined academic literacy as “the ability to read critically with reference to other texts and world knowledge, to understand a given text in the broader context of its genre and discipline, and to be able to interpret and apply understanding from the reading” (p.3). Furthermore, Torgesen et al., (2007) defined academic literacy as:
the kind of reading proficiency required to construct the meaning of content-area texts and literature encountered in school. It also encompasses the kind of reading proficiencies typically assessed on state-level accountability measures, such as the ability to make inferences from text, to learn new vocabulary from context, to link ideas across texts, and to identify and summarize the most important ideas or content within a text (p. 3).

Arguing that language and culture are inseparable and that every culture has a language that exists within it, Ballard and Clanchy (1988) defined academic literacy as students’ ability to function within the culture of academia. This requires the production of written assignments appropriate to the setting, as demonstrated by the ability to define concepts and terms and provide clear arguments supported by evidence. Many other voices suggest that academic literacy involves processes beyond reading and writing skills alone; to them, reading and writing are tools to comprehend and interact with the material in the different disciplines (Kern, 2000; Lea &Street, 1998; Leibowitz, 2001). Academic literacy as a “language” emerges as students move from simple narrative-like reading and writing practices in early elementary school to the more specific expository texts in content area classes (Keisler & Bowers, 2012).

Nor is academic literacy about decoding or reading fluency only; it is about meaning-making. However, reading fluency and decoding are prerequisites for meaning-making, as successful academic literacy development practices should enable students to be able to make meaning from complex content area texts, and produce their knowledge by answering questions in class and on the exams. Consequently, improving academic literacy should work towards adding more skills to the basic ones that enable reading
fluency, which students are expected to master by the early stages of their schooling (Torgesen et al., 2007). Improving academic literacy for adolescents, as Torgesen et al. (2007) argue, is geared towards assuring that struggling students maintain grade level reading skills, helping students who achieved grade level reading skills to acquire more skills, and helping all students improve their reading proficiency while acquiring new reading comprehension skills. To this end, Torgesen et al. (2007) suggest that academic literacy for adolescents, whom they define as students in fourth through tenth grades, focuses on six skills that I will mention briefly in the literature review section.

**Disciplinary Literacy (DL)**

Disciplinary Literacy (DL) means “learning to read, write, talk, and reason as a junior member of a discipline’s community. It means understanding what counts within the discipline as a good question, evidence, problem, or solution” (Petrosky, McConachie, & Mihalakis, 2010, p. 132). DL means that in a history class, for example, activities involve students in thinking as historians who make historical conclusions based on evidence and credibility of resources (Ravi, 2010). The DL approach was developed based on the belief that content-relevant literacy skills will be internalized by students if they are involved in content-specific reading, writing, communication and cognitive practices (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The definition of disciplinary literacy “involves the use of reading, reasoning, investigating, speaking, and writing required to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline” (McConachie, 2010, p.16).

Based on reports of dilemmas surrounding students’ performance, an attitude towards personalizing students’ learning experiences emerged. The goal was to highlight
the importance of utilizing students’ shared histories in classroom discourse in order to inform instructional conversations. This implied a rejection of the traditional view of academic literacy and ‘out-of-school’ literacy as binary opposites (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). Commenting on the challenges that English language learners (ELLs) face in the classroom, Cummins (1981) noted that “one reason why language minority students have often failed to develop a high level of academic skills is because their initial instruction has emphasized context-reduced communication, since instruction has been through English and unrelated to their prior out-of-school experiences” (p. 15).

Research shows that DL practices empower students by allowing them to draw on their own knowledge and experiences to construct meaning (Ravi, 2010). Two key principles of the (DL) approach that are necessary for this discussion of academic literacy are the notion that students can manage their own learning, and the notion of apprenticeship (McConachie, 2010). Students are encouraged to manage their own learning experience as their teachers motivate them to read by helping them find their own reasons for reading, guide them to do so effectively in the different disciplines, and help them evaluate their own reading strategies (Schoenbach, 2003). The concept of apprenticeship challenges teachers to do more than just engage their students in classroom activities; it encourages teachers to consider how they can help their students acquire and apply disciplinary knowledge the same way experts do.

**Conceptual Processes**

The standards of the CCSS include academic skills. To meet the skills of the standards, students need to understand certain concepts such as details and conclusions. In other words, they need to develop conceptual understanding skills needed for the
academic skills included in the standards. In this way, the standards embed processes through which the conceptual understanding skills are practiced. I refer to these embedded processes as conceptual understanding processes. These conceptual understanding processes are also cognitive processes that students need to practice to meet the standards. Thus, the standards and the skills that they include embed cognitive processes. That is why I use the terms conceptual understanding processes and cognitive processes interchangeably to refer to processes through which the academic literacy skills included in the standards are practiced.

The terms “conceptual processes”, “conceptual understanding processes” and “cognitive processes” are used interchangeably in this study to refer to those cognitive processes required for doing academic tasks, such as reaching conclusions, drawing inferences, and locating details. Conceptual processes can be included in academic skills and other skills related to daily activities that do not necessarily involve reading and writing. They are the cognitive processes through which academic concepts are practiced. Even though the CCSS refers to items on the CCSS as the standards, I refer to them as academic skills. I use the terms conceptual processes, conceptual understanding processes and cognitive processes to refer to the thinking needed to meet those standards. The reason I use the terms conceptual processes, conceptual understanding processes and cognitive process instead of academic skills is to make it clear that the focus of the study is not the skills practiced in reading and writing only; the focus of the study is the thinking needed for the reading and writing tasks required by the standards. The focus on the thinking needed for the tasks make it possible for me to investigate these tasks in situations beyond reading and writing, such as the daily activities of the households.
Genre

Gee (2001) notes that “genres are more or less fixed patterns of language associated with more or less fixed patterns of actions and interactions” (p. 34). Examples, as Gee indicates, are the genre of ‘literary children’s book story’ or the genre of oral stories. A significant aspect of the term genre, which is relevant to this study, is that groups who come from different backgrounds do their daily affairs using different genres; certain groups might rely on written text while others might rely on oral communication. It is worth mentioning that incorporating this definition into this study grew out of the findings of the study; it was not intended for inclusion during the design phases of the study.

Social Languages

The concept of social languages is used by Gee (2001); he defines it as “varieties of a language that are associated with specific socially situated identities (“who is talking/writing/acting”) and specific socially situated activities (“what is being done”)” (p. 32). The language used to describe an incident to a family member can be different than the language used to describe the same incident in an academic context. Similarly, the language used to describe a phenomenon in a professional academic scientific journal is different than the language used to describe the same phenomenon in a daily newspaper or magazine. Different people in different social contexts use different social languages. Social languages differ from each other in the lexical, semantic, morphological, phonological, syntactic discursive devices and pragmatic features they utilize. Different social languages differ not only in the grammatical sources of a language that they draw on, but also in how grammatical features are patterned together.
An example of differences between grammatical patterns of one social language and another is the difference between how an object or a process in described in casual daily conversations and how it might be described in a professional academic written text.

Like the case of the concept of “genre”, the concept of “social language” was not intended to be part of the theoretical framework for this study; it emerged from the data analysis.

**Discourse**

Gee (1989) defines discourse as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’” (p. 1). According to this definition, individuals can be alienated from certain specific discourses if they do not share the same language, ways of thinking, or appropriate acts of conduct of those who are engaged in that discourse. As Gee explains, people’s acceptance or rejection by certain discourses is not due to the individuals themselves; instead, it is due to the historical and socioeconomic circumstances that define who these individuals are.

Gee (1989) distinguishes between two types of discourse which he calls primary and secondary discourse. Primary discourses are those developed in the primary modes of enculturation within one’s family and culture. A primary discourse is the primary way of making sense of one’s life and may differ among individuals who speak the same language. For example, many African American children in urban settings use the same language, or at least a similar variety as mainstream suburban American children, but the African American children make sense of their lives in completely different ways.
Secondary discourses, on the other hand, are used in institutions and associations where individuals are expected to communicate with people with whom they are not familiar. Uses of language in secondary discourses are different from those in primary discourses most of the time.

The definition of discourse and the distinction between primary and secondary discourses is used by Gee to define literacy. Gee (1989) indicates that literacy is “control of secondary uses of language (i.e., uses of language in secondary discourses)”. A very important notion that Gee (1989) indicates is that individuals master or control a discourse mostly through acquisition, not through learning. According to Gee, children coming from mainstream backgrounds acquire the different types of literacy at home, and in turn, school promotes what they have learned at home. Furthermore, the teaching which they receive at home gives them the meta-cognitive literacy of these discourses, which in turn allows them to critique the different discourses. Gee (1989) argues that the dominant secondary discourses will always be a challenge for non-mainstream students because they essentially conflict with these students’ primary discourses and community secondary ones.

Gee (2001) also distinguishes between Discourse (with big ‘D’) and discourse (with a little ‘d’). A social language or a genre is a discourse (with a little d) for individuals when they access it as consumers only, i.e., when they only use it, but do not produce it. A Discourse (with the big D), on the other hand, takes place when individuals are able not only to consume that form of social language or genre, but also to produce it. Even though Discourses involve language, they encompass more faculties, such as “ways of talking, listening, writing, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling
(and using various objects, symbols, images, tools, and technologies) in the service of enacting meaningful socially situated identities and activities” (Gee, 2001, p. 35).

Based on Gee’s (1989) distinction between primary and secondary discourses, and Gee’s (2001) distinction between Discourse (with the big ‘D’) and discourse (with the small ‘d’), if household practices of students (primary discourse) are different than practices dominant in the classroom (secondary discourses), these students will be “consumers” of the school discourse and will not be able to “produce it”. This is because the school discourse, for them, is a discourse (with the small ‘d’) not a Discourse (with the big ‘D’).

The school’s discourse is closer to the home discourse of mainstream white middle class children than it is to home discourses of English Language Learners (ELLs) (Mays, 2008). Consequently, “free and equal education, as claimed by the U.S. government, may, in actuality, be perpetuating an education for ELLs that is far from equal and costs them dearly” (Mays, 2008, p. 416). If the conceptual processes of CCSS are related only to background knowledge of mainstream white middle class students, they will be ‘secondary discourses’ to students who come from different backgrounds.

**Research Problem**

English language learners (ELLs), or ESL students, have suffered a lot during the standards-based assessment era because standardized exams adopted by schools and districts did not take into consideration their linguistic and cultural needs (Harklau 1994; Corson, 1997; Ernst-Slavit, Moore & Maloney, 2002; Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2005; Slama, 2012). They might be subject to similar challenges with the CCSS-based assessment practices if the latter do not take into serious consideration these students’
linguistic, cultural and cognitive needs. This is because the standards of the CCSS require students to use high-level reading and writing skills in academic contexts. As has been noted previously and will be illustrated in Chapter Two, academic literacy involves more than decoding texts; it involves, among many others, skills of making inferences and drawing conclusions based on evidence.

Previous research has shown that ESL/ELL students have been wrongly referred to special education classes because their failure on assessments was attributed to cognitive limitations rather than linguistic ones (Corson, 1997). After examining whether or not the conceptual understanding processes embedded in the CCSS are present in the households and the Islamic Studies classes of Muslim ESL students, this study examined linguistic and cultural factors that might make CCSS-based assessments challenging to these students. To the researcher’s best knowledge, this study will be the first study to examine 1) the relevance of the cognitive processes embedded in the CCSS to those cognitive processes practiced in the daily lives of Muslim ESL students’ households and Islamic Studies classes; and 2) the linguistic and cultural factors that might make assessments that measure CCSS conceptual processes challenging to Muslim ESL students. Such investigation is extremely significant amidst the current educational endeavor to plan structured formative assessment tools based on the CCSS for content area classes.

Research Questions

During this period when state and national efforts are working hard to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into the curriculum, this study intends to offer insights on how to identify or investigate CCSS-embedded conceptual understanding processes with Muslim ESL students or Muslim English Language Learners (ELLs)
attending an Islamic private school in a large city in the American Southwest. Essential to this study is a two-pronged investigation: a) identification of academic literacy skills which are embedded in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and what they require in terms of conceptual processes; and b) whether these conceptual processes are present in the homes and religious studies experiences of the students.

This qualitative study aims to investigate the following main questions:

- How prepared, if at all, are Muslim ESL students to display the conceptual processes embedded in the academic literacy skills which are included in the Common Core State Standards?

- How can Muslim ESL students’ degree of preparation and cultural forms of acquisition of the CCSS conceptual processes inform assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS?

To answer these two main questions, the study seeks to investigate the following sub-questions:

- What conceptual understanding processes do Muslim ESL students need in order to meet the requirements of Common Core State Standards for English language Arts (ELA)?

- What, if any, conceptual processes that can inform Common Core Standard-based assessment practices are available to Muslim ESL students at home and/or in textbooks of their Islamic Studies classes?

- Are there conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS that Muslim ESL/LEP students do not have access to in their homes or in religious classes?
- Are there any conceptual processes familiar to Muslim ESL students in their homes or religious textbooks that are overlooked by the CCSS?

- Based on findings of this study, can assessment practices which will be based on CCSS be relevant to Muslim ESL students’ home discourses and the academic expectations of their Islamic Studies classes? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Significance of the Study**

The relevance of conceptual understanding processes embedded in the CCSS to the daily experiences of Muslim ESL students has not been investigated to inform assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS. More importantly, the linguistic modalities and genres in which these conceptual understanding processes are practiced in the households of Muslim ESL students might be different or similar to the ways in which the same processes are traditionally measured on standardized exams. This study attempts to discuss the implications of the similarities or the differences between what genres of conceptual understanding processes are practiced in home discourses of Muslim ESL students and those of standardized assessments.

In so doing, this study intends to bridge a gap in literature that has not investigated academic conceptual processes which Muslim ESL students have access to in their households and in their Islamic Studies classes, and their relevance to conceptual understanding processes included in the CCSS. The linguistic skills, which are included in the CCSS, are the carriers of the conceptual processes which will be investigated. Consequently, this study intends to move beyond just finding the linguistic skills included in the CCSS, in order to analyze the conceptual processes, which are embedded
in them. In this way, this study will investigate whether households of Muslim ESL students prepare their children to meet the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS.

The purpose of the study is two-fold: first, to suggest ways in which CCSS can be assessed and consequently taught in a manner relevant to that of students’ households. In so doing, the study attempts to address an unfolding concern for both educators and policy makers nationwide and in the state where the study will be conducted in particular. By studying the experience of Muslim ESL students with the standards, the study aims to offer an example of how assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS can tap into the cultural and linguistic needs of the general body of ESL students.

Second, the study aims to inform educators in the setting of the study about the degree to which conceptual processes included in the standards are relevant to conceptual processes which are part of the daily lives of their students, and what linguistic challenges their students might face when assessed on these standards. The study intends also to inform educators in the school about how to cater their teaching and assessment practices to the linguistic and cultural needs of their students.

Since the researcher is a member of the Education Committee of the school where the study was conducted, the study investigated how the CCSS can be adapted for the school setting in order to meet the special needs of its ESL students. Even though the findings of the study will be in a specific school setting, findings can offer insights about how educators attempt to examine the experiences of other bodies of ESL students in other schools in order to better implement the CCSS. The school where the study will be conducted is very diverse. Consequently, students coming from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds demonstrate different levels of preparedness to meet the standards.
This diversity of backgrounds is very helpful to claim validity of results across several ethnic backgrounds.

**The Researcher**

The researcher is an Arab Muslim doctoral candidate who learned English as a second language. His interest in the topic emerged as he interacted with individuals whom this study seeks to help. A few years after he came to the US in 2006, he noticed the high dropout rates among Arab immigrant middle and high school students. The phenomenon was more evident among Arab refugee students because they came in large numbers during the last ten years since the US invasion of Iraq. The researcher conducted a single case study in spring 2011 to examine the experience of success or failure for an Arab high school student. The researcher examined how the participant perceived his performance on written assignments in order to investigate how the participant experienced the impact of his academic language and academic literacy skills on his performance.

The findings of the study suggest that the participant’s access to academic English helped him do well on assignments that did not involve sophisticated concepts or terms, but he was challenged when he dealt with material that included concepts or terms that he was not familiar with. Even though the participant understood the language and he could read the terms, he could not comprehend concepts and terms easily. An overarching theme that seemed to emerge from the data was the impact of background knowledge on his attitude towards the different assignments, how he approached the assignment, and on his score. The researcher concluded that tapping into his participant’s background knowledge might help him with written assignments and other assessment practices. This
conclusion encouraged the researcher to conduct the present with the hope of offering initial recommendations to assessments practices which will be based on the CCSS.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The following pages present a synthesized analysis of bodies of literature consulted in order to shape the frame of the study and its methodology. I will first present the concept of academic language and how it was perceived as a challenge for ESL/ELL students. Then I will examine the concept of academic literacy, what it means, and what linguistic and cognitive skills it requires. Since the concept of disciplinary literacy (DL) is argued to be embedded in the CCSS, I will explain what the concept means and how it is incorporated in the classroom. Finally, I will examine the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA). In doing so, I will explain what the initiative is, the conceptual processes embedded in the standards, how the CCSS-based assessments intend to assess these conceptual processes, and how the initiative claims to incorporate English Language Learners (ELLs). This chapter will conclude with the conceptual framework based on the reviewed literature.

Academic language

The issue of academic English as a challenge for ELLs emerged when Cummins (1981) presented his analysis of the difference that exists between ELL ability to speak English to their peers or their families and their ability to meet school expectations. Cummins suggested that there are two different types of linguistic competency: the one called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) is required for students to hold conversations on everyday topics; the other, called Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), is needed for addressing academic topics in writing, reading, speaking and listening. Cummins reached his conclusion based on his analysis of
psychological assessments and referral forms in a school district in Canada. He found that teachers referred students to special education classes because the teachers falsely attributed students’ diminished academic performance to cognitive factors, when this problem was really a linguistic one. In other words, teachers failed to realize that these students performed poorly due to their inability to deal with the linguistic content of the tests, not their cognitive components.

The previously-mentioned students underperformed in academic settings because they had developed a more advanced level of BICS than of CALP, the language skills required for academic proficiency. Because “it is frequently assumed that language minority students have become ‘English proficient’ when they have acquired relatively fluent and peer-appropriate face-to-face communicative skills” (Cummins, 1981, p.6), or BICS, these students were referred to special education to treat their poor academic achievement cognitively instead of helping them develop academic language skills. To Cummins, students can achieve higher communicative interaction out of school because these interactions are “context-embedded” while in school settings, interactions are “context-reduced”. He noted, “context-embedded communication derives from interpersonal involvement in a shared reality that reduces the need for explicit linguistic elaboration of the message” (p.11), while in context-reduced communication, students have to rely fully on linguistic cues.

Bielenberg and Fillmore (2005) investigate the impact of academic English on students’ performance on high-stakes exams. English language learners in public schools find difficulty passing high-stakes exams because these exams are linguistically demanding. Even though ELL learners can communicate with their peers in English, they
still lack the academic English used in textbooks and exams. ELLs can deal with the academic content in the earlier grades when the amount and complexity of academic language is not very great, but academic language demands become overwhelming in later grades. Based on a review of 9th grade ELLs’ scores between 2004 and 2008, Slama (2012) found that “the average ELL started high school while just beginning to develop academic English proficiency, with Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) scores that correspond to the early intermediate level of proficiency” (p.276). ELLs need to be prepared to comprehend and deal with academic English in order for them to be able to pass the standardized academic exams. Slama (2012) provides many recommendations that have been used to improve the performance of ELLs on the exams. Among these recommendations is the need to educate both teachers and learners about the importance of acquiring academic language. Furthermore, students need to be scaffolded by teachers to participate in activities that would improve their mastery of academic language.

Corson (1997) argues that students’ success at school is tied to mastering Graeco-Latin academic words which are not accessible outside of school by students coming from nonmainstream backgrounds. English L1 learners often acquire longer words from Graeco-Latin origin in their teenage years and continue developing them throughout their lives. English L2 learners have more difficulty accessing these words, based on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This is because communicative discourses outside of school impact students’ access to academic vocabulary. For example, according to Corson (1997), Latino students in the United States have less access to vocabulary compared to their English-reading peers.
However, teachers and academics ignore this fact and still evaluate the content of students’ utterances based on the sophistication of the vocabulary that students use when they are involved in communication, regardless of their linguistic background. More importantly, “there is much evidence that vocabulary diversity is the most consistently used marker of proficiency in education” (Corson, 1997, p. 673).

To improve the teaching of academic vocabulary to English L2 students, Corson (1997) encourages presenting complex words in motivational contexts. This is because most words that students encounter in written texts are passively perceived by the students and are easily forgotten, except for those words that the students encounter more often. Even though words that students encounter more often are processed through the brain, they need to be presented in their context in order for students to comprehend their meanings fully.

Ernst-Slavit, Moore and Maloney (2002) bring forward many suggestions that would enable students with limited English proficiency to succeed in academic settings. The authors suggest that students’ needs should be the focus of the teaching-learning process. They argue for the importance of incorporating students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the school settings. Most ESL students share some similar needs but some have specific needs due to their home background. For instance, students coming from Arabic or Persian backgrounds have difficulty reading and writing English because their home languages use a different script than that used by English speakers.

Drawing on work of other scholars in the field of second language acquisition, the authors analyzed a number of strategies that should be incorporated in teaching practices in order to help ESL and limited English proficiency (LEP) students succeed
academically. Harklau (1994) conducted a three and a half year ethnography on Asian-background students who were placed in a mainstream school in California, and she found that the environment in mainstream classes is not very helpful in enabling non-mainstream students to develop their academic competency. One reason was that the main activity in class was teacher-led discussion. What is problematic about this activity is that the teacher dominated most of the talk and he targeted mainly mainstream students. Even though his talk provided non-mainstream students with the opportunity to experience authentic English content, it did not help them because most of the time they could not comprehend it.

Rasinski (2008) noted that reading fluency, a practice that is totally ignored by teachers of ELLs, is necessary for reading comprehension as it involves processes such as ‘word recognition’, ‘decoding’ and ‘expression’. Unfortunately, reading fluency skills are emphasized only at elementary reading stages; they are not taught in adolescent years because children are expected to have mastered them by that time. Rasinski (2008) claims that reading fluency instruction needs to be emphasized in adolescent years as well, and that the assumption that students by that time already had the necessary skills is not supported by academic research.

**Academic literacy and ELLs.**

Many previous policies related to English L2 students were generated based on the assumption that fluency in English is the sole requirement for students’ success in American schools. This assumption is false because students need to maintain an adequate level of competency in content areas as well (Callahan, 2005).
Due to factors such as lack of academic competence, “English learners typically demonstrate poor academic achievement; for example, LEP students scored an average of 1.2 standard deviations below non-LEP populations in both the 1998 and 2002 eighth-grade National Assessment of Academic Progress reading tests” (Callahan, 2005, p. 306). Similar results were indicated by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2011 (Keisler & Bowers, 2012). These results are alarming when we take into consideration that a significant component of demographic change in educational settings in the United States is the increase in the number of students who speak a language other than English at home. Data from the 2000 census show that “the total number of foreign born children enrolled in elementary (not kindergarten) and secondary schools in the United States was 2.6 million” (Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002, p. 117). In the academic year 2002-2003, more than 10% of US students were considered limited-English-proficient. In the 1990s, the increase in overall enrollment in K-12 grades was estimated at 13% while the increase in the number of immigrant students was approximately 104%. In California, more than 40% of the students’ households speak a language other than English at home. This is in addition to 12 million students who are children of parents born outside the US (Callahan, 2005). Between 1998 and 2009, the number of ELL students in U.S. public schools witnessed a 51% increase. In 2013, ELLs in U.S. public schools represented 10% of the entire student population. This percentage is expected to increase to 25% by the year 2015 (TESOL International Association, 2013).

The most dangerous impact of this issue is when students are wrongly labeled as cognitively-disabled based on inappropriate or biased assessment tools. Squire (2008) indicates that “[s]tudies find that current assessments that do not differentiate between
disabilities and linguistic differences can lead to misdiagnosis of ELLs” (p. 3). Assessment practices that take place in high schools, for example, include, but are not limited to, text summaries, interpreting and analyzing writers’ perspectives, text analyses, assessments of authors’ use of rhetorical language, and composing and writing detailed texts supported with evidence (Olson, 2007). This list of assessment practices shows how sophisticated these tests are and how much mastery over the language they require. Due to lack of understanding about the reasons why students might not perform well on these practices, teachers frustrated by their ELL students prefer not to stress these topics in class (Olson, 2007).

The above-mentioned issues complicate the challenges that educators face while dealing with the development of academic literacy for adolescent ELL students, especially when use of academic literacy is beneficial to them in contexts beyond the school discourse, such as workplaces where they have to read complex texts and write sophisticated documents (Torgesen et al., 2007). Furthermore, academic oral proficiency is a prerequisite for academic literacy, whether in class discussions of written assignments or reading comprehension (Torgesen et al., 2007). Academic language is described by Keisler and Bowers (2012) as a “third language” that ELLs need to master. Keisler and Bowers (2012) noted that “understanding and using academic language for academic purposes requires that students are able to explain, analyze, infer, compare, contrast and draw conclusions about the information they encounter” (p.22). According to Cummins (1980), it takes ESL students two to three years to acquire conversational English skills, but they need five to seven years to acquire academic English skills. Similarly, Slama (2012) concurs “it is estimated to take 3-5 years for second language
learners to become proficient in conversational English but at least 4-7 years for students to develop academic literacy” (p. 266).

Torgesen et al. (2007) suggested that academic literacy for adolescents, whom they define as students in fourth through tenth grades, focuses on six skills. The first skill is improving reading fluency, which is the rate of students’ ability to recognize words at first sight. They argue that the focus on this skill should not stop after third grade because students’ ability to recognize most words at first sight increases the speed of text reading and is essential to maintaining grade level reading skills. Second, academic literacy focuses on continuous building of students’ vocabulary through enhancing students’ ability to utilize morphemic and contextual cues. Third, academic literacy focuses on building and enhancing students’ knowledge of vocabulary and concepts related to the text they are reading. Evidence suggests that students’ background knowledge about the text being read increases their ability to deal with it in academic contexts. The fourth focus of academic literacy for adolescents is building higher thinking and reasoning skills, which involves students developing the ability to use their intellects to reach conclusions by relating reading material to their previous knowledge, as well as to other texts. The fifth focus is building students’ cognitive strategies to enable them to comprehend texts. The last focus of academic literacy, as indicated by Torgesen et al. (2007), is motivating students to be fully engaged in reading and to read more.

Building academic literacy should be achieved within content area classes (Schoenbach, 2003); for example, reading can be supported in a history class through guiding students to look for points of view and biases, and connect events to previous events or historical concepts. Schoenbach designed a course to build students’ academic
literacy that aimed at “three goals: to increase students’ engagement, fluency, and competency in reading” (p. 5). Content area classes offer opportunities for students to communicate with others in learning practices that are rich with both disciplinary content and critical cognitive skills. Students’ ability to comprehend and interact with a certain content increases if students have adequate knowledge of concepts and factual knowledge about this content across the levels (Torgeson et al., 2007).

Based on their review of the literature on academic achievement of ELL students and research conducted on instructing ELLs, Torgeson et al. (2007) conclude that at least three “principles” can be generated and presented to enable both teachers and policy-makers to help ELL students improve their academic literacy. First, they conclude that ELL students may benefit from “research-based practices that have been identified to ensure the development of successful reading skills in monolingual students” (p. 91). The second principle is that ELLs can transfer linguistic and metacognitive comprehension skills developed in their first language to their English and content area classes. The transfer of skills is not restricted to decoding and reading fluency skills, but can also include the ability to make inferences, comparisons and connections to draw conclusions. More importantly, students can use academic concepts developed through their first language in English language and content area classes. The third principle is that in order for teachers and curriculum designers to help ELL students, they have to differentiate instruction based on students’ linguistic knowledge and previous skills.

Developing academic and linguistic skills for ELLs should be incorporated into content area classes through unlocking academic terms and concepts and providing opportunities for authentic academic communication with their teachers and their peers
(Torgesen et al., 2007; Keisler & Bowers, 2012). The process of unlocking terms and concepts includes adding both to the number of words that students know and the depth of their knowledge of these terms. However, teachers should have explicit teaching moments during which they step back and provide explicit instruction for ELL students in all linguistic skills on word and sentence levels (Keisler & Bowers, 2012, Torgesen et al., 2007). Emphasizing the importance of providing instruction to overcome reading fluency challenges, Torgesen et al. (2007) noted that “students who struggle with decoding skills require targeted, systematic phonics intervention to benefit the most from higher-level reading comprehension instruction” (p. 98). Keisler and Bowers (2012) argued that teachers should keep an eye on their students to find out what concepts and terms are essential for the material they have not mastered yet in order to provide explicit instruction that would help students internalize both the meanings of these words and how to utilize them. They differentiated between two different domains of academic vocabulary that schools can help ELLs develop to function in academic settings: content-specific vocabularies that are related to a specific field, and general academic vocabulary that can be used across the disciplines.

**Disciplinary literacy**

Zygouris-Coe (2012) noted that Disciplinary Literacy (DL) is very evident in the CCSS, especially in the upper grades. *Application of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners Document* (n.d.) states that it is essential for students to “communicate mathematically”. Mathematical discourse should be the center of instruction. The focus should not be merely on mathematical vocabulary, but also on making connections and providing mathematical explanations.
Interest in adolescent literacy has increased over the past 25 years (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). The assumption that improving reading and writing skills for younger children would improve their reading skill when they are in adolescence did not prove to be correct. This is because early reading skills do not transfer naturally to the more sophisticated skills required in the different disciplines (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010).

As McConachie and Petrosky (2010) noted, two approaches were developed to help students who achieved below grade level academic skills. The first focused on building linguistic skills and included mainly extra tutoring sessions taught by Language Arts teachers who did not focus on utilizing content to empower students’ academic thinking skills. A more successful approach adopted a form of learning studios where students read material that they could handle based on their level, and then wrote compositions. However, neither of these two approaches worked to help students build long-term learning skills. They failed to serve students’ needs as they advanced to middle and high schools where “content demands and the sources of information—whether observations of natural phenomena or significant events, solutions to mathematical problems, or reading and writing more difficult texts—become more complex” (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010, p. 9), because each subject area has its own concepts and processes that complicate the discipline. Mismanagement of challenging school discourse affected both immigrant students and students whose first language was English, as both were offered remedial reading classes instead of being “strategically” challenged and supported (Schoenbach, 2003).

Content and discipline-specific reading, writing and communication skills are inseparable. This means that in order for students to comprehend academic content in a
certain discipline, they need to develop thinking and literacy skills prevalent in that discipline (Achugar & Carpenter, 2012). Teachers need to understand how meaning-making happens in their discipline and guide students using academic language all the time (Janzen, 2008). Mathematics teachers, for instance, can assist students to solve problems using their intellect to make connections between different cognitive mathematical representations (e.g. Bill & Jamar, 2010). This aligns with recommendations of the National Research Council, which in 1996 called for utilizing both scientific knowledge and critical thinking skills in science teaching (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). The DL framework is influenced by the “literacy practice that takes on the challenge of preparing secondary students to achieve high levels of literacy in major academic disciplines” (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010, p.11).

In a history classroom, teachers would apprentice their students to do the real work of historians, who investigate texts to examine specific questions that they have in mind, look for supporting or refuting resources, and use their previous knowledge to draw conclusions and make comparisons (Ravi, 2010, Achugar & Carpenter, 2012). Ravi (2010) noted that “historians do not just read and analyze the text on the page; they also read and analyze the subtext—the context in which the source was produced” (p. 35). In the Disciplinary Literacy approach, history teachers are expected to help students to find out about the context and the sub-contexts of the texts in order to gain both knowledge about events and skills specific to the discipline of literacy. In an intervention study that aimed to examine the effect of DL practices on ELL students in a history class, Achugar and Carpenter (2012) concluded that “disciplinary literacy and academic language development are intrinsically related. While learning new knowledge, we learn new ways
of using language to construct that knowledge” (p. 273). Their study focused on examining the impact on students’ academic language of scaffolding students to learn essential historical concepts and skills. They used successful technique of looking closely at historical texts to show students how experienced readers of history approach historical texts. Other useful techniques included group work and vocabulary instruction.

De La Paz, Ferretti, Wissinger, Yee and MacArthur (2012) conducted a study on 8th grade students to examine how they developed comprehension skills when they were involved in a history DL activity. Students were given reading excerpts and were asked to develop arguments concerning certain topics in American history. The study measured how students used resources for supporting their arguments, as well as the breadth and the depth of resources they used. The concept of building an argument and examining evidence that would support or refute it is essential to the work of history. Results suggested that students who showed better mastery over using evidence to support their argument produced better-written responses.

Disciplinary literacy practices empower students, as they allow them to draw on their own knowledge and experiences to construct meaning. In a history class, Ravi (2010) illustrated the practices of a history teacher to draw on students’ background knowledge, as well as their family history, to explain the history of immigrant groups in America. She concluded that in a disciplinary literacy classroom “teachers and students become empowered to interact with the historical record—expecting and seeking out multiple interpretations—while having a viewpoint and a stake in how history is constructed, how the story is told, and who is included” (p. 60).
Moulthrop (2003) apprenticed his students to become “good readers” through showing them metacognitive techniques of asking questions, making connections, building viewpoints and testing their points of view. Apprenticeship helped students improve their reading skills through building their belief in themselves by discovering their points of strength and building on them (Messina & Baker, 2003). In reading apprenticeship workshops, Smith (2003) trained students to use their own background knowledge to help others understand a reading text and acquire new problem-solving skills. Based on a review of empirical research on strategy instruction for adolescents, Torgesen et al. (2007) concluded that explicit teaching and training of comprehension strategies increased students’ abilities to understand the material and to demonstrate their knowledge. Also, Spörer, Brunstein and Kieschke (2009) found that students who were taught summarizing, “questioning”, “clarifying” and “predicting” skills performed better in reading comprehension than the control group of students.

In order for students to develop disciplinary literacy skills, they must be immersed in activities that require them to collaborate with each other in conversations in order to solve problems, using both disciplinary knowledge and reasoning skills. During this immersion process, students are asked both to read and ponder upon what they read in order to comprehend the text (McConachie, 2010). Through its conversational practices, the disciplinary literacy approach recognizes students’ cultures and background knowledge as assets for their learning, because students build upon this knowledge while discussing problems, trying to reach solutions (McConachie, 2010). In a math classroom, teachers are expected to teach their students how to spot certain patterns, how to think critically to make generalizations, and how to support or refute an argument in a given
situation. A powerful way to do this is to merge content with the previously-mentioned cognitive skills. Bill and Jamar (2010) provided a good example, where a teacher apprenticed students to use cognitive skills to solve a mathematical problem. Trying to decide which of two telephone plans would end up being more expensive and at what number of minutes the two plans would cost the same, students utilized several cognitive skills. The teacher apprenticed her students through guiding their thinking about how to look for other possibilities and how to draw conclusions.

In a disciplinary literacy science classroom, students are in charge of producing rather than receiving knowledge from their teachers (Spiegel, Bintz, Taylor, Landes & Jordan, 2010). Students are expected to be involved in a scientific inquiry process where they observe a certain phenomenon, ask questions, and use cognitive skills to find evidence and draw conclusions. These procedures are essential to science as a discipline; they are strongly related to the belief that the world is knowable if observed according to systematic inquiry. Involving students in scientific cognitive practices is teaching them to think like scientists while learning scientific material. Spiegel, Bintz, Taylor, Landes and Jordan (2010) illustrated how a third grade teacher apprenticed her students to think like scientists; she guided them with several questions about the phenomenon under investigation and she gave them the chance to work in groups -- under her supervision -- to conduct experimental scientific inquiry.

Common features that Torgesen et al. (2007) found across successful techniques included explaining the cognitive comprehension processes, demonstrating to students why and how to use them, and finally giving students time to practice them. Similarly, explicit teaching of word-reading skills can improve reading comprehension of
elementary and middle school students. Evidence suggests that students improve their word-reading skills more from instruction by their teachers more than from interaction with their peers (Torgesen et al., 2007). Other research studies suggest that word-reading intervention strategies have positive impacts on the performance of struggling readers, as well. Even though reading strategies worked for both struggling readers and students who achieved grade-level reading skills, teachers need to understand that struggling readers still need more techniques that are different in focus and degree because their needs are different in both “degree and nature” (Torgesen et al., 2007, p. 89).

After reviewing qualitative and quantitative studies on sustained content discussions, Torgesen et al. (2007) concluded that extending the length of discussions helps adolescent students better understand the text, and more importantly, it helps them build analytical and critical skills.

Students’ motivation and engagement can be improved by adopting several techniques: giving students the chance to choose reading topics, providing opportunities for students to discuss the reading in social settings, selecting texts that are appealing to the students, and indicating to the students both appealing and important goals of the texts under study. Key factors that teachers should be aware of in order to help their students’ progress in academic literacy are maintaining high expectations and challenging students in a systematic manner (Torgesen et al., 2007).

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

The philosophy of the CCSS emerges from the goal of creating a “social contract” (Kendall, 2011) that assures that students are prepared for the next class/grade regardless of which school they go to in any state. The CCSS initiative developed standards that
include a set of conceptual processes to be internalized by students in order to enable
them to succeed in college and professional domains of the society. Standards for each
grade level explain which cognitive and content-specific skills have to be mastered by
students by the end of that year (Kendall, 2011). For example, “in history/social studies,
students are expected to analyze primary and secondary sources, cite textual evidence to
support arguments, consider the influence of an author’s perspective, corroborate
different sources” (Breakstone, Smith & Wineburg, 2013, p. 53). In order for students to
be able to meet this standard, they need to master the following conceptual processes in
English. First, they need to read texts and determine which sources are primary and
which are secondary, distinguishing between the two types of sources. Second, they need
to develop an argument. In order to develop an argument, they need to examine details
and relate them to big ideas. More importantly, they need to investigate texts looking for
details that might support or refute their arguments. Furthermore, they need to make a
connection between an author and his/her perspective using different sources. Making
inferences entails the ability to make connections between different texts in terms of the
ideas they carry.

For ELA reading standards, Zygouris-Coe (2012) noted that:

Close reading is a focus of the CCSS across grades and content areas. Students are
expected to read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and implicitly
and cite specific evidence from text(s) when writing or speaking to support
conclusions drawn from one or multiple sources (p. 40).

For students to meet this standard, they need to be able to read details closely and
relate the details to plausible conclusions. Then they need to present those conclusions
either verbally or in writing. In their presentations, students need to locate and cite evidence relevant to their conclusions. It is worth mentioning that these standards are included in both literature and informational texts. Reading expository texts for all grades is an essential component of the CCSS. Of student time spent in reading, the percentage of reading informational compared to fiction texts increases from 50% in 4th grade to 70% by 12th grade (Zygouris-Coe, 2012). In elementary years, informational texts are used in science and social studies for the sake of building literacy skills. In the higher grades, they are also used in social studies and history, science, and other technical subjects (Zygouris-Coe, 2012).

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative Standards-Setting Considerations document (n.d.), skills demonstrated by these standards will be the basis for the assessment practices to be developed by the CCSS. Phillips and Wong (2010) noted that assessment for Common Core State Standards functions as more than a gatekeeper for promotion and retention; it is meant to inform instruction. Therefore, assessments need to be aligned with the standards and instruction needs to be informed by assessment results.

CCSS provided states with an assessment model that includes components that states need to take into account as they adopt assessment practices. The model includes:

1. Qualitative dimensions of text complexity (e.g., levels of meaning or purpose, structure, clarity, language conventionality, and knowledge demands); 2. quantitative dimensions of text complexity (e.g., word and sentence length, and text cohesion); and 3. reader (e.g., reader motivation, knowledge, and experiences) (Zygouris-Coe, 2012, p. 41)
The third component in evaluating the complexity of a reading passage, i.e. the reader, allows the teacher to determine the complexity of a reading text based on the teacher’s understanding of students’ levels of motivation, interest, and background knowledge that affect students’ ability to comprehend the text (Kendall, 2011).

Unlike the case with previous standard-based teaching and assessment practices, CCSS makes text complexity the criterion for choosing reading text content in the different grades. Similarly, the same standard is used in all grade levels, with increasing difficulties at every higher grade (Kendall, 2011). Even though standards are worded differently in the different content areas, they are interconnected across all subjects using similar language and academic literacy skills (Kendall, 2011).

**CCSS, assessment, and ESLs/ELLs.**

Even though it recognizes that English language learners (ELLs) have special teaching and assessment needs, the CCSS hold them to the same standards as native speakers of English (Application of Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners, n.d.). The document states that the CCSS believe that ELLs will benefit from CCSS-based instruction that enables them to be as equipped for college and career settings as native speakers of English. Furthermore, the document indicates that ELLs can meet the required standards, in addition to developing their English linguistic skills, if teachers build on students’ background literacy skills, which students have developed in their first language, and tap into students’ cultural talents as well as their background knowledge. To better serve ELLs, the document explains that there is a need for “ongoing assessment and feedback to guide learning” (p. 2).
Even though there has been much literature offering insights into how to incorporate the CCSS in teaching (e.g. Cummins, Dec 2012/January 2013; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012), there have been few endeavors by entities other than consortia contracted to design assessment for CCSS to offer models for how to assess students. Breakstone, Smith, and Wineburg (2013) offer an assessment model called History Assessment of Thinking (HAT) that incorporates the Common Core Standards into the assessment of history and social studies. Instead of asking students to write short or long essays, the model uses multiple-choice questions to assess students’ ability to draw conclusions from primary sources.

In order for ELL/ESL students to be able to pass the CCSS-based assessment, they need to overcome the following anticipated challenges: the academic language used in the exams/assignments, conceptual processes they need to understand so as to respond to the prompts, discipline-specific vocabulary and concepts in context, and reliance on their background knowledge to understand the context of the problem.

**Muslim Students and Islamic Schools**

Islamic schools are based on a concept of education as understood by Muslim scholars and intellectuals. Education in Islam is the means to build human beings balanced in their spiritual and mental knowledge. Islamic education intends to help individuals internalize modern knowledge within an Islamic spiritual paradigm (Jones, 2008).

Although the earliest records of Islamic schools in the United States date to the 1930s among African Americans affiliated with the Nation of Islam (Memon, 2009), the earliest records of orthodox Islamic schools go back to the 1970s; but their significant growth
was as late as the 1980s and 1990s (Merry, 2007). To many Muslims, establishing Islamic schools only means finding the physical space for the school and recruiting staff, while curricula and lesson plans can be borrowed from neighboring public and private schools. As cited in Jones (2008), the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) noted in its 2004 report titled “The Mosque in America: A National Portrait” that there were 1209 mosques in America. Twenty-one per cent of these mosques had Islamic schools affiliated with them. The number of Islamic schools was estimated in 2006 to be 253 schools. This is still a relatively small number compared to that of other religious private schools (Jones, 2008).

Most Muslim students in the US and Canada attend public schools, yet the number of Islamic schools is increasing. In most public schools in the US, Muslim students are a minority except in cities where large numbers of Muslims live, such as Dearborn, Michigan (Merry, 2007). Schools where Muslim students are the majority are sensitive to the needs of Muslim students, allowing for dietary restrictions and prayer times (Merry, 2007), but references to Islamic history still do not appear in the curriculum of most public schools (Jones, 2008). In public schools where Muslim students are not the majority, these students are not able to practice their religion freely, and they are often harassed if they adhere to religious practices. Furthermore, Muslim children are questioned as to their loyalty to the US because of the actions of a few terrorists (Merry, 2007). Islamic private schools offer an alternative to public schools as they offer a healthier social and religious environment for Muslim children (Al-Hashimi, 2007; Al Zeera, 2001; Merry, 2007).
In the post-September 11 context, Muslim and Arab students have been subjected to both physical and verbal harassment in many settings of society, and schools are not an exception. The number of Islamic schools increased significantly after 9/11 in response to harassment that Muslim children faced in public schools (Jones, 2008). Studies show that there has been an increase in the level of aggression against Muslim and Arab students at school since then (Morgan, 2010). Aggression against Muslim students is practiced not only by students but also by teachers, who ridicule students’ Arabic names and harass them verbally and physically. Harassment against Muslim and Arab students is a direct result of negative stereotypes against Muslims and Arabs in the US media and TV (Morgan, 2010). Also, stereotypes of Muslim students in schools have been attributed to many textbooks that depict Arabs as Bedouins living in the desert and lacking any form of civilization. Research shows that photos of Arabs in textbooks depict them as nomads wandering in the deserts even though the percentage of Bedouins among Arabs is no more than two per cent (Morgan, 2010).

Research further shows that “bias against Arabs in school curricula begins early when children are in elementary school” (Morgan, 2010, 33). In public school curricula, Arabs are either represented negatively or not mentioned at all. Morgan (2010) says that interviews conducted with Middle Eastern students who attended American public schools showed that these students remembered famous characters from African American, European, and Hispanic backgrounds, but they have never had the chance in school to read about anyone from their own backgrounds. Furthermore, students said that lack of representation of Arabs in the books made other students perceive all Arabs as terrorists.
As quoted in Morgan (2010), Russell (2009) emphasized the importance of providing children in public schools with “culturally authentic” information about minority groups in order for the students of minority groups to develop a satisfactory sense of self, which Morgan called ‘cultural pride’ (p. 33). This is emphasized by Al-Hazza and Bucher (2008), as quoted in Morgan (2010), who noted that “a scarcity of children’s book on Arabs will make it more difficult for Arab students to build a sense of cultural identity and self-esteem” (p. 33). They added that the existence of self-esteem is crucial because its absence may lead to students' failure in schools. More importantly, research shows that bias against Arabs and Islam is practiced through middle and high schools; even though the distortion is not as evident in secondary as in elementary schools, it still exists and is still practiced (Morgan, 2010).

Prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam that Muslims must observe in order to maintain their religion. Furthermore, it has a special status compared to other acts of worship; consequently, concern about prayers in public schools is a big issue for Muslims. Muslim students are asked to observe several religious rituals throughout the day. Most significant among these practices are the five daily prayers. In schools that run until three in the afternoon, Muslim children are required to perform, during school hours, two prayers in the winter and one prayer in the spring or the summer. Muslims are required to perform the daily prayers once they reach the age of puberty; before that age they are encouraged to do so but not required to. However, parents are required to teach their children to perform the prayer when children are seven years old and they should punish them for missing it at the age of ten. So, performing the prayers is a concern for parents more than for their children in elementary schools, but towards the end of middle
school and the beginning of high schools both parents and children share the responsibility. Genieve (2006) who studied Muslim communities in America concluded that Islamic schools are viewed by many parents as essential for maintaining Muslim identity for Muslim youth and protecting them from non-Islamic sanctioned behaviors, such as dating, pre-marital sex, and drugs.

In recent years a debate gained national attention over a prayer room in a school in San Diego. The debate was among school officials who wanted to maintain separation between religion and the state, and others who wanted to give Muslim students their right to practice their rituals. According to the legal specialists, allowing students to pray at school does not violate the First Amendment, which bans the establishment of religion in schools, as long as the prayer is not led by a school employee or official (Ashford, 2007). The school offered an extra recess later during the day at a time that would allow Muslim children to perform the prayer on time. Also, the extra recess worked to provide all students in the school with equal recess time; earlier the school allowed Muslim children to pray while other students were doing activities. The debate continued between two opposing parties: one argued that there should not be a problem in allowing the students to pray because the school should not hinder the students in their religion, while the other party argued that the school should not alter the schedule of classes or major activities for the sake of prayer (Ashford, 2007).

Muslims vary in their views of Islamic schools; Husain and Vogelaar (1994) report that a poll indicated many Muslims feared that Islamic schools would isolate Muslim youth and hinder their integration into the American community. Other surveys indicate that many Muslims favor Islamic schools; a survey in Los Angeles indicated that 52%
believed that Islamic schools are essential for Muslims in America (GhaneaBassiri, 1997). Oriaro (2006) concluded that Muslim and Christian parents in Orange County, California, prefer to send their children to religious-based schools to keep their moral values. Similarly, Badawy (2005) concluded that Muslim parents enrolled their children in Islamic schools mainly due to religious reasons; they wanted their children to study morals and ethics in an Islamic environment. However, increasing fees, concerns about the academic quality of education, and sectarian religious beliefs reduce parents’ interest in Islamic private schools (Merry, 2007).

Muslim attitudes toward Islamic schooling might also be a reflection of Muslim attitudes toward assimilating into American society. Jones (2008) indicated that nearly 44 per cent of American Muslims believe that new immigrant Muslims should assimilate into American society, while about 26 percent believe that Muslims should remain distinct from the rest of the society. Interestingly, the percentage of Muslims who believe that Muslims should remain distinct is higher among American Muslims who were born in the US than immigrant Muslims. Many Muslims who support Islamic schools believe that Islamic schools will not hinder Muslim children’s integration into the society because they will not be completely isolated from it (Jones, 2008).

Islamic schools in America are supported by most Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Student Association (MSA) and the Islamic Council of North America (ICNA). The Islamic Schools League of America was established by four parents who believed that Islamic schools benefited their children, and consequently they wanted to support providing good Islamic education for all Muslim children in America. In addition to organizations that work to promote Islamic education through supporting Islamic schools,
such as the Council of Islamic Education, other organizations work to assure that Islam is correctly portrayed in public school curricula which follow American national standards (Jones, 2008). Because of Islamic private schools’ dependence on community mosques, the politics of the community impact the choice of curricula and pedagogies and even school administrative affairs (Merry, 2007).

Teachers in Islamic schools pose a significant challenge to the quality of education. Most Islamic schools have mostly Muslim teachers, even though qualified non-Muslim teachers are also hired. In some cases, Muslim teachers in Islamic schools are highly educated and qualified, but in other cases, schools must choose to hire either non-Muslim qualified teachers or less-qualified Muslim teachers.

When non-Muslim teachers are hired, they are told that they are expected to respect Islamic values (Merry, 2007). A number of Muslim teachers in Islamic schools are certified teachers but the majority are not. Less qualified Muslim teachers, however, are valued when they contribute by teaching ethnic languages such as Arabic and Urdu, which rarely can be taught by more qualified non-Muslim teachers. In addition to their struggle to find qualified teachers, Islamic private schools lack adequate educational equipment and their teachers and staff are underpaid. They also lack medical and special education services (Merry, 2007). Many parents are involved in school affairs and this has constituted both a promise and a challenge. It is a promise because this enthusiasm can be utilized for schools’ benefit. It is a challenge because parents’ involvement is intimidating for many teachers (Merry, 2007).
Islamic schools are very diverse, but the most dominant ethnic groups who attend these schools are Palestinians and Pakistanis. Other ethnic minorities, such as whites and African Americans, also attend Islamic schools (Merry, 2007).

**Conceptual framework**

Based on the review of the literature including a brief discussion of the concepts of academic language, academic literacy, and disciplinary literacy as well as the CCSS and the PARCC assessment, it has become clear to the researcher that the CCSS requires students to gain a specific set of skills that require them to act not only as consumers of knowledge, but also as producers of it. Based on the researcher’s experience and knowledge about Islamic societies overseas, this set of skills and the conceptual processes they contain might not be dominant in the homes of Muslim students. In this case, students’ unfamiliarity with these conceptual processes will add to the challenges ESL students in general face in their schooling, due to the fact that English is not their first language. The section of this study about academic language and how it has been a challenge to ESL students is informative in the sense that it sheds light on the linguistic barriers that students experience with assessments written in English, even when students have already acquired the cognitive tools needed for the test. With the CCSS, the issue is more complex because the assessments, which will be based on the standards, will not assess students’ knowledge of designated subject matter content only, but also will assess whether students have acquired a specific set of cognitive processes. In this case, ESL/ELL students are asked to develop those conceptual processes in English, a language which they have not yet mastered. As a result, it is important to investigate whether this set of conceptual processes is practiced in the households of Muslim ESL
students and in their Islamic Studies texts in order to predict whether the challenges that these students might face with such assessments will be only linguistic, or both linguistic and cognitive.

The review section about Islamic schools in America shows that Muslim families who send their children to these schools value Islamic education tremendously and view it as necessary for their children. The most essential subject that sets Islamic schools apart from public education is the teaching of Islamic Studies and the Arabic language. Almost as important is the absence in Islamic schools of social issues that Muslim students encounter in public school, such as peer pressure and the shortage of safe environments. Consequently, Islamic Studies classes in Islamic schools are expected to be an essential part of the lives of Muslim students who attend Islamic schools, as well as a potential influence on their academic background knowledge and cognitive skills.

With this mind, the researcher decided to investigate the preparedness of Muslim ESL students attending a private Islamic school in the American Southwest to meet the conceptual processes included in the skills of the CCSS. He has decided to investigate this preparedness in two dominant settings in the lives of the Muslim ESL students attending this school: in their home discourses, and in their Islamic Studies texts.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Qualitative research is a researcher’s choice when he or she wants to interpret the experiences of marginalized groups, and when he or she wants silenced voices to be heard (Creswell, 2007). With that conviction, I adopted a qualitative research design to shed light on a specific marginalized group that has not been sufficiently studied in regards to the CCSS. I, the researcher, studied the daily lives of four families of Muslim ESL students whose children attend a private Islamic school in a large city in the U.S. Southwest so that the voices of their households could be heard in academia, by policy makers, and more importantly, by the school personnel who are in charge of choosing and applying academic policies in this school.

I approached the study through several lenses: 1) analysis of the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA); 2) interviews with parents of Muslim ESL students attending an Islamic private school; and 3) analysis of Islamic Studies textbooks. The voices of Muslim ESL students’ households are heard through interviews with parents about the conceptual processes that they develop with their children at home. As illustrated in Chapter 2, many parents send their children to Islamic schools because they value Islamic education as a means to help their children to gain Islamic morals and to be competent American citizens. The third lens through which I approached the study is an analysis of the Islamic Studies textbooks used at the school with the purpose of examining which conceptual processes they include.

My goal has been to investigate ways conceptual/cognitive processes conveyed to these students at home and/or through Islamic Studies texts can inform assessments that
will be based on the CCSS. In cases where certain conceptual processes reflected in the CCSS do not exist in students’ homes, the researcher alerts educators and policy makers to these findings.

Qualitative studies are interested in reality as it is experienced by certain individuals in a specific context. Thus, qualitative studies are interested in individuals’ perspectives on a contextualized experience rather than claiming the ultimate truth about the issue under investigation (Merriam, 2009). Participants’ experiences are the core of this study. Parents’ perspectives and the teaching goals of Islamic Studies textbooks provide the tools for analyzing how to make CCSS-based school discourse sensitive to that of the households of Muslim ESL students and that of their Islamic Studies textbooks.

Creswell (2007) stated that researchers conduct qualitative research when they do not want to separate the participants from the context of the study. The relations between the participants of this study, the setting of the study, and the issue of the CCSS are intricate. In order for me to understand how the participants, the issue under study, and the setting of the study interact with each other, I needed to examine and analyze each of these three elements in detail. To understand the school setting in relation to ESL students, I examined school documents, such as the mission and vision statements of the school and policies related to ESL students. To understand the CCSS, I read and analyzed the standards themselves, as well as relevant literature that explained them and explained which conceptual processes they require.

Creswell (2007) indicated that qualitative research can be conducted to produce complex details of the issue under study. The complexity of the issue of bringing the home experiences of Muslim families into classrooms and assessment practices requires
producing a detailed account of the home discourses and daily activities in which these students participate. To this end, I interviewed students’ parents in order to listen to their stories about how they communicate with their children and produce knowledge. I also analyzed the textbooks used in the Islamic Studies classes to investigate how knowledge is produced in the discourse promoted by these learning materials.

In addition to being inductive, qualitative research is not interested in cause and effect relationships between different factors involved in the study; it is interested in interpretations of certain experiences by individuals involved in the study and the meanings attributed to these experiences (Merriam, 2009). Even though I had a clear idea what I was going to investigate, my goal has not been to prove or refute a hypothesis. My interest has been to investigate how appropriate assessments, and consequently, teaching practices based on the CCSS, can be made sensitive to the linguistic and cultural needs and background experiences of Muslim ESL students who are the focus of this study. I have also examined Islamic Studies textbooks to investigate conceptual processes that students are familiar with in these classes. By following a qualitative research design, I was the main instrument of data collection (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2007); I conducted interviews, I did home visits to households, I analyzed Islamic Studies textbooks, and I connected findings to my analysis of the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA), guided also by relevant literature on the CCSS.

I adopted an interpretive lens to discuss what conceptual processes are practiced by participant Muslim households and how these processes are relevant to conceptual processes required by the CCSS. As discussed by Creswell (2007), interpretive positions allow researchers to investigate issues or research questions for the sake of understanding
why underrepresented groups are disadvantaged. They give room for interpreting the issue from the perspective of the marginalized/subject groups themselves. Adhering to interpretive position assumptions, I examined how parents guide their children at home to make and communicate meaning, and what activities and problem-solving strategies dominate in their home discourses. The goal of documenting parents’ accounts of home discourses is two-fold: a) to investigate whether and how CCSS assessment tools can be informed by households’ practices; and, b) to investigate whether Muslim ESL students are prepared in their households to display conceptual processes included on the CCSS.

Through my interpretive lens, I sought to examine what conceptual processes are practiced in Islamic Studies classrooms by examining Islamic Studies textbooks which are used in the school. As noted in the literature review section of this study, many Muslim parents value Islamic schools as a means to prepare their children morally and socially. As will be discussed in the analysis section, participants in this study are passionate about providing Islamic education to their children. Examining which conceptual processes are included in the Islamic Studies textbooks provides another dimension for understanding what support is available for Muslim ESL students to help them meet the cognitive expectations of the CCSS.

Participants

Participants in the study were selected purposefully to provide data for the research problem and the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2007). Participants are two male and two female Muslim parents from four households who volunteered to participate and whose sons or/and daughters are attending Manar Islamic School (MIS) school between first and eighth grades.
To invite participants to the study, I wrote an e-mail to the school secretary and asked her to forward it to parents of all ESL students in the school. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix A. A clear description of what criteria were needed for parents to be included in the study was discussed with the secretary. I was looking for four or five parents who came from different Muslim households and who spoke a language other than English at home. Criteria for selection also required that parents have children in K-8 grade levels; i.e., parents whose children are in kindergarten or younger were initially excluded. However, this criterion was altered after the initial meeting with a mother of a kindergarten child revealed that her home discourse and activities with her daughter would enrich the study. Unfortunately, this mother withdrew later from the study for undisclosed reasons, so data generated from interviews with her are not included here.

The invitational e-mail included a short description of the goals of the study, study design and roles of participants. The e-mail which asked parents interested in participating to call me or provide the school’s secretary with their phone numbers so that I could call them to arrange one-on-one meetings. The e-mail explained that in these meetings, the objectives, the design, and the timeline of the study would be explained in detail.

From those parents who agreed to participate in the study, I chose a diverse group of participants. Creswell (2007) noted that it is better to choose individuals with varied stories in order to present different perspectives (p.129). Students attending Manar Islamic School come from diverse ethnic, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds
Students’ parents were included in the study to gather information about students’ home activities and which illustrate how parents help their children acquire conceptual processes that are related, or not, to those included in the CCSS.

I collected data from four households of Muslim ESL students. At the beginning of the study, I anticipated that fathers would be more willing to participate than mothers for cultural reasons. I assumed that Muslim women who come from certain ethnic and cultural backgrounds might not want to interact with men who are not members of their immediate or extended families. I found, however, that more women were interested in participating than men.

I planned to select four or five parents from four or five households of ESL students in the school in order to generate data sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions and to maintain a sufficient number of participants if any decided to withdraw during the study. In the course of the study, I collected data about the life and background of each of the participants through interviews and home visits. Since, as Creswell (2007) noted, the goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings but to look at specifics, I dug deep into the linguistic and cultural background of each participant in order to investigate how background factors complicate the implementation of CCSS. Due to time limitations, not all parents of Muslim ESL students attending the school were included in this study. Table 3.1 below illustrates a general view of the four participants, with information relevant to the scope of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>How long in the U.S.?</th>
<th># children in MIS</th>
<th>Grades of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Data Collection

Data for this study included documents, interviews, and home visits.

Documents.

For this study, I analyzed researcher-generated documents to help me “learn more about the situation, person, or event being investigated” (Merriam, 2009, p.149). His interview notes and home visit memos were organized for further analysis. The purpose of these notes and memos was to document observed events, artifacts, and documents, etc., which are relevant to how the Muslim families studied communicate conceptual processes related to academic literacy skills.

The researcher closely investigated and analyzed the standards of the CCSS. I looked for conceptual processes that students need to master in order to fulfill the requirements of these standards. My analysis of the conceptual processes depended on how CCSS scholars explained both the standards and how they should be taught. I also used textual analysis to examine the content of the standards in order to find out the embedded, required conceptual processes. The following example illustrates his analysis of conceptual processes which are included in sample CCSS.

Standard 6 for 4th grade Reading Literature requires students to “compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1: Participants</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abd Alif</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} &amp; 8\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hafsa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ismail</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jameela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Wolof</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
difference between first- and third-person narrations” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 12). The required conceptual process in this standard is students’ ability to make connections and comparisons between different points of view. For the sake of my study, I investigated through home visits and interviews with parents whether these processes were practiced at home, or not. In cases when these conceptual processes were present in households, I investigated how they were practiced. If they were not practiced in the households, I discuss this finding in the recommendations section of the study.

I had initially planned to analyze all standards for the selected grades to find conceptual processes embedded in each of them. In examining the standards, I was interested in the implied meaning-making processes that needed to be internalized by the students in order to achieve the standards. These meaning-making processes involved conceptual processes, such as making inferences and drawing conclusions. The interview questions were initially intended to find out how these meaning-making processes and the conceptual processes were embedded in households’ discourses. If a connection between a conceptual process which is included on the CCSS and students’ daily lives was found, I had planned to further investigate how it was taught/practiced in the home discourses and the Islamic Studies textbooks, in order to offer recommendations about how such a conceptual process could be implemented in the CCSS-based assessment.

For example, Standard 5 for 4th grade literature reading requires students to “Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text” (National
Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 12). Conceptual processes implied in this standard are: 1) the ability to distinguish different genres of writing; 2) make connections between styles of writing and the genres to which they belong; and 3) read a text to analyze the components of a written passage (e.g. instructions, stanzas, rhyme, etc.). Relevant interview questions would have been designed to investigate whether and how these conceptual processes are practiced in the homes of Muslim ESL students. Participant responses to interview questions, which were designed to investigate these conceptual processes indirectly, did not relate to all the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS. I realized that if I wanted to investigate each conceptual process purposefully, I would need to design interview questions in survey format which asked participants whether they did a specific conceptual process in their households, or not. This is not how interviews in qualitative research work (Seidman, 2006).

For instance, the researcher asked Abu Ali whether his children practiced making Iraqi tea or playing the Iraqi traditional musical instrument. The goal for investigating such activities was to find out whether the cognitive processes, which are included in the CCSS, are practiced in the households in any form. By asking the father how to make tea and whether the children know how to make it themselves, the researcher sought to contextualize cognitive thinking in specific household activities. In one instance, Ismail explained that he guided his children to solve a problem that erupted between his son and daughter, and helped them reach a home policy about family values by asking them questions about the details of what had happened between them. Ismail’s action provides an example of how his children relate key details to a general idea or message in the
household. It is evident to the researcher that Ismail’s children are capable of relating key
details to a general idea, but in a modality different from that of the CCSS; they practiced
these conceptual processes verbally in the context of a real life story, not a fictional or
informational text.

**Textual analysis of Islamic Studies textbooks.**

To investigate academic conceptual processes available for Muslim ESL students in
their Islamic Studies classes, the researcher used textual analysis to examine the content
of the Islamic Studies textbooks taught in the school. The Islamic Studies textbook used
in the school is titled *We are Muslims*, and leveled versions of this text are used from first
through fifth grades. The researcher purchased an electronic version of the book covering
the grade levels of children whose parents participated in the study. Each chapter of the
textbook included an introductory passage, verses from the Quran, and a story that relates
to the topic of the chapter. The book was not accompanied by CDs or DVDs or any visual
supplemental material, other than graphs and illustrations in the textbook and the
workbook. The textbook is accompanied by a workbook in grades 1, 2, 3 and 4, but not in
grade 5. The workbook is designed in a teaching and assessment format; it repeats the
information in the textbook.

In the textbook introduction, the authors say that they believe the concepts presented
in the book can be both grasped by all students and applied in students’ daily lives. In
regards to the workbook, the authors argue that it is designed to help students
comprehend the topic in the textbook and to enhance their critical thinking skills (Ghazi
& Ghazi, 2005). More details about how the textbooks and workbooks were examined in
this study are presented in the analysis section below.
Interviews.

Interviews are “necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). It would be time-consuming and might not even be possible to observe how families help their children acquire conceptual processes, given the cultural background of the Muslim families who were selected to participate in the study. Muslim families are not comfortable being observed while managing family affairs because cultural reasons view family space as sacred. That is why I substituted observations with interviews and home visits. As will be discussed below, one of the three interviews conducted with each parent took place during the home visits.

Each participant was interviewed three times. The first two interviews were supposed to be conducted with each participant over the course of two weeks. Seidman (2006) noted that a three-day to week period between interviews works best because it helps interviewees remain connected with the study. However, the two interviews and the home visit were conducted with Ismail over the course of only one week due to his schedule; he indicated that he would be busy for the following few weeks. Figure 3.1 shows dates of interviews, home visits and how long they lasted with each participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2: Home Visits and Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initially, I planned to design interview questions to inquire about conceptual processes manifested in the CCSS for English Language Arts for the grade levels of students whose parents would participate in the study. The concern that accompanied this approach was that the interviews would seem like surveys, which investigated specific concepts, and would ignore the bigger picture of the households’ home discourses. The alternative approach was to ask the participants about activities that they do at home with their children, and analyze those activities to examine conceptual processes included in them. I followed a mixed approach where I analyzed the standards in detail, but did not ask participants questions directly related to any standard. Instead, I asked participants about their daily activities in order to analyze conceptual processes that students practice in their households. A sample of interview questions is found in appendix B. The appendix does not include full interviews to protect participants’ confidentiality. The community where the study was conducted is small and it will be feasible for insiders of the community to identify participants from the interviews.

Since reading and writing are the main modalities used in the CCSS-based assessment, I investigated how these literacy practices were utilized in participants’ households, to examine their relevance to the ways in which these practices were utilized in the CCSS assessment. Consequently, the first interview with each participant included specific questions that directly asked participants about how they assisted their children in reading and writing. Other than that, I designed interview questions that would enable me to have the fullest understanding possible of the students’ daily lives. I attempted to
do so by asking questions that would help me understand the daily activities of participant Muslim families and how ESL students function as family members. For example, I asked them about the different roles that children have in family life. The goal was to analyze practices embedded in events in which children participate, in order to examine what conceptual understandings students learn, and perhaps internalize, while participating in these activities.

As mentioned above, the first interview included questions that meant to directly investigate whether and how reading and writing are practiced in the participants’ households. With the initial approach of directly investigating a specific set of conceptual processes present in participants’ households that are included in the CCSS reading and writing standards, the researcher asked many how and why questions, hoping that participants’ responses would relate to those conceptual processes advocated for in the CCSS. Participants’ responses did not always relate to conceptual processes included in the standards simply because participants did not comprehend specifically what the researcher was looking for.

Also, the first interview with the first participant convinced me that my approach would not help me reach accurate conclusions about what conceptual processes Muslim ESL students are capable of, and which they are not. This is because students may be able to draw conclusions and make decisions in situations other than the ones that the interview questions investigated. That is, students who were not accustomed to the practice of drawing conclusions in reading and writing at home might do so in other situations. Based on this realization, I decided to shift my focus when designing the interview questions, from looking for specific conceptual processes to investigating the
common practices that happen in the households, and then analyze these situations to examine which conceptual processes are included in them. The main shift included in this approach was that the researcher was not investigating every conceptual process included in the CCSS. Instead, he examined only CCSS-relevant conceptual processes that emerged from the interviews. A sample of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

In Interview 2, each of these interview questions was followed by other questions, based on responses of the participants. The goal of the follow-up questions was to encourage participants to provide more information about events or activities being discussed, or to clarify certain interpretations and hunches that the researcher had during the interviews. Also, responses of certain participants led to other questions, which the researcher then asked the other participants. For example, Abu Ali discussed how he helped his daughter prepare for the Hajj (Pilgrimage) Project \(^1\) which the school asked students to do. The researcher asked the other participants whether their children participated in this project and how they helped their children with it. Similarly, Ismail indicated that he played with his children, so the researcher asked the other participants whether they played with their children and how this happens.

After interviews were completed and coded in relation to the conceptual framework and the conceptual processes included in the standards, I located a list of conceptual processes which were embedded in the standards, and I examined how they were practiced in the households. Also, I located conceptual processes that the students were

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\(^1\) The Hajj project is an annual competition where students design 3D models of one or more of the Islamic pilgrimage rituals.
accustomed to in their homes, but were not embedded in the standards. In this study I offer some initial suggestions about how assessments, which will be based on these CCSS conceptual processes, could incorporate conceptual processes practiced in the homes of Muslim ESL students. As for CCSS conceptual processes which do not appear in the interviews, I discuss the implications of these findings on assessment in Chapter 7 of this manuscript.

Interviewing parents served three purposes: a) to generate ideas to observe in home visits; b) to triangulate data with those which emerge from the home visits; and c) to investigate cognitive processes practiced in the households. During the interviews, I took notes about cultural activities that parents do with their children. I used these notes to ask parents for cultural artifacts or tools that relate to these actives. For instance, Abu Ali mentioned in an interview that he has a traditional Iraqi musical instrument in his home. I asked him to show me this musical instrument when I visited him in his house. Also, he mentioned to me that he watches YouTube videos with his children to teach them about religion. I asked him to show a sample video when I visited him. Similarly, Jameela mentioned in an interview that she helps her children study using online sources. In the home visit interview, I asked her to show me a sample of the website that she uses. I interviewed every parent twice during the study and told them that I might contact them for a “member check interview” (Merriam, 2009) at the end of the study to verify my interpretations, if needed.

Interviews for this study were semi-structured because the researcher had a set of issues to investigate, based on which he would write a number of questions; but at the same time he wanted to hear the experience of the participants themselves (Merriam,
In this manner, his questions were for the purpose of initiating the conversation and, consequently, they were open-ended. In the course of each interview, further questions and comments were asked, based on the interviewee’s responses.

Interviews for this study were designed to be about 90 minutes in duration. Seidman (2006) noted that interviews should be no less than 90 minutes in order to give participants enough time to elaborate on their experiences. However, some of the interviews lasted for less than 90 minutes because participants indicated that they had exhausted their thoughts about the topics under discussion. Also, I relied on my judgment that data generated from these interviews were sufficient for the scope of the study.

The third interview with each participant was conducted during the home visit, and it was conducted at least a week after the second interview because the researcher wanted to give himself a chance to review the previous two interviews to highlight certain themes or topics/activities to be further investigated in the home visits. The home visit with Abu Ali was delayed for more than a month because he was travelling for work. Also, both interviews and the home visit with Ismail were conducted in one week because of his work schedule.

At the end of the first two interviews, I highlighted for the participants the main topics discussed, and I told them what would be discussed in the following interview. Also, I asked the participants if they preferred the questions to be sent to them in advance to be better prepared for the interviews. Participants indicated that they did not need to see the questions in advance. Also, at the end of the second and the third interviews, I updated the participants about key findings that I noted from their interviews.
**Home visits.**

The author visited the households of participants once during the study. During these visits, he looked for artifacts, tools, or any material products used by families to help their children practice conceptual processes included in the CCSS, especially in areas identified through the earlier interviews. For cultural reasons, the researcher sat in the living room with parents who were participating in the study. The researcher did not visit Jameela’s house. Instead, he met with Jameela in the school and asked her to bring to school whatever tools or toys her children had. Jameela indicated that there was nothing to see in her household; she said that her children had just arrived in the U.S. three months before the date of the interview and, consequently, they did not have “much stuff”. Jameela and the researcher met in the school and she brought her children’s toys and guided the researcher through the website that she uses to help her children do their homework.

During the home visits to the other three households, the researcher looked for objects, which were located in the living rooms and asked who uses these objects, how they are used, and whether the children know how to use them. In Hafsa’s house, there was a large Arabic calligraphy tableau. The researcher asked whether anybody in the family writes Arabic or English calligraphy and whether the children know how to read what is written on the tableau. Also, the researcher asked how what was written on the tableau is significant to the family.

The researcher asked parents to talk about and show him tools, kits or toys, which their children had. Then, the researcher asked what children do with these tools, kits, and equipment, and how they use them. Ismail showed the researcher a sewing machine that
his daughter had and showed him a dress that she made for her toy princess. Hafsa showed the researcher toys in the form of fruits and vegetables that her daughter had and which she pretended to cook.

Before the home visits, the researcher designed a set of questions informed by preliminary findings of the topics or activities mentioned in the earlier interviews or topics or events mentioned by other participants. In the first and second interviews, Abu Ali mentioned that he watched the news on TV and his children noticed that he got angry when he watched news of Iraq. During the home visit, the researcher asked Abu Ali to show him which TV channel he watches and the news it broadcasts to find out what upsets him, and how this might relate to the cognitive and linguistic skills of his children. Discussion of the news broadcast on this channel triggered Abu Ali to speak extensively about the Sunni-Shiite struggle in Iraq. The researcher found that discussion of the Sunni-Shiite struggle in Iraq was a rich context in which Abu Ali’s children access valuable cognitive and conceptual processes, such as understanding different perspectives and identifying themes of stories, in this case news, real life, and even religious stories, as will appear in Chapter 6.

Also, Jameela mentioned in the second interview that she relied on online tools to help her children do their math and English homework. In the third interview, which was a substitute for the home visit, the researcher asked her to show him which website she and her children use to review the children’s homework. As will be discussed in the analysis section, the researcher found that the approach of the website was different than that of the PARCC assessment model.
In addition to the questions which were based on findings of previous interviews, the researcher asked a set of questions of participants in order to generate information about what they do in their homes: “Do your children watch TV? What do they watch? Do you watch it with them? Do you discuss what you watch? How about computers and internet?” The goal of such questions was to develop a perception of all aspects of daily life of Muslim ESL students in their homes.

Home visits were the researcher’s chance to “member check” (Merriam, 2009) with his participants his preliminary findings from the previous interviews. Once patterns or themes were identified, they were analyzed, and then the researcher asked his participants about his interpretations to check the validity of these findings.

Each home visit lasted about one hour. Times and dates were decided by the participants; the researcher told them he would like to visit them in their home at the earliest time possible. Participants decided on the date and time and contacted the researcher to schedule the time. The researcher made it clear to the participants that during the home visit, he would not communicate with any family members except the participant him/herself. In cases when children were present in their homes at the time of visit, the interviewer did his best to avoid tape recording their interactions with him and with other family members. This was because the researcher had an Internal Review Board (IRB) approval to communicate with parents; the IRB approval was not for communicating with other family members. However, there were some interactions with non-consented others the interviewer could not avoid recording; he did not transcribe these interactions or analyze them in the data. In instances when interactions with children and other family members occurred, the researcher assured participants that
interactions with their family members would not be included in the study. Table 3.4 illustrates data sources as they relate to research questions.

Table 3.3: Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Parents= 4</th>
<th>Common core standards</th>
<th>Target sub-questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 per parent</td>
<td>Common core standards</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Whatever available</td>
<td>Common core standards</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>1 per parent (except Jameela)</td>
<td>Common core standards</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Islamic Studies textbooks</td>
<td>Common core standards</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Research Questions Are Answered

The two main research questions were answered through first examining the five sub-questions. The following pages show how the sub-research questions were answered.

Sub-question #1: What conceptual understanding processes do Muslim ESL students need in order to meet the requirements of Common Core State Standards for English language Arts (ELA)?

In order to answer this question, the researcher relied on literature that explains the different standards for English Language Arts (ELA). For example, the PARCC Model Content Framework (2012) indicates that the writing standards for fourth grade students “requires students to draw evidence from literary and informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Students should be able to produce a variety of written
texts, including opinion pieces, explanations, narratives, and short research projects” (p.3).

To develop an understanding of what these standards entail, the researcher examined how these conceptual processes can be implemented in the classroom, as suggested by institutions in charge of developing and implementing the CCSS, such as the International Reading Association (IRA). Finally, the researcher closely examined the standards themselves to identify conceptual processes needed to be mastered by students in order for them to meet these standards, as well as the conceptual processes included in them.

Sub-question #2: What, if any, conceptual processes that can inform Common Core Standard-based assessment practices are available to Muslim ESL students at home and/or in textbooks of their Islamic Studies classes?

To answer this question, the researcher did the following: a) visited parents in their homes, where he looked for cultural artifacts such as paintings, musical tools, toys, or homemade tools, and used these as cues to find out about activities that members of the households are involved in during their daily lives. The researcher interviewed participants about their children’s toys and other cultural artifacts and belongings to find out whether/how they used these items to communicate knowledge to their children. The goal was to find out whether/how conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS are practiced at home, not necessarily in literacy events (Heath, 1983), as such events may not be culturally practiced, but while using or making these objects.

The researcher also conducted open-ended and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with parents to identify daily activities that their children are involved in. The goal was to
discover conceptual processes and conceptual processes that the students practice in their households. Ways and techniques which families use to help their children solve problems, as well as ways they communicate knowledge to their children, were analyzed in regard to their relevance to the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS.

To investigate conceptual processes available for Muslim ESL students in Islamic Studies classes, the researcher used textual analysis to examine Islamic Studies textbooks to identify the conceptual processes they include.

Essential to answering this question was an analysis of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students and their families and how these are relevant to, or different from, the requirements for CCSS. This was accomplished by interviews with parents and the initial survey which was sent to participants to complete. Upon signing the consent forms, participants were asked whether they preferred to receive the initial survey via e-mail or hard copy. All participants chose a hard copy. The survey asked them basic questions intended to identify who they were, where they came from, how many of their children attended MIS, what languages were spoken in the home, and the ages of their children. A copy of the initial survey appears in Appendix C. Throughout the course of the interviews, the researcher attempted to document parents’ and their children’s linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Sub- question # 3: Are there conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS that Muslim ESL/LEP students do not have access to in their homes or in religious classes?

The answer to this question includes an analysis of the answers to the second question, compared to findings of the first question. The researcher first made connections between the findings of the first and the second questions; and then he
illustrated, if they existed, any gaps in the relation between conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS, on the one hand, and conceptual processes which exist in the resources of Muslim households and school textbooks on the other. Answering this question draws the readers’ attention to the possibility that Muslim ESL students find difficulty meeting the CCSS standards because they have limited background experience with the conceptual/cognitive processes that they require. Explaining this issue is important, especially when offering recommendations for assessment practices.

Sub-question # 4: Are there any conceptual processes familiar to Muslim ESL students in their homes or religious textbooks that are overlooked by the CCSS?

The answer to this sub-question is based on findings of the second sub-question, which investigates conceptual understanding processes available for Muslim ESL students at home and in their religious studies classes. Part of this sub-question is about conceptual processes present in students’ homes, but not included in the CCSS. The other part of is about the conceptual processes which exist in Islamic Studies classes but which are not included in the CCSS. Data for the first part of the question was generated from home visits and interviews with parents of Muslim ESL students. Data for the second part was generated by examining conceptual processes included in the Islamic Studies textbooks taught to ESL students in the school, and comparing them to the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS.

Sub-question # 5: Based on findings of this study, can assessment practices which will be based on CCSS be relevant to Muslim ESL students’ home discourses and the academic expectations of their Islamic Studies classes? If so, how? If not, why not?
This sub-question is discussed in Chapter 7 of the manuscript. This question is the “so-what” contribution of the study. Based on findings of the four previous sub-questions, this sub-question covers two issues. First, it discusses how findings of the first two sub-questions can inform how assessment practices based on CCSS conceptual processes can take into consideration ESL students’ home discourses and Islamic Studies texts. The second issue this sub-question attempts to address is conceptual processes which are included in CCSS, but do not exist in home discourses of Muslim ESL students or their Islamic Studies textbooks. Also, the answer to this question taps into findings of the third question, which addresses conceptual processes available to Muslim ESL students at home and/or in Islamic Studies texts but which are not included in the CCSS.

**Data Analysis**

First, the researcher first read the CCSS and literature that explains them thoroughly in order to frame the scope of interview questions which later were asked of the parents. Direct interpretation (Stake, 1995) was used in analyzing the content of the CCSS; the researcher looked for conceptual processes that the CCSS require students to have in order to meet the standards.

The researcher adopted an ongoing analysis policy (Merriam, 2009) in order to have data collection strategies and interview follow-up questions illuminated by findings of the analysis. The general strategy of the data analysis was based on the researcher’s conceptual framework; the researcher took the theoretical perspectives and research questions as departure points for trying to make sense of data (Yin, 2009). The researcher’s theoretical framework and the research questions guided data analysis strategies both during and after data collection. During the data collection stage,
theoretical perspectives guided research stages and interview questions, while at the end of data collection they helped in ‘explanation-building’ (Yin, 2009, p.141). Data interpretation that took place during data collection was tentative and subject to change when more data were collected.

During the analysis process, interviews were transcribed and coded weekly so that the author would not forget details about data sources. Data units were identified across interviews, documents, home visits and literature, in terms of their relevance to the research questions, and were sorted into categories (Merriam, 2009).

Also, an inventory of different categories and subcategories related to them was formed in order to ease the process of data interpretation. The researcher used the qualitative data analysis software *Atlas-ti* for coding and data analysis purposes. Categorical aggregation (Stake, 1995) was used in interviews with parents to find conceptual processes that students have access to in their households.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) noted that there are three purposes of coding: “(a) noticing relevant phenomena; (b) collecting examples of these phenomena; and (c) analyzing these phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures” (p. 29). The researcher analyzed CCSS literature and standard documents first to find conceptual processes that students need to acquire. The researcher coded interviews and home visits as they responded to conceptual processes which exist in the households’ discourses. For this purpose, he used mostly emergent coding (Creswell, 2007); then, prefigured categories were used to organize codes together. Emergent coding was used in analyzing interviews and home visits in order to find topics that could be used in the content of the assessment tools; such tools could then provide a context-
embedded (Cummins, 1981) content for ESL students to enable them to overcome challenges of academic discourses.

**Coding Procedures**

**Interviews.**

Interview coding for this study was done using Atlas-Ti qualitative data analysis software. The coding process was strongly influenced by the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. The goal was to examine conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS. To this end, initial coding was conducted to locate activities and experiences that the children have in their households. In vivo coding (a form of coding where actual words of participants were used as codes) was conducted to highlight all themes and ideas highlighted by participants in the interviews. In vivo coding was accompanied by open coding (a form of coding where participants’ words are categorized based on the concepts of ideas explicitly stated or implied in them), where the researcher highlighted the conceptual processes which were explicitly indicated by participants, such as comprehension, reading, writing and research. The goal of this initial coding cycle was to establish a list of activities and academic practices that the children do in their homes.

Another cycle of coding was conducted to examine the details of each activity that the children do, in order to locate what conceptual processes are included in such activities. Paying attention to conceptual processes included in the standards, the researcher coded the data, examining any activities which promote either the conceptual/cognitive processes implied in them. Examples of investigated conceptual processes and concepts which the researcher examined in the data are:
• drawing inferences
• comprehending details
• determining facts
• supporting ideas by details and facts
• understanding and building arguments
• finding themes
• locating evidence
• identifying literary elements
• relying on linguistic clues
• citing textual evidence
• drawing conclusions
• determining central ideas
• tracking the development of ideas
• thinking deductively
• summarizing main ideas with details
• understanding relationships and connection among ideas and people
• comprehending thoughts and feelings
• comprehending content-specific vocabulary
• comprehending figurative and literal uses of language
• determining the different points of views and illustrating how they affect the way a text is written
• generating information from different sources
• analyzing different media and how they contribute to the texts’ central ideas

List generated directly from the textual analysis chapter included in chapter 5 of this study.

To examine how language standards exist in the households, the researcher reviewed the interviews, looking for reading practices, genres of texts read and procedures of reading. The researcher examined whether there are opportunities for children to gain language skills, such as determining the different structures of the different texts and understanding the relations between and among the different text components.

For skills that require both general cognitive processes and processes specific to academic literacy, the researcher examined whether the students have the chance to gain these skills in any context, and then he examined whether they have a chance to gain these cognitive processes in a context similar to that of the standards. For example, students in fifth grade are asked to analyze how certain visual or oral elements incorporated into a text add to its effectiveness. For this standard, the researcher coded the data, looking for instances where students practice the conceptual/cognitive process of analysis in any context. He tried to locate whether in general students use the cognitive process of analyzing a situation, a text, a story, or an event. Then he attempted to locate whether students have the chance to practice analysis conceptual processes in reading and writing contexts.

After finishing this coding cycle, the researcher examined the codes to find common themes or ideas among them. Similar codes were organized in groups and categories which were used to determine findings. The coding process was accompanied by writing
memos that described the researcher’s reflections on coding in relation to the research questions. Many of these memos were incorporated in the Chapter six of this study.

Textual analysis.

I, the researcher, read Islamic studies textbooks for first, third, fifth and seventh grades thoroughly, from cover to cover, before I made any attempt to code their content. This initial reading included the preface, table of contents, and lessons in order to develop a general conception of what conceptual processes are included in them. Using the same list of conceptual processes that was used to code the interviews (included above in the interview section), I coded the content of the Islamic Studies textbooks. The coding process took place using the “note” option available upon reading the book in digital format. For example, when I read the first chapter of the first grade textbook, I wrote a code and called it “Central Idea explained”. This coding process was accompanied by writing memos on a word document. Each memo included a number that refers to the page in the book, another number refers to the paragraph in the page, and a third number refers to the grade level of the book. Memos and codes were organized in categories based on the conceptual processes they refer to. Finally, category memos were incorporated into the study.

Figure 3.1 illustrates below outlines the data sources and how they can inform findings and conclusions.
Creswell (2007) noted that the most popular ways of supporting internal validity are triangulating data from different resources, providing a thick description of data collection and interpretation, and taking findings back to participants to verify or alter them. Data regarding home discourses of Muslim families were triangulated with interviews with parents, home visits, and textual analysis of Islamic studies textbooks.
Data for academic literacy and academic language skills that can be challenging to ESL students were collected from the researcher’s analysis of the CCSS, literature on CCSS, and literature on academic language and academic literacy.

Member check interview questions were conducted with participants during home visits in order to confirm the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The purpose of the member check interview questions was to make sure that the researcher understood and correctly interpreted what participants meant in their interview statements. The researcher also kept a researcher’s journal to document all steps of the research journey. His researcher’s journal documents what Merriam (2009) called “audit trail” which refers to recording in detail how “data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (p.223). In his researcher’s journal, the researcher kept track of all inquiry stages, as well as his thoughts during the research journey. The researcher’s journal also explains his biases and assumptions, in order to make clear how they might influence the data analysis and interpretation.

Furthermore, the researcher attempted to provide a thick description of the research setting, context, participants, interviews and home visits, in order to allow readers to reach the findings themselves (Creswell, 2007).

**Ethical Consideration**

The objectives and the design and timeline of the study were explained to the participants in detail. Also, an informed consent form was written and given to the participants by hand. The researcher asked participants to read it and ask him if they had any further questions. The consent form explained the title, design, timeline of the study, possible risks, and how the researcher guaranteed protection of participants’
confidentiality and privacy. The researcher also stated clearly that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any moment.

Protection of data and participants’ identities was a priority for this study. Participants were given pseudonyms to hide their identity. The researcher kept the data locked where only he had access to it. Electronic files of data or data analysis were password protected on a computer that was password protected, as well.
Chapter 4

Participants and School Setting

To contextualize the analysis of this study, this chapter examines key details about participants of the study and the school setting. The first section of this chapter illustrates who the participants are, and which details about their histories contribute to my understanding of the findings of the study. The second section will describe in detail Manar Islamic School (MIS), the private school from which the participants were drawn.

Participants

In response to an email invitation, parents of students at Manar Islamic School (MIS) volunteered to participate in this study. I, the researcher, selected four parents from four families, two mothers and two fathers.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Table 3.1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the selected participants.

Table 3.1: Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>How long in the U.S.?</th>
<th># children in MIS</th>
<th>Grades of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abu Ali</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2nd &amp; 8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hafsa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kindergarten &amp; 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ismail</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3rd &amp; 7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jameela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Wolof</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>K &amp; 5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the key findings of this study is that home discourses of the participants are strongly influenced by who the participants are and where they come from. As will
appear in the following chapters, participants’ histories influence what themes, values, topics and activities they share with their children.

Abu Ali, who speaks both Arabic and English, chose to speak in Arabic occasionally during the interviews when he did not feel confident responding in English. In cases when he spoke Arabic, I translated his statements and included in this study both the Arabic version and the English translation of his words.

**Abu Ali**

Abu Ali is an Iraqi engineer in his forties. He has two daughters and two sons who all attend Manar Islamic School (MIS); the sons are in high school and the daughters are in elementary and middle grades at MIS. Explaining his career, Abu Ali says that he has “experience for the aviation engineer that for maybe 20 years” (Abu Ali 1L7).2

Abu Ali communicates in English, but his Arabic is more organized and easier to follow. During the interviews, he had some challenges expressing himself in English, and consequently he chose to speak Arabic when needed. Abu Ali came to the U.S. as a refugee after the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003; he came to escape the persecution of militant Shiite groups.

Abu Ali has an aviation engineering license from an academic institution in Turkey, another license from Jordan, and he studied for a third license in the U.S. His two sons are attending a private high school in aviation engineering and one of them is licensed to fly aircraft. Abu Ali seems pleased that his sons chose engineering careers; he said, “That

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2 The number after his pseudonym refers to the number of the interview, and the number after the letter “L” refers to the line of the vignette in the interview transcript.
is especially for the flight school. And he is given the license for the private pilot; I think that is a good life for him” (Abu Ali 1L15).

He also has two daughters, 12 and 8 years old; both study in MIS. He commented, “The Arabic daughter follows the mom and boys follow the father. I think so but I am not sure (laughing)” (Abu Ali 1L77). Still, he also confirmed, often confusing gendered pronoun usage in his English:

I share with my daughter for the study. I teach him the Quran; I teach him the Arabic language. Ya, I share with him that. And the school give him … some homework for the Arabic and Quran. I assist him with them to complete this work (Abu Ali 1L51).

Regarding why he sent his daughters to MIS, Abu Ali said: “I share my daughter with (…) school, because they benefit from it. It is expensive a little bit, but I share with him, because they benefit about this money” (Abu Ali 1L82).

Abu Ali teaches the Quran to his children and he highlights its value in his life and in the lives of his children. He said:

To us as Muslims, Quran is part of our life, so we consider it our Constitution. From the Quran they learn what's right and what's wrong. And everything exists in the Quran; it explains to them that this is wrong. Or that this is right so it helps them take away from making mistakes. (Abu Ali 1L291).

He pays special attention to teaching his children the Arabic and Bedouin culture that he belongs to, so he brought with him from Iraq a musical instrument that is used in his homeland, Iraq. He said:

نحن أصلنا بالعراق أصلنا شمر فأصلنا يوبيكي، فجيء معي رباب، بالسعودية وبالكويت وبالخليج، فجيء الربابة معاي عشان تكون ذكرى لهم حتى لا ينسون أصلهم يعني وتكون موجودة

We are originally from the Shammar tribe, so we are originally Bedouin, so I brought with me Rababa (name of instrument). Our tribe has roots in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Gulf. So I brought with me the Rababa to remind them of their origin so that they do not forget it (Abu Ali 3L94).
Abu Ali is strongly influenced by the Shiite-Sunni conflict in Iraq and it affects many activities that happen in his house. Abu Ali said:

And today I listened to my brother who called me and told me that this woman is killed. He is my friend. He is my teacher and my friend too. He taught me in elementary school. When we grew older, we went to the same mosque and lived in the same city. He is my friend. I am very angry that the Iranian sent the Shia to kill my community. I do not like that. My kids ask me why Iranian kill Sunna inside Baghdad. I tell because these people are bad; they do not like Sunna (…) I am sorry for talking about this because this thing is breaking my heart. (…) Because you know what they do now is send people to kill people over there. And send people kills Iraqi Sunna now” (Abu Ali 2L244).

I believe that Abu Ali in the previous vignette is referring to a man who was killed, not a woman; he confused the pronouns she and he repeatedly during the interviews.

When I asked him how his children respond to him, he added:

They are angry, my kids. Because before last week, that my sister’s son died too because when he was sick they sent him to this hospital. This hospital is inside the Shia city. In Shia city cannot go with my sister to treatment with my sister’s son. Because Shia will take him from the hospital and kill him because he is Sunna. I talked to my brother and told him not to go with my sister because that is very dangerous (Abu Ali 2L250).

And he continued:

And my kids ask me why their cousin is die, ya. Why cousin is die? They love him, and he is very smart. I tell them because the Shia control this hospital, can my brother go help him, can my brother go take him some blood. If he needs blood changed. But my brother cannot go over there. I tell him no, do not go over there, the Shia will kill you (Abu Ali 2L255-257).

Abu Ali has a reason for telling these stories to his children. He said:

I tell him that… because I don’t want my kids to go over there. That is very dangerous. And especially, my old son, whose name is (said the name), this name is not liked by the Shia. They will kill him directly. That is very dangerous (Abu Ali 2L270).
In this vignette, Abu Ali mentioned that his son’s name is not liked by the Shiites because he is named after one of the prominent figures in Islamic history who is strongly disliked by the Shiites.

Abu Ali’s history affects how he explains stories to his children. Commenting on the Biblical and Quranic story of Joseph, Abu Ali said:

Like Youssef (PBUH) why his brothers wronged him and they left him inside the well and they did not like because he is beautiful and he is smart. And why his brothers do not like him. We are smart and we are rich and that is why the Shia do not like me. Do not like my brother, do not like all the Sunna. They think that Sunna is better than them (Abu Ali 2L277).

This history affects Abu Ali’s children as well. One of his children has nightmares because of what he had witnessed in Iraq. Abu Ali said:

Because that is have a problem for my middle son after he sees the Shia army coming to my store. He shoots and shoots my brother too. That is have a problem. After that, he has bad dreams at night (Abu Ali 2L183).

It also impacts activities that he and his children do together; his children do not want him to watch the news so that he does not lose his temper. When I asked him whether his children watch TV, Abu Ali said, “They do, but they do not watch the news especially that I lose my temper when I watch the news” "بيتفرجوا لكن ما يحبوا الأخبار. خاصة أنه أنا لما أشعر عصبي " (Abu Ali 3L190).

Hafsa

Hafsa is from Afghanistan. She has been in the U.S. for ten years, ever since she married; her husband came to the U.S. as a refugee. The main language spoken at home is Farsi. She has two children who attend MIS.

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3 (PBUH) stands for Peace Be Upon Him, an expression used by Muslims when they mention the names of prophets.
Hafsa had a quite eventful history. She said, “When I was two years old, Russia attacked Afghanistan and all my family were in prison for three years and left Afghanistan and went to another neighboring country” (Hafsa 1L7). Ahmed, Hafsa’s husband, “came when the Russian war started in Afghanistan, he came as a refugee” (Hafsa 2L78). Then Hafsa came after she got married to him in 2003.

Hafsa’s schooling was interrupted several times since her childhood, she said:

I did (go to school), but ours was chopped up. I went to school and then we stopped going to school because we moved to another city, they did not have school. In the city where I live … we lived had an Afghani school. Then moved to another city in Pakistan, they did not have the Afghani school. I knew the language but then the curriculum was very different. So we did not go to school for five years. We went back to the same city and went to the same school again. It took me a long time to finish school. And then started to going to college. Then 9/11 happened, and then went back to Afghanistan. So, I did not go back to college there. Now I am here and I started my school” (Hafsa 1L16).

The reason she values education and encourages her children to do so is related to who she is and what she wanted to do. She said:

Actually, I like them to pay attention to their studies more. I started to go to school late when I had my son and… he saw how much I struggled because English is my second language. I came here when I was starting to learn English. I started ESL classes. Then I graduated nursing school (Hafsa 1L62).

Themes of communication in her household are also related to her history and to who she is. She noted:

I always tell them if you ever have a goal and you work towards it, then nothing can stop you. If you give up… It was easy for me give up, but I did not give up because I know my family needs me here and in Afghanistan. I usually talk to them about my school and how much I struggled (Hafsa 1L63).

Hafsa is passionate about teaching. When I asked her whether she teaches her children, she said:

I love teaching and I was a teacher. My first job was a teacher in Pakistan. Ahh.
Usually with younger kids, I am not good with teenagers. 
I was a teacher assistant in one of the five star day cares… not a day care …it was a school and I taught in one pre-k year in my kids’ school. 
Ahh, so I think … teaching is my passion.. I love teaching (Hafsa 1L91-94).

However, Hafsa’s ability to help her children is influenced by the type of education she received and the limits of her linguistic and educational abilities. When I asked her about teaching religion to her children, she said:

I don’t know much. I am guilty of that. When we were at school we studied few years. We studied very good, but I don’t have memorized or I don’t know the whole meaning of the Quran. What we read at school that is what I know and I used to read a lot of book when I was back. What I remember we talk about that. We do not sit and take out the Quran and read it (Hafsa 2L106).

Hafsa does not work as a teacher any more, and I will not mention her job title or activities related to it because revealing her job title might reveal her identity. Also, the limits of her Arabic language abilities influence what she teaches to her children and how she does so. She said:

Arabic is my second language, I can read Arabic, but I do not know the meaning. So, if I read with him, then we go find the meaning of the words, then I write it down under the word for him… under the English … then he reads then he goes over…. Then I read for him, then I translate it for him… then I ask him. That helped a lot… I did that for a month. Then I got lazy. Then I saw the difference in his grade and also in his learning (Hafsa 1L124).

Regarding English she said:

In English, we do the same. Sometime because …. Not sometimes…. All the time, because my English is not good… I started learning nine years ago. If I don’t know a word, then I google how to pronounce it, its meaning. Then we go from there. (Hafsa 1L132).

As for language use at home, she said:

We don’t speak English at home a lot. Sometimes it slips, but I usually make him speak in Farsi. It is hard for my daughter.. it was easy for my son because I kept him home for two years. And he was almost two years old when we took him to
school, and he learned English very fast, but before that he was very fluent in Farsi. But my daughter, we put her in school when he was six months old. So, she was exposed to English and then she would come home and we talked to her in Farsi. So, she started talkingly. And we took her to [Manar] school and here she learned Arabic and English and then she comes home and we talk to her in Farsi. She just stopped talking… she would not respond at all. She finally started talking… and I think taking her back home helped too. Because there she had to communicate in Farsi. Hmm, so that help now. But before if he asks me in English, I would respond to him in Farsi. I tell her I do not understand what you are saying, so now she asks me. She tells me how do I say it. So, I tell her in Farsi and she repeats and her Farsi is getting better now (Hafsa 1L276).

Regarding her son’s usage of Farsi, she said, ‘Sometimes we make him write grocery list, but sometimes it is hard to write in Farsi. Like I was telling him to write “chai” and he was “how do write sh (sound)?”’ (Hafsa 1L285).

Hafsa intends to help her children in the same way she learns. She said:

He had some difficult subjects that we had to read about it a lot. But if it happens that he does not understand it, then we had to …. It has not happened yet, but I know I learn when I am studying and I do not know a topic, I am a visual person, so I go to Youtube if it is a …. A procedure and I read ten times and I do not know how to do it, then I go to Youtube and usually they are very good. I do not know if it is because it is health field and they have a lot of things. But if that happens and my son does not understand what I tell him then I can either make a picture of it or file, or show a video of it, whatever makes it easier for him (Hafsa 1L201).

Hafsa does not read often, she said:

No, I am not …. I do not know if I should have that excuse or not. I am too busy, I miss. I was the person who would read at 2 o’clock at night. My mom would turn off the lights at night and I would read in the light of the moon. I miss that. Now, I do not read.

I like reading in Farsi and Urdu because that what I learned. So, I do not enjoy reading in English. So, and I do not have the time. I come home, then I cook and study with the kids… and study for my school and go to school, because my job is a lot of driving and I do not wanna fall asleep (Hafsa 1L30-332).

Hafsa likes stories; she said, “When we were in Afghanistan, my husband’s sister used to tell stories in Pakistan” (Hafsa 2L237). That is why she likes to tell stories to her
children, but she does not know how to be as good at it as her sister-in-law who “was good in story-telling. When she tells a story, like we are watching a movie” (Hafsa 2L245). Recently, Hafsa’s family purchased a machine that helps them watch TV channels from all over the world. They watch channels that show movies based on real religious stories. Hafsa said:

Sometimes we talk about religious stories and then .. we since we had bought this box, we can watch any … like Iranians make really good movies on prophets and since they know the language, they can know, they can ask, .. They watch those movies (Hafsa 2L265).

Ismail

Ismail is a medical provider from Pakistan. He has four children: a son and three daughters. His older son and daughter graduated from MIS and the younger one is still attending. He received his higher education in the U.S. Commenting on his life back home, Ismail said:

I came from a very average family, and parents have struggled a lot and we in the United States have struggled in the start but now, Alhamdulellah⁴, things are settling down. I want my kids to have the opportunity to choose what they wanna to do, such as a .. choosing a major and choosing a career (Ismail 1L7)

Due to his understanding of what he needed in his early life in the U.S., Ismail highlights to his children the importance of finding and utilizing resources available to them in the surrounding communities. Ismail said:

And figure it out, what do they want to do (…) And what other guidance around do they have, as I was telling them. I have told them several times that I did not have anybody who has came along and take me the places and tell me this is what it is, this what it is, things like that (Ismail 1L65-66).

Ismail tells his children about certain things in his life history. He said:

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⁴ “Al Hamdulellah” is an Arabic term meaning “Thank God” (or Thanks be to God)
I talk to them about the way I was brought up, things that I did and I wanted to
and was not able to do because of multiple reasons, such as poverty, such as
living.. such as resources… Okay.
And I compare them to what we have today on fingertips … the internet, the
information, the resources ... a lot of ways to learn (Ismail 1L56).

Ismail seemed very grateful that he sent his children MIS. He commented on why he
decided to send all of his children to this school:

I was fortunate enough; my youngest daughter went to [Manar] School. So when
she went to this school, I would say couple of weeks later, she was reading
phrases from the Holy Book… the Quran (…) And that really amazed me (Ismail
2L222-224).

This happened at the time when the older son and daughter were going to public
schools. After this incident, Ismail said:

I spoke to my wife and we made a decision together that we were gonna put them
in Manar. Number one it is gonna be tuition addition, number two we’re gonna
have an easy life as bringing them up according to the religion (Ismail 1L232).

Ismail continued to appreciate MIS after he sent his older children there as well. He
said: “So Alhmaduieellah, my… [Manar] has done a wonderful job of … and my son
comes home, he probably had the opportunity to in school, to lead the prayers or pray
with other kids” (Ismail 1L232).

A remarkable incident that increased Ismail’s conviction of the value of the school
was when he observed his children praying together at home without being prompted by
their parents. Narrating this incident, Ismail said:

I was going to school for my medicine not working so when I come back from
school I’m tired. Fortunately enough that there were days that I would come home
early, and in my son’s bedroom I was taking a nap. All of the sudden well you are
tired all day long or all week long or few weeks back, right? So you got this
opportunity to take a nap, right? When you are taking this nap during the day it is
a luxury for you, right? So you are like completely out, all of the sudden I start
hearing “ALLAH Akbar”, and I thought that I’m dreaming, again “ALLAH Akber”.
So I started opening my eyes, then, “Sameaa ALLAH Leman Hamedah”. I was
like, “what is going on?” So I came out of the room to see my son for the first time leading the congregation, leading the prayer, brought tears to my eyes. Ever since then, and that was the first time I saw it and that is because (Manar). I didn’t know they were doing it. I’m like any parent taking my kids to the school, it is Islamic school, it is private school, and fine kids get their education. I didn’t know it is going to turn my son into that! I didn’t know it’s going to turn my daughter into giving the corrections while my son is leading! I think this school and the school for sure was built by the blessing of ALLAH (Ismail 2L88).

Ismail gives his older children autonomy in their education. He and his wife trust their children’s reports regarding the latter’s level of achievement in the school setting.

He said:

Older kids I ask them if you read. (...) And have you learnt something from it?
Yes
That is all I need from them because I want them to have this from us that we trust them, okay? And then when school work comes around, and they are doing English, they are doing their math, they are doing their science; well of course we get the results, okay?
So, at the end we get the results and we know if they have not done that, the results will be lower. So I don’t need to do anything… my older kids are auto pilot per se (Ismail 1L314-321).

This is not to say that Ismail under-values the importance of parent involvement in his children’s schooling. He said:

There is different approach to get from point A to point B for the kids. To me I think school is a very important aspect of it. School is a main aspect of it, but not only school can do it. Very few gifted children may just go to school and turn out to be successful people, but along with the school I think parents have a very important job to do. Not just for the education, but for the manners and how their kids live in the society. (...) Once you send the kids to school, you wash your hands and you sit, “That’s it, my kids are going to be fine”. No, you’re going have to put a lot in to it if you want to see your kid to be successful, okay? (Ismail 2L136).

Unlike Abu Ali, Ismail does not have much knowledge about the Quran and stories in it, so he does not tell stories to his children, whether from the Quran or not. Yet, he

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5 Ellipsis
teaches his children the Islamic knowledge that he learns in the mosque (Masjid). Ismail said:

You know when you go to the masjid and when you are regular in the masjid every single day you learn something. Sometimes it’s stuck in your head and sometimes it doesn’t as a normal human being. So a lot of stories that I have or you know little Hadeeths and the Tafseer and all that in the Mosque. I go sometimes sit with them and tell them (Ismail 2L52).

Similar to all the other participants, Ismail indicated that gender influences the types of activities that he does with his children. He noted:

We have two parts of our family: male and female, okay? Wife takes care of the daughters, Okay? Wife shows them more about the feminine things. Now, for example, the older daughter is getting older. How to cook… how to do a little bit of stitching and knitting and stuff like that. How keep things around. How to fashion yourself with clothing (Ismail 1L151).

He, on the other hand, takes care of educating his son in outside-of-home situations. For instance, he teaches him how to buy things in the store, taking into consideration the face value of products compared to the price. He attributes this division of tasks to his lack of knowledge about female affairs, such as clothing and fashion. Also, he attributes it to respect; he noted that there are private issues that out of respect, he cannot discuss with his daughter, but his wife can. He declared that he discussed similar issues with his sons.

However, Ismail takes care of the affairs of his daughter that take place outside of the home, such as driving. He noted that he knows that his wife is busy at home and does exhausting work, so they decided he would take his daughter to teach her to drive. Still,

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6 The word *Hadith* refers to a saying of the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and the word *Tafseer* refers to an explanation of the meaning of the Quran.
he noted that he does not want his children to assume that housework is a mother's work only, so he intentionally washes the dishes to educate them.

**Jameela**

Introducing herself, Jameela said:

I am Jameela… I am from Senegal, West Africa …. Okay. Hmmm, I am Muslim. I am a mom of three, and a student, going to school part-time right now. I can’t go full time… it is too hard… (laugh). This semester I am doing part time.. I am doing Pre-Nursing right now. And I volunteer here at school, mostly; I am almost here every day. And when I am done, I go home and do my mom’s job. Full time there (laugh) (Jameela 2L4-8).

Unlike the other participants who indicated they do not do many activities with their children, Jameela said, “We don’t have much to do really. (…) We don’t have much friends (Jameela 2L113-115). Ismail indicated that he plays with children every day, Abu Ali said that he cooks barbeque with his children and takes them to the mosque every day, and Hafsa said that she takes her children to the chess club and soccer and other activities; but Jameela’s life is limited to the school and home settings. She said that she occasionally takes her children to walk in the malls and play around next to the house.

When I asked her when she first came to the U.S, she said: “First time, long time ago. It was 1999. Then I go back. Then I settle. So I have been here mostly six years” (Jameela 2L10). She added, “I came here to study, when I first came. I already got an associate degree in Computer Information System from New York. Then I stopped then I started working” (Jameela 2L21-23). Jameela does not have any relatives in the city where she now lives, but she has friends.

Concepts and ideas that Jameela teaches to her children are strongly influenced by who she is and where she comes from. When I asked her about what she teaches her
children, she said: “What is good, what is bad, what they should do, what they should not
do…. Hmmmm, what they should expect, too. It is not gonna be like their way” (Jameela
1L13-15). When I asked for clarification, she said, “They should expect. This is not how
I wanted it and it is gonna be that way” (Jameela 1L17). More of how her history affects
what she teaches to her children will be explained in later chapters.

During the interview, Jameela was very reluctant to talk about her life history, but it
was clear from the way she spoke and statements she made that her life history affects the
household discourse. Referring to her children, she said:

If things seem strange to them, they think things should be that way… why is
this? … this like not that way. I am like nooo, it is not like that all the way. It is
not like this person … you must have the same thing. Like we should be… we are
not all equal (Jameela 1L41).

Even though she did not mention it clearly in the interviews, Jameela’s husband does
not live with them and I did not ask for the reason. The fact that her husband is absent
from the home explains what she refers to when she tells her children that it is normal
that people do not get what they want. Realizing that she is responsible for preparing
them for the future, and being afraid that things for them will not go as they want,
Jameela wants her children to be ready for life. She said, “I just wanna get them ready …
for life… You don’t know when you are gonna pass, you are not gonna be here forever,
so you have to prepare them” (Jameela 1L113-114).

Jameela said about her children that “besides Arabic and English, they write in
French. French is not much. When they got here, mostly now about Arabic and English”
(Jameela 1L366-367). More about what they write and how they practice writing will be
discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
Her children recently spent several years in Senegal. She said, “They were there; they just came back. They speak the African dialect (...) I sent them to learn Quran, they just came back. They lost all their English” (Jameela 1L70-74). When I asked how long her children stayed in Senegal, she said, “A while, maybe 2 or 3 years. They just came back last August” (Jameela 1L76). As for herself, Jameela said, “I was coming back and forth” (Jameela 1L79).

Similar to the other three participants, Jameela indicated that boys and girls do different things in the household. When I asked about her children in the home, she said:

The boys run around the house. Arrange things… sometimes they just wanna pick the broom and start sweeping (...). The girl wants to wash dishes and then… do things… women things. She wants to help all the time. She will learn by helping you. When cooking, they learn things, when it is time to … do something like cut things… how to cut them, how to arrange them … I mean she learn different things (Jameela 1L197-201).

School Setting

Manar Islamic School (MIS)

MIS, where the study was conducted, is a North Central accredited (NCA) private school. It was established in 2001 to serve the Muslim community in this Southwest U.S city. The school is dedicated to offering both secular and religious education. The concept secular education in the school context refers to subject area classes other than Arabic and Islamic Studies. The school’s mission states that MIS is an institution that aims to maintain the ethnic and cultural roots and moral values of its Muslim students. The aim of the school is to build American citizens with Islamic values and morals.
Enrollment

Chart 4.1 includes enrollment data from the academic year 2013/2014.

Table 4.1: School Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of ESL Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Pre-K</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd /4th</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th, 7th, 8th</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart shows that 70% of the students who attend this school are ESL students.

The number of ESL students who attend grades one through eight is 31 out of 44 with a percentage of 70% as well.

School curriculum

To achieve its mission, the school offers the following classes (retrieved from the school’s website):

- Arts
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Arabic Language
- Quran knowledge and recitation
- Islamic Studies
- Library
- Physical Education
• Computer Education

All students are required to attend all classes, including Arabic and Islamic Studies. The Islamic Studies curriculum uses Islamic Studies textbooks published by Iqra Foundation. The textbooks include the following branches of Islamic knowledge: Quran memorization and understanding (Tafseer), life of the prophet (Seera), sayings and actions of the prophet (Hadeeth), Islamic belief (Aqeedah), Islamic morals (Adab), and general Islamic knowledge. The Arabic curriculum, as well, uses the Arabic textbooks published by Iqra Foundation. The textbooks are written in English.

The school functions five days a week starting at 8:15 in the morning and ending at 4:00 in the afternoon. The school day includes eight 45-minute periods with five minutes between every two periods. The school dedicates 15 minutes in the afternoon for prayer after a 45-minute lunch break.

Manar Islamic School relies on students’ tuition to cover its expenses. Consequently, the school prioritizes admitting students based on their ability to pay the tuition. However, the school offers scholarships to help talented students and it offers financial assistance for students who are in need of it. Such support is covered through funds raised from the community in fundraising events and from donors who pledge a monthly donation. In addition to scholarships and financial assistance, the school adopts a discount policy for families who have more than one child in the school. Households’ yearly income is the main criterion for students’ eligibility for financial assistance. Rates of assistance are measured based on yearly income of the family and the total number of family members. Priority of financial assistance is for families who earn less money and have more members in the family. Among families who need financial assistance,
priority of admission is given to students whose families are willing to work/volunteer in return for the financial assistance they get. Due to space limitations, the school prefers to admit students with less or no financial need to those who need higher rates of assistance.

The school has adopted standards-based instruction and assessment practices. Even though the curriculum and instruction are aligned with the mandated standards of the state’s Public Education Department, the school allows teachers to modify their instruction to better serve the needs of every student. Since 2012, the school has been working to align curriculum, instruction and assessment with the Common Core State Standards followed by the state’s Public Education Department.

Currently, standardized tests written in English are used in all grades except the pre-kindergarten to measure students’ academic growth and guide instruction. In addition to ongoing assessments, the school conducts standardized final exams in all subjects: the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is used for subject area classes, and Iqra Standardized tests (written in English) are used for assessing Islamic Studies classes offered as electives in the school with the purpose of maintaining students’ ethnic roots and Islamic moral values. As a member of the Education Committee (EC) in the school, I have developed for the school a set of standards-based assessments for the Arabic curriculum following the national standards of the teaching of Arabic (MIS official website).

**Dress Code**

The school’s *Employee Handbook* states that all members are required to dress in a manner appropriate to Islamic teachings. This means that all blouses for women must cover at least ¾ of the arms and all the neck/chest area, and they must be loose. Dresses/slacks/outfits must also be loose and cover the entire leg. Thin and see-through
clothing is not allowed. Male clothing, also, is expected to be loose and not revealing. Shirts must have at least half sleeves and cover the chest. Thin and see-through clothing is not allowed for men either.

**Parent Involvement**

The *School Handbook* states that a letter must be sent home during the first week of school to inform students’ parents of any items/materials needed during the school year. Also, teachers must send weekly newsletters to parents to inform them of the goals and objectives of the coming week, the material that will be covered during the week, and reminders of upcoming tests, projects, etc. The handbook indicates that parents need to sign these letters and return them to the school. Other letters are sent occasionally, if needed, to inform parents if their children fail to meet the school’s academic requirements or code of conduct. Also, teachers must complete monthly progress reports, which are reviewed by the school’s principal two days before the end of every month and sent to parents the last business day of the month. Also, the school developed a communication folder to be sent to parents, when needed, to inform them of their children’s progress and conduct.

The students are assigned a classroom teacher who is in charge of generating report cards for each student. To do so, the classroom teacher contacts other teachers and asks them to provide a grade in their subject area for each student in the class. Furthermore, a parent-teacher conference is held at the end of each trimester to provide an opportunity for teachers to communicate with the parents about the successes and challenges they faced with their children. Parents should be contacted before the middle of the semester if teachers feel that their child is likely to be held back.
Student Achievement

The school requires teachers to prepare their students to progress at least one grade equivalent (GE) in mathematics and reading, as measured by Star Math and Reading tests. Furthermore, the end-of-semester average for every class in each subject is expected to be above average according to the GE measurement on the Star Math and Reading tests.

Student Retention Policy

The school follows the state’s law that requires schools to have an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) for any student who falls behind in academic achievement. In MIS, teachers track their students continuously to determine if they are eligible for an AIP. Once a student is diagnosed as in need of a remedial plan, teachers and parents will work together to decide on a plan that highlights academic deficiencies of the student, and strategies to address these challenges. Implementation of the AIP is led by the classroom teacher under the supervision of the principal and school administration. If the AIP does not help the student to achieve better academic yearly progress, teachers, principal and the student’s parent will meet and examine other options that might include one or more of the following:

- Mandatory summer remediation program
- Mandatory after school and/or summer tutoring
- Mandatory/optional combination of both summer remediation and tutoring
- Seek private tutoring services
- Enroll student in a professional tutoring institution

The school’s retention policy indicates that if students fail to demonstrate academic progress, they will be retained in the same grade for no more than one year.
**Gifted Students and Students with Special Needs**

The school has a special program for gifted students where, they the MIS Gifted and Grade Advancement Policy. This policy applies from second to eighth grades. Even though the school is not prepared to serve students with special needs, the school promises to provide a safe environment for all students, including those with special needs. To do so, the school works with the local public school district to insure the availability of services for their special MIS students.

To help students improve their academic achievement, the school holds intensive summer programs for students from kindergarten through high school. The content of these programs does not repeat the same material that students cover during the school year; it is meant to help students to overcome academic challenges that they face, including language challenges.

The school also provides private tutoring and after-school services to help students complete their homework and overcome challenges that they face. Also, the school provides special professional English language development for its ESL students through state funding. Funds received from the state are used to hire professionals in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to train teachers how to better serve the needs of their ESL students. A portion of these funds is used to purchase English reading material. Currently, a faculty member from the state university is hired to train teachers how to help ESL students in content area classes.
Chapter 5

Textual Analysis

In this chapter, I provide the results of the textual analysis of both the CCSS and the Islamic Studies textbooks used in Manar Islamic School (MIS).

Textual analysis of Common Core State Standards

The goal of this section is to analyze the CCSS English Language Arts (ELA) Informational and Literature Reading standards to display the conceptual processes embedded in them. This chapter includes a detailed analysis of the reading standards and a brief description of the writing and speaking standards, and how the conceptual processes included in the reading standards are the same as those demanded by the speaking and writing standards.

My first intention was to analyze reading standards only and leave writing, speaking and listening standards for future studies. Based on this goal, the study was conducted with the intent of looking for activities that Muslim ESL students practice in their homes and in their textbooks of Islamic Studies to compare findings to the conceptual processes embedded in the reading standards of the CCSS. Now, however, this analysis of the standards incorporates conceptual processes included in the writing standards, as well because they are relevant to the reading standards most of the time.

Interviews for this study were coded using Atlas-Ti software qualitative data analysis. Related codes were categorized and analytic memos were written and incorporated. After the initial analysis of the data, it was clear to me that reading for comprehension was not a common activity in most families, and neither was writing. On the contrary, speaking and oral communications were dominant in most families’ discourses.
Consequently, I decided to refer briefly to the conceptual processes included in the listening and speaking standards, as well. This is brief summary is included below after the extensive analysis of the reading standards.

**Reading standards.**

The ten overarching reading standards of the CCSS are referred to as College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. Students are expected to meet them when they graduate from high school. Anchor Standards describe what students should be able do in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and English language skills, such as recognizing “Standard English” and acquiring and using vocabulary (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). Standards in the grade levels are designed to help students achieve the Anchor Standards by the time students finish high school; thus, grade level standards constitute a progression towards the Anchor Standards. The following pages include an analysis of conceptual processes in grade level standards and how they lead to conceptual processes demanded by the Anchor standards. Figure 5.1(on the following five pages) illustrates both anchor and grade level standards with the conceptual processes embedded in them. This is an exhaustive listing of conceptual processes that students need to master by fifth grade, in addition to those conceptual processes which students need to master in seventh grade. This analysis does not include the tenth Anchor standard, which is about text complexity, because it is purely about reading complex texts that require different measures, part of which are quantitative. Also, this list does not include the sixth and the eighth grade standards because the textbooks for those grades are not part of this study.

This list includes conceptual processes which were found in the households studied, as well as conceptual processes which were not. An analysis of which conceptual
processes are included in the Islamic Studies textbooks will appear in the second section of this chapter, and an analysis of which conceptual processes are included in the households will be in the following chapters.

**Figure 5.1: Conceptual Processes in the CCSS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anchor Standard#</th>
<th>Academic Skills</th>
<th>Conceptual processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text</td>
<td>- Ask and answer questions about details in the reading text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conceptual Processes</strong> (CPs)</td>
<td><strong>1 - establish explicit message</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 - make inferences based on details</td>
<td>3 - draw conclusions based on evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1 - Ask and answer questions and draw inferences</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 - refer to text when drawing inference or explaining what the message says</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7 - Cite textual evidence to analyze what a text states explicitly and what it implies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Refer to texts when explaining an understanding of an idea/message</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas</td>
<td><strong>1 - retell stories including key details and the main message</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CPs:</strong> 1-Find the main idea or a theme in a text</td>
<td><strong>- Determine the main topic and retell main details in a text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2- Trace and analyze the development of main themes or ideas</td>
<td><strong>2 - Find the morals of and recount folktales, myths coming from different cultures, and fable tales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3- locate and summarize key details</td>
<td><strong>- In information text, understand the focus of a certain paragraph</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3 - Same as above</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 - Same as above</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-Find out themes and summarize texts recounting key details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-Same as above + summarize the text using key details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Summarize the text, demonstrating an understanding of two ideas supported by key details recounting the key details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine the central theme in a text and summarize the text, tracing and analyzing the development of its main theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|   | Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text | 1 | -Use key details to describe characters, settings and major events | -Use details for describing things |
|   | CPs: Understand the relations between the different components of a literary text such as ideas, events and characters | 2 | -Identify what challenges and events characters go through | -Identify details |
|   |   |   | -Describe connections between events, ideas and concepts | -Make connections |
|   |   |   | 3 | -Describe characters and examine how they contribute to the sequence of actions | -Understand sequence |
|   |   |   |   | -Use language specific to time, sequence and cause, etc. to describe relationships between events, ideas and concepts | -Describe why people behave in a certain way |
|   |   |   | 4 | -Describe ideas, characters, settings, and events in depth | -Describe people, places and events with details |
|   |   |   |   | -Explain events and why they happen, using specific information in the text |   |
|   |   |   | 5 | -Compare settings, events and characters | -Compare based on similarities and differences |
|   |   |   |   | -Identify relationship between historical and scientific texts and ideas in the reading passage |   |
|   |   |   |   | -Describe connections between events and ideas and each other |   |
|   |   |   | 7 | -Analyze interaction between elements of a story or a drama | -Evaluate linguistic tools |
|   | 4 | Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone | 1 | -Ask and answer questions about meaning of words | -Recognize single words |
|   |   | CPs: Understand contextual meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text |   | -Identify words that relate to feelings and the senses |   |
|   |   |   | 2 | -Determine meaning of a word in a text | -Comprehend words and phrases |
|   |   |   |   | -How words and phrases supply meaning in different genres |   |
|   |   |   | 3 | -Identify meanings of content-specific words | -Comprehend words in specific contexts and genres |
|   |   |   |   | -Distinguish literal from non-literal words |   |

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| phrases, figurative and connotative expression, and content-specific vocabulary | 4 | -Identify meanings of content-specific words  
-Identify words that relate to specific characters such as Hercules  
-Rely on context to comprehend words |
| 5 | -Identify meanings of content-specific words including figurative expressions  
-Rely on context to comprehend words  
-Comprehend figurative language |
| 7 | -Determine textual meaning of words  
-Analyze the impact of rhythm and rhymes  
-Identify meaning in context |
| Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole | 1 | -Recognize the differences between storybooks and information texts  
-Use key text features to locate key information about a book  
-Evaluate textual structure  
-Identify text features |
| 2 | -Understand the structure of storybooks, e.g. introductions, etc.  
-Locate key information in the book, effectively using visuals, headings, and familiar sections of the books (e.g., glossaries)  
-Recognize the different parts of a storybook and information books. |
| 3 | -Use specific storybook terminology when speaking or writing about stories or poems such as chapter, stanza and scene  
-Use text features such as keywords to locate information  
-Recognize different genres  
-Develop basic meta-cognitive skills about reading in the different genres |
| 4 | -Recognize the differences between the different genres of written texts such as poems and drama, recognizing and distinguishing the main features of each  
-Describe how events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text are organized  
-Same as above  
-Determine text structure |
| 5 | -Determine how parts of stories, poems, or other texts relate to the whole text whether, it is a story, a drama, or a poem.  
-Compare two texts in regard to structure of events, ideas and concepts, etc.  
-Determine the relation between each part and whole message of the text  
-Locate similarities and differences |
### CPs: Compare and contrast perspectives and how they result in different content

| 1 | -Identify who is narrating the story at the different stages in the text  
-Compare information in text against pictures | -Relate accounts to specific characters  
-Compare details in pictures to those in texts |
| 2 | -Distinguish between the points of view of the different characters in the text  
-Determine the purpose of a text (e.g., author’s main goal) | -Recognize and compare views |
| 3 | -Compare students’ points of views to those of the author | -Compare points of views |
| 4 | -Compare and contrast first- and second-hand narration of the same stories or events | -Compare different accounts of the same event |
| 5 | -Identify the influence of the narrator’s perspective on how she or he describes the event | -Recognize different perspectives |
| 6 | -Analyze the structure of the text of poems and dramas | -Analyze textual structures |

### CPs: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words

| 1 | -Rely on pictures to describe characters and settings in stories and ideas in books | -Interpret visuals to describe events, ideas, places and people |
| 2 | -Use images and print texts to understand details about reading texts such as stories  
-Explain how pictures in a text support the written text | -Interpret text and media to understand details |
| 3 | -Use images and print texts to understand details about reading texts such as stories and books | -Interpret text and media to understand details |
| 4 | -Relate information read in a story or a drama or a poem to other visual or oral material that describes the same text  
-Interpret visual information and describe how illustrations support the written text | -Interpret text and media and relate them to each other |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Analyze how certain visual or oral elements incorporated into a text add to its effectiveness</th>
<th>Solve problem and answer questions quickly by using information presented in different formats</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Compare stories presented in different media</td>
<td>Interpreting texts and visual media to solve problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td>CPs: Evaluate arguments and reasoning based on evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-Identify textual reasons used by an author to support a point</td>
<td>-Identify main argument in a text</td>
<td>Identify main argument in a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-Make relational connections, such as cause and effect, sequence or comparisons, between different parts of a text demonstrating an understanding of how an author uses these tools</td>
<td>Understand relations between different sentences and different paragraphs in a text</td>
<td>Identify the reasoning behind such argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explain how authors support their points with evidence and reason</td>
<td>Identify main argument in a text</td>
<td>Identify the reasoning behind such argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Refer to specific pieces of evidence and determine which pieces of reason they support</td>
<td>Same as above + choose (from among many) which evidence supports which reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches</td>
<td>Compare and contrast experiences and adventures of characters in stories</td>
<td>Comprehend experiences or topics of different characters in a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-Compare and contrast experiences and adventures of characters in stories</td>
<td>-Determine the similarities and differences between two texts about the same topic</td>
<td>Comprehend experiences or topics of different characters in a text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CPs:
- Identify themes
- Compare how different texts and authors approach the same theme

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</table>
| 2 | - Compare more than one version of the same story written by different authors who come from different cultures  
  - Compare and contrast key points in two texts written about the same topic | - Comprehend that two texts address the same topic or story  
  - Compare the two texts to each other |
| 3 | - Compare stories written by same authors including the same characters in order to compare and contrast themes, settings, and plots of these stories  
  - Refer to key details to contrast and compare key points in two texts about the same topic | - Determine themes of stories or main ideas of texts.  
  - Compare texts to each other |
| 4 | - Compare and contrast themes, settings, characters and plots in the different genres such as adventures and mysteries  
  - Integrate information from multiple texts about the same topic | - Identify different genres of texts  
  - Compare settings, characters, themes, etc. |
| 5 | - Compare how stories from the same genre approach similar themes or topics in similar or different manners  
  - Integrate information from multiple texts about the same topic | - Identify themes or topics in different texts.  
  - Evaluate how texts are different  
  - Use relevant textual information from different texts |
| 7 | - Analyze how authors alter history or fiction; through analyzing different texts, write about the same topics | - Comprehend perspective and biases |

This analysis shows that the CCSS emphasize detail-oriented and evidence-based conceptual processes. Details and evidence are the bases for students’ ability to find themes or central ideas of texts, draw inferences and conclusions, and evaluate and
compare authors’ perspectives. This is in addition to determining how an author uses text structure to and linguistic tools to convey a certain message.

**Listening and speaking and writing standards.**

Similar to the case of reading standards, listening and speaking and writing standards focus on comprehending what counts as main ideas and key details, recognizing the different points of views and perspectives, describing people, events, settings, and feelings; analyzing and making clear claims supported by appropriate evidence, and evaluating the work of others. Differences exist, however; in reading standards the focus is on written texts, while in listening and speaking the focus is on audio media files (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

One academic conceptual process included in the listening and speaking standards, not included in the readings ones is group work. In listening and speaking Standard 1, students are expected to participate in meaningful communications in pairs, in groups and in teacher-led group discussions. Also, listening and speaking standards require students to develop an understanding of the differences between formal and informal conventions of English, and when to use each (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Furthermore, in addition to above mentioned conceptual processes for reading and listening and speaking, writing standards emphasize the importance of conducting research projects in collaboration with others. Also, “the CCSS specifically addresses the use of pictures, including multimedia images, to support the students’ writing of informative and explanatory text” (Richards, Sturm & Cali, 2012, p.138). The goal of
using drawings, images and pictures as aids for students writing is to help them bring forward their background knowledge to assist them in writing (Richards, Sturm & Cali, 2012). It is important that pictures that students might use to support their writing be relevant to the writing theme; this, again, brings forward the notion of students’ ability to recognize what a theme is and how it is presented in texts.

Students need to produce various types of writing: argumentative, descriptive/informative, and narrative. In informational writing, students use their describing skills; in argumentative writings, they use reasoning and evidence-demonstrating skills; and narrative writing, they need to demonstrate an understanding of story elements such as characters, settings, dialogue and plot (Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, n.d.; Richards, Sturm & Cali, 2012). In elementary grades, opinion writing, also referred to as argumentative writing, constitutes 30% of students’ writing, informative/explanatory writing constitutes 35%, and narrative writing constitutes 35% (Burke, 2014).

Textual Analysis of Islamic Studies Textbooks

In this section, I analyze the conceptual processes embedded in the Islamic Studies textbooks in MIS, using several samples from the textbooks for first, fifth and seventh grades. All books are published by Iqra international Foundation. They are available in hard copy and online via the Iqra e-book reading application. I obtained e-book versions for the first grade textbook, and both hard copy and e-book versions for fifth and seventh grades. I recorded all conceptual processes available in these textbook, but chose to report only several samples here.
In this section, I analyze the conceptual processes included in the Islamic studies textbooks for grades 1, 5 and 7. Textbooks for first and fifth grades are *We Are Muslims* for grades 1 and 5 respectively, by Dr. Abidullah Ghazi, Dr. Tasneema Ghazi and Huseyin Abiva. The seventh grade textbook is titled *Islamic Tahdhib and Akhlaq*, by Aisha Lemu. The three textbooks were published in 2013. In this section, I will cite each sample analyzed by the corresponding page number, and the lesson number when applicable.

**First grade textbook.**

*We Are Muslims* for first grade includes this introductory page (Figure 5.2) describing how the book is organized.
Notes on Figure 5.2:

- Main theme of the lesson is presented through verses from the Qur’an, Hadith\(^7\), poetry or simple questions

- Main ideas are summarized

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\(^7\) Hadith is a saying of the prophet. The word Hadith is also used to refer to the science of studying the sayings of the prophets in regard to the meaning of the sayings, how they were collected, and how to measure their authenticity.
-Some lesson elements align with the CCSS skill/conceptual process of locating key text features to find information in the text.

- Lessons includes graphic illustrations to help readers build higher thinking skills

The following analysis examines how these features are displayed in the textbook. I will examine the first grade textbook by considering several of its lesson parts: lesson title; Tune In; We Have Learned; Think About it and Do You Know these Words.

**Tune In.**

The main theme of the lesson is generally illustrated through the title of the lesson. In the first lesson on page 1, titled “We are Muslims”, the “Tune In” section shows a chant. At the end of the chant, there is a task for the children that clearly explains the theme of lesson. The chant reads:

Allah made my family and
Allah made me,
Allah made my teachers and
(...)
Let us find out what makes us Muslims (p. 1).

The following three pages of the lesson present sayings or activities which Muslims say or do; they include activities that define who Muslims are. The text on page 3, reads:

We believe in the Prophets of Allah
We believe in Akhira.
We pray to Allah (SWT⁸)
We fast for Allah (SWT)
We share for Allah (SWT).
We go to Hajj for Allah (SWT) (p.3).

In Lesson 7, which is titled “Allah is the Creator”, the “Tune In” section includes only a picture and a question. The answer to the question is explicitly provided at the

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⁸ SWT stands for Subhanahu Wa Ta’la which is an Arabic expressions that means Glory is to due to Him.
bottom of the page. The questions reads, “Can you tell us who made all these?” The answer is, “Allah (SWT) made everything. Allah (SWT) is the Creator, Al-Khaliq” (p.16).

In Lesson 2, the title of the lesson, “We Say Good Words”, directly states the lesson’s theme and content, but the chant was about an example of the theme (saying Salam “The Islamic greeting”). Also, the question at the end of the chant was about the example, not about the theme of the chapter:

We Say Good Words
Tune In
Let us sing this song:
“When we meet a Muslim we say Salam.
As-Salamu ‘Alaykum.
Wa-‘alykum As-Salam”
How many times a day do you say Salam? (p. 5).

Similar to the case in Lesson 1, this lesson presents examples of the theme of the lesson. It presents situations when Muslims say good word (e.g., they say “in the name of Allah (God)” before they begin something).

On the contrary, in Lesson 6, titled “Allah is One”, the majority of the examples in the lesson are not related to the concept of the oneness of Allah. Only three statements in the two pages are about the oneness of Allah: “We believe Allah is One”, “Allah is Al-Ahad. Al-Ahad means “the One”, and “We believe that there is no god but Allah” (p. 14). The next page has the following statements:

Muhammad (PBUH) gave the message of Allah (SWT) to us.
We ask Allah (SWT) to bless Muhammad (PBUH).
When we say the name of Muhammad (PBUH),
We say “Sal Lallahu a’laihi Wa Sallam” (PBUH)
It means that peace and blessings of Allah (SWT) to be upon him (PBUH) (p. 15).
None of the above expressions is about the title of the lesson “Allah is One”. All of them are about the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), even though favors bestowed by the prophet or respecting him are not examples of the theme “Oneness of Allah”.

In Lesson 8, the theme of the story was mixed with another theme, but the main theme was given priority in the title and the final detail. The title of the lesson is “Allah is All Powerful, \textit{Al-Qawi}”. The “Tune In” section, however, presents another theme, “Be thankful”. Examples and the details in the lesson relate to the second theme, which is presented through the Tune In, not the title. Then, the final statement in the lesson relates to the first theme. The title reads, “Allah (SWT) is all Powerful, \textit{Al-Qawi}”. The Tune In section reads: “Be Thankful! Allah (SWT) has done many favors to us. Let us always thank Him and say “Alhamdu Lillah” Can you count his favors?” (p. 22).

Pages that follow include statements in English and pictures that illustrate the favors of God, \textit{Allah} in English, upon humans. Text on the first page reads:

\textit{Allah (Subhanahu Wa’tala, or (SWT in Arabic)) takes care of us. Allah (SWT) made us all. Allah (SWT) made our families. He takes care of all of us all. He takes care of our families} (p. 22).

The remaining two pages of the lesson include a mixture of both themes: statements about things Allah does for humans, and statements that show God’s power. On page 23, the statements read:

\textit{Allah (SWT) makes the sun rise. The sun gives us light. It gives us heat.}
Only Allah (SWT) can make the sun rise.
Allah (SWT) is all powerful, Al-Qawi (p.23).

In Lesson 30, the last lesson in the first grade book, titled “Be patient, Ismail”, the theme was clearly stated at the beginning in the Tune In section, and for the first time in the book, it was established in a story. The Tune In reads:

Fellow brothers and sisters
With whom we share
Show how much we love them
With patience and care (p. 96)

The theme of the story is “being patient”, and this theme is repeated throughout the story.

The story is about Ismail, who wanted a white Persian cat, but he had to wait until his father approved of buying one for him, and then he had to wait until the shopkeeper found one for him. An excerpt from the story reads, “They went to the pet shop for Ismail’s cat. No white Persian cat. The shopkeeper said that he will get it in two days. Ismail had to wait. He had to be patient” (P. 98).

The conceptual processes included in the Tune In section in the first grade Islamic Studies textbook are unclear. The authors say that the Tune In section includes the main theme of the story. Yet in analyzing this section, I the conclude that either 1) the theme is not always the focus of the Tune In section; either the focus is on presenting information related to the title of the lesson; or 2) the information in the Tune In section is the theme of the story, but the concept of theme is defined in one way by the author and in another by the CCSS.
The theme is presented in the title in most cases. However, there are occasions when neither the title nor the Tune In section is related to the details of the lesson, as in Chapter 6 where both the title and Tune In section include the concept of oneness of Allah while the details are about the prophet. Two possible explanations exist: first, neither the title nor the Tune In section is related to the theme, which is favors of the prophet, or second, both the title and the Tune In section include the theme of the lesson; but the details in the lesson are not meant to relate to the theme of the story.

On occasion, the Tune In section includes examples of the topic of the title, and on other occasions it brings in a totally different topic.

**We Have Learned.**

The “We Have Learned” feature recounts details or examples of the lesson, including at times the main idea or the theme. In Lesson 1 described above and whose title and theme is “We are Muslims”, the “We Have Learned” section recounts the details of the lesson as follows:

**WE HAVE LEARNED**

- We believe that Allah (SWT) is the only God.
- Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Prophet of Allah.
- We pray only to Allah (SWT)
- We fast and share for Allah (SWT)
- We go to Hajj for Him.

By examining the contents of the “We Have Learned” section in all chapters, I conclude that there is no variation among them; they all repeat “themes” of the Tune In section and the examples lesson or details included in the lesson.
In Lesson 30 described above, however, this section illustrated another feature of the theme “patience” presented in the title and in the “Tune In” section:

**WE HAVE LEARNED**

- We should be patient.
- Allah (SWT) likes it when we are patient
- Allah (SWT) helps those who are patient

The focus of the “We Have Learned” section above is summarizing the moral of the story, which in this case is different from the theme of the lesson: show how much you love your family by being patient.

In my judgment, this is either a mistake by the authors of the book, or a different perspective on the concept of theme and how it works. Both conclusions can be significant in our discussion of the CCSS. The first conclusion rests on the hypothesis that the authors confused the title of the chapter (Be patient, Ismail) with the theme of the chapter presented in the “Tune In” section (Take care of your family by being patient). Because the theme is not explicit in this story, the author recounted the implicit message in the “We Have Learned” section of the lesson.

A more plausible explanation is that the theme of the story is what is in the “Tune In” section and it is not meant to be necessarily supported by the details of the lesson. This is similar to what I noted in the “Tune In” section above. Figure 5.1 above indicates that the goal of the “We have Learned” section is to summarize the details of the lesson. Perhaps details of the lesson are not meant to support the theme according to the authors’ perspectives. Perhaps the authors view themes as the topic of the lesson, not the specifics of a certain topic. For example a topic can be being patient, but the different sections of
the lesson can handle sub-topics of the topic of being patient. It can be that the “Tune In” section deals with being patient with family, while the “Think About It” section deals with the concept of being patient to please God, and “We have Learned” focuses on the take home message of the lesson. If this is the case, we can conclude that the concept of “theme” is defined differently by the authors of the CCSS and the authors of this Islamic Studies textbook. Let’s first examine the section titled “Think About It” and we shall return back to this point.

**Think About It.**

The section titled “Think About It” is included only a few times in the whole textbook. It is included in Lesson 4, titled “We wear good clothes”. In this lesson, the “Think About It” section asks students about information that, even though not presented in the previous pages, is related to the daily lives of the students. It is about appropriate clothes that Muslims (and non-Muslims) wear in different relevant situations.
The critical thinking skill which the book claims to instill in the students through this section of the lesson is “establishing the relationships between the types of clothes that Muslims wear and the times they are appropriate for”. In other words, the critical thinking skill that students learn is “making connections”.

In Lesson 7, titled “Allah is the Creator”, the ‘Think About It” section asks students to group animals together based on whether they live on land or in water. This activity asks students to make connections between animals and where they live. Another activity included in Lesson 7 in the “Think about It” section is comparing animals based on details. Comparisons included in this activity involve finding key similarities and differences between objects, in this case, animals.

This is similar to the focus of the “Think About It” section in lesson 23, which is titled “Zakah”.

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9 “Zakah” means alms.
In this activity students are given a list of acts of charity and they are asked to identify a group of people who need each type of assistance. The guidelines are not clear, but it is evident to adults, at least, that a certain item might meet the need of more than one group, and each group might need more than one item.

The “Think about It” section is also included in Lesson 28, titled “Ismail and his Family”. The 3-page lesson is about the family tree of a child named Ismail. Text on the “Think About It” section in this lesson reads:

People in the family do things together. They do things that make everyone happy. Write what are the things you like to do to make your family happy
Things I like to do to make my family happy …
A
B
C
D (p. 93).

Conceptual processes required in this activity are simply recounting examples that relate to a theme or a concept. In this case, the concept is making family members happy,
and the examples needed are activities that show how children can make their families happy. It is noticeable that the title of the lesson and the focus of the “Think About It” section are related but not the same. The title is about the general topic of Ismail and his family, but the “Think About It” section is about a sub-topic related to the general one: making family happy. This supports the second explanation regarding themes in the textbook, I provided in the “Tune In” section above.

Similarly, in Lesson 20, titled “The Special Month”, students practice recounting examples of activities they do in the month of Ramadan, such as fasting and praying at night. A higher thinking skill/ conceptual process included in this activity is remembering the name of the special prayer of the month of Ramadan, i.e., a prayer that Muslims do only in Ramadan. For this question, students make connections between the month of Ramadan and a certain prayer.

**Do You Know these Words?**

The section titled “Do You Know These Words” (DYKTW) presents words that are used in the lesson. In so doing, it highlights some words that can be specific to the Islamic context or can be general vocabulary used in the book. In Lesson 4, titled “We Wear Good Clothes” the DYKTW section includes the words “clean, good, clothes, wear” (p. 10). None of these words is specific to the Islamic context nor have they been used in the lesson in a way different than their literal meanings. However, DYKTW in Lesson 6 present words that are specific to the Islamic context, such as “Al-Ahad (means that One), Messenger, Shahada” (p. 15). The word *Al-Ahad* is an Arabic word which means the One (referring to Allah). The word Shahada is an Arabic words meaning testimony but it is used in the Islamic context to refer to the statement declaring that there
is only one God; the word messenger means the prophet. Three of these words have meanings that are special to the Islamic context, including the word messenger, which can be used to refer to something else in a different context.

*Workbook.*

All lessons in the *We Are Muslims* Islamic Studies textbook for first grade have corresponding activities in the workbook, which component repeats activities and conceptual processes practiced in the textbook. The Workbook reinforces concepts and conceptual processes through coloring, matching pictures with words, matching Islamic expressions with their meanings (in English), and recounting examples through storytelling.

**Figure 5.5 First grade Workbook (p.4)**

This activity recounts story details by placing stickers in order, not by writing the story. This is different from what the CCSS Writing Standard 3 for first grade specifies: “Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events,
include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure” (p. 19).

First graders are asked to write in Lesson 5. The title of the writing activity is “We Take Care of Our Families”. The prompt includes the question “How does each person take care of the family? Write what you think” (p. 15). Below the prompt are pictures of a father carrying a child on his shoulder, a mother carrying a baby on her arms, and a child. There, children can write short sentences related to the prompt and supported by the pictures. These short sentences can be considered related to one theme: taking care of family.

Lesson 3 in the Workbook adds to the conceptual processes practiced in the textbook. The title of the lesson is “We Have Good Names”. The textbook gives examples of Muslim names, and it provides their meanings in English. The Workbook adds the conceptual process of making connections between names and attributes. An activity on p.10 in the Workbook reads:

Some names tell something special about the person. A person who runs fast could be called “lightfoot”. Someone who is happy all the time might be named “shining face”.
If your name told something special about you, what would your name be? (p.10).

Similarly, Lesson 24 asks students to draw inferences based on details. In this exercise students are asked to examine the pictures and read the text below it to determine who can go for *Hajj*⁴⁰. A significant observation here is that each set of statements is supported by a picture which cannot be used as a clue to the answer since there are two statements under each picture and the picture describes only one of the two statements.

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⁴⁰ *Hajj* is the Arabic word for pilgrimage.
statements clearly. Furthermore, in order for students to do this activity, they need to have an understanding of categories of people who are exempt from going for Hajj.

**Figure 5.6: First grade workbook (p.62).**

On p. 26, students are asked to match pictures with statements that describe them. The prompt of the activity reads, “We can always ask Allah (SWT) for help. Draw a line from the picture to the words” (p.26). One statement that students need to match is “O Allah (SWT), please help me get home safely” (p.26). The pictures on the same page include a student studying, a man who looks angry, a child trying to sleep on bed, and a man driving a car.

Sometimes students are asked to write about the picture, too. The prompt on p. 27 reads, “Look at the pictures. Write a sentence that tells how someone in the picture is being kind” (p.27). The pictures include a man helping a woman on a wheelchair, a fireman extinguishing a fire, and a man fixing a car for a woman. In Lesson 30, students are asked to draw a time when they were patient, and then write about their drawing.

In the Workbook section I analyzed the conceptual processes included in the Workbook for accompanying first grade Islamic Studies. In this Workbook, students are asked to recount examples that relate to a main idea, through drawings, writing, and, sometimes both. Students are also asked to make connections between names of people
and attributes of their characters. Making connections is also practiced through matching pictures with words as in the example p.26 described above. They are also asked to drawn inferences based on reading short sentences and looking at pictures as in figure 5.6 described above.

In my analysis of the conceptual process included in the Islamic Studies textbook and Workbook used in MIS first grade classes, my findings are 1) the theme of the lesson is explicitly explained in the “Tune In” section as indicated by the authors, and 2) details in the lesson are examples that relate to the topic of lesson but not necessarily to its theme or title.

The concept of the theme of the lesson is viewed differently by the authors of the textbook and authors of the CCSS. To authors of the textbook, the theme of the lesson highlights the topic of the lesson; but it does not put boundaries to the scope of the discussion. Thus, the lesson can about a subtopic of the lesson, but the details in the other sections in the lesson highlight different subtopics.

The Workbook adds to the conceptual processes included in the textbook. It adds writing exercises and other conceptual processes such as inferences based on details in texts and pictures.

**Conceptual Processes in the First Grade Islamic Studies Textbook vs. CCSS**

**Reasoning and details.**

In Lesson 6, titled “Allah is One”, the central idea is presented without any details or reasoning.

In Lesson 7, which is titled “Allah is the Creator”, the central idea is presented without reasoning, even though the picture included at the beginning of the lesson might
suggest otherwise. The picture is used to answer the question, “Who created all of these?” The answer to this question is explicitly provided under the picture: “Allah made everything”. The children are not asked to reason or explain why such creation cannot be attributed to evolutionary forces or entities other than Allah. No details explain the given response, either. Subsequent pages include examples that illustrate the creatures of Allah, but again, without reasoning, explanation, or other perspectives requested of the children or provided in the text.

The vignette from Lesson 8 described above is an example of how first grade texts used in Manar Islamic School (MIS) give students examples of statements supported by details. The lesson includes statements that illustrate how God is powerful and how He bestowed many favors upon His creation. Similarly, Lesson 9 provides several details that relate to the theme of the lesson “Allah is Kind and Merciful”. The details give examples of how God is “Merciful and Kind”, so these details provide examples but not reason.

**Words in context or content-specific words.**

Some expressions used in the textbooks refer to specifically Islamic expressions. In most cases, they are Arabic words used by all Muslims, even those who do not speak Arabic. Examples of such words used in this textbook are: *Al Ahad* (the One), and *Subhanahu wa Ta’ala* (the Most Glorified, also abbreviated as SWT). These two words are explained explicitly (Lesson 6, p. 14). The words are specific to Muslim discourse. Muslims use these words as a form of code-switching when they utter these words in the middle of a sentence that is completely in English. These words are used and known by all Muslims around the world, so they have become part of the vocabulary of every language.
There are words that are English, but used in manners specific to the Islamic discourse. As illustrated in the “Do You Know These Words” section above, some of these words carry different meaning if used outside of the Islamic context (e.g., the word messenger). This aligns with the CCSS expectation of comprehending and determining the meaning of context-specific vocabulary.

**Interpreting visuals to understand ideas, settings, or events.**

*We are Muslims* for first grade is full of visuals that support the main ideas and explain the examples provided in the lesson. The following example is from Lesson 18 titled “Places We Can Pray” (p. 53).

**Figure 5.7: Fifth grade textbook (p.54)**

![Image of visuals showing places to pray]

In Lesson 15, titled “We Pray”, students are asked to recount names of prayer times, an activity which requires rote memorization without necessarily practicing any critical thinking skills.

The Workbook activity in Figure 5.6 above is a good example of CCSS Standard 7 that requires students to examine a picture to find out how it relates to the information presented in the text.
Genres.

Similar to CCSS Reading Standard 1 for first grade, the “Think About It” section in Lesson 11 teaches students to differentiate between the different types or genres of books. This activity compares the Quran to storybooks:

**Figure 5.8: Fifth grade textbook (p.33)**

![Diagram comparing Quran and storybooks.]

In this activity, students practice making comparisons through examining the similarities and the differences between the formats, the languages, and the contents of the Quran and storybooks.

Writing.

In the workbook, students are asked to write description of pictures, examples about a main idea or a concept and show connections between attributes of a person and a nickname that can be given to him/her. Yet, writing included in the first grade Islamic Studies Workbook (ISW) is much less advanced compared to writing required by the CCSS both in depth and width. In CCSS first grade writing, students are asked to recount appropriately sequenced events, but in the Islamic Studies Workbook they write to recount examples. Also, in the ISW, students write sentences to describe picture, but in
the CSS; they write informative texts to name a topic, supply details and provide a closure. In CCSS, first grade students are asked to work with peers to research and write about topics such as how-to instructions.

**Inferences and conclusions based on details.**

In first grade Islamic Studies text, students are asked to draw inferences based on details in short sentences and with the help of pictures, as in Figure 5.6 described above. Making inferences while answering questions such as what and why based on textual evidence (as is the case in the workbook) is a conceptual process that the CCSS requires students to practice in second grade.

**Fifth Grade Islamic Studies Text**

MIS uses the same book series; *We are Muslims*, from first to fifth grades. In this section, I examine the academic literacy and conceptual processes included in the fifth grade Islamic Studies textbook. This grade level textbook does not come with a workbook. The school uses another textbook with it, but I chose to analyze this one because it is from the same series as the book which I analyzed in the previous section for the first grade.

Figure 5.9 shows a snapshot featuring the book’s structure:
As Figure 5.9 shows, the book includes a section that introduces the topic of the lesson through the title and a verse from the Quran. Another section includes the main content of the lesson, labeled “Read and Think”, and yet another that includes a story related to the main topic of the lesson, labeled “Faith in Action”. Finally, the lesson a review section labeled “Lesson Review. We Have Learned” (p. 1). As I did with the first grade textbook, I will analyze the conceptual processes included in each of these sections.

**Lesson introduction.**

The introduction in each lesson presents a verse from the Quran or a Hadith that relates to the topic of the lesson. In most cases, there is no explicit connection between the title of the lesson and the verse or the Hadith quoted in the introduction. In some
cases, however, an implicit connection between a word in the verse and the title can be established.

In Lesson 1, whose title is “In Pursuit of Excellence: To Become the Best”, the verse quoted reads: “And those who strive for Us—We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good” (Quoted in Ghazi, A., Ghazi, T., & Abiva, 2013, p. 1). The verse quoted here states that individuals who strive will be guided by God, and that He loves those who work hard. The connection in this case is implicit because the word “strive” in the verse is implicitly related to the meaning of the concept “pursuit for excellence” in the title.

The title of the fourth lesson on p. 16 of the textbook is “A Muslim is Practical and Proactive.” The introduction includes a verse from the Quran that reads: “And everyone has a direction to which he should turn, therefore hasten to (do) good works” (Quoted in Ghazi, A., Ghazi, T., & Abiva, 2013, p. 16). As in the previous example, an implicit semantic connection exists between the verse quoted and the title of the lesson, established through the word “hasten” in the verse. In both examples, verses quoted are not explained anywhere in the lesson and neither are the words that connect the verses to the titles.

In other examples, words that connect the verses to the titles of the lessons are not explained in the same lesson where an explicit connection can be established. On p. 97, the lesson title is “Zakat Al-Fitr”, and the verse quoted reads: “But those who purify themselves will succeed, and who remembers the Name of

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11 The print book includes the verse in Arabic and its translation to English. The digital one includes only the English translation of the verse.
12 “Zakah” means alms, and “Fitr” refers to the first day after the month of Ramadan. “Zakat Al-fitr” is the alms that Muslims have to give to the poor on that day.
his Lord and prays” (Quoted in Ghazi, A., Ghazi, T., & Abiva, 2013, p. 96). The word that connects the verse to the title is the word تزکی (pronounced Tazakka) because it comes from the same Arabic root as the word Zakat (ZKW), and it means “purify”. The meaning of the word “Zakat” is “purification”. In this case, if students are told that the meaning of the word Zakat is purification, the connection between the verse and the title will be explicit: the title includes the word Zakat, and the verse includes the word Tazakka.

“Purification” as used in the verse quoted here from the Quran is not necessarily about the act of giving alms; it is about any act of purification. The meaning of “Zakah” as an act of purification is not explained in this lesson; it is explained in a previous lesson where the word “purify” or “purification” does not appear in the verse quoted.

I use this example to establish my conclusion that the authors do not use these verses in the lesson as evidence, which the CCSS requires fifth grade students to do. CCSS Standard 1 requires fifth grade students to refer to text when drawing inferences or explaining the message of the text. It is worth mentioning that the 2012 edition of the textbook includes only the English translations of the verses, not the Arabic version. This means that students who have the 2012 edition would not hear the word Tazakka because it is only in the Arabic version of the verse. Consequently, they would not be able to connect the verse to the title based on hearing the same, or related, words in both.

A stronger explicit connection can be observed between the quoted verses and the material presented in the section titled “Read and Think”. The above example of the meaning of the concept and the word of “Zakah” (purification) is an illustration such a connection. The word Zakah is explained on page 66 in a lesson titled “What Zakah
Means to Us”. The verse quoted in this lesson does not include the word “purify” or any of its derivatives; it has the word “Zakah” in its Islamic meaning, “alms”. The quoted verse in this lesson reads: “And establish prayer and give Zakah, and whatever good you put forward for yourselves-- you will find with Allah” (Quoted in Ghazi, A., Ghazi, T., & Abiva, 2013, p.66). This verse includes the Arabic word “Zakah” but it does not include the meaning “purification”. Instead, the word “Zakah” is explained in the “Read and Think” section of the lesson. Thus, “The word Zakah comes from the Arabic word Zaka (زكاء), which mean to “‘to purify’”, “‘to increase’” or “‘to bless’”. So, giving Zakah is a way to purify our money wealth. Zakah helps clean our hearts and minds from greed and stinginess” (p. 67).

If teachers choose to do so, the Introduction section of each lesson can be used to teach children to refer to texts to establish the value of certain actions or concepts in Islamic discourse. This is because in most cases, there is a connection between the verses quoted in the Introduction and the main topic. Yet, there is no guaranteeing that teachers would do so because, with one exception, the verses quoted in the Introduction section are not explained in the body of the lesson.

Read and Think.

This section of the dissertation contains an explanation of the main topic of the lesson. The following pages illustrate the main findings about the conceptual processes included in this lesson section.

The main theme or central idea of each lesson is clearly explained in this lesson section in all lessons of the fifth grade We are Muslims Islamic Studies textbook. The

13 The spellings Zakah and Zakat are used interchangeably in the study
explanation is in addition to the title of the lesson that clearly states the theme of the lesson. In many cases the theme of the text is clear in the thesis statement, which is usually the first or the second sentence in the passage. For example, in the first lesson, titled “In Pursuit of Excellence: To Become the Best” (p.1), the first sentence in the passage reads, “As Muslims it is very important that we do our best in everything we do. Allah (SWT) is happy with us when we do things to the best of our abilities” (p. 2). In the paragraphs that follow, the passage explains the meaning of excellence (Ihsan in Arabic). In so doing, the passage quotes a verse from the Quran to explain that Allah wants Muslims to do their best in everything.

Details in the passage introduce other ideas or themes that support the main one. In this passage, for instance, ideas such as persistence and concentration are presented as prerequisites for excellence. The passage states, “When we have persistence we keep doing something no matter how hard it is or how long it takes. We may fail many times, but we keep trying” (p. 3). To illustrate this meaning, the passage gives an example of Thomas Edison and how he persevered until he succeeded. The passage states, “Thomas Edison worked many long hours trying different experiments. Even after that many of his experiments failed. But he never stopped until he figured something out” (p. 3). The passage also presented the concept of “concentration” in the same manner that it explained “persistence”.

Similarly, the lesson titled “Personal Responsibility” (p.121) presents the sub-themes “self control”, “get involved”, and “requisites for personal responsibility”.

Among the examples that explain the theme or the central idea of the passage are short real-life stories, some of which are religious while others relate to famous figures.
In the “Read and Think” section, the textbook refers to religious figures with key details of the story in a manner that relates these to the theme of the passage. For example, the lesson titled “Managing Conflicts: Ways to Compromise” (p.116) includes a brief summary of the story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he resolved the conflict between the tribes in Mecca. After Arabs rebuilt the Holy Mosque in Mecca, they disputed who would have the honor of replacing a holy stone known as the Black Stone where it was located before they rebuilt the Cube. The text explains that the prophet Muhammad brought a piece of cloth, placed the holy stone on it, and then he asked the four tribes to carry the cloth by its four corners.

Narrating a detailed story in this section of the textbooks is not as common as narrating stories in the section titled “Faith in Action”, which will be discussed below.

**Islamic Studies discourse not in the CCSS.**

Learning material presented in the section labeled ‘Read and Think” takes place in a pedagogical form that I call *Truth-claiming* learning. In this form of learning, information is presented to the students as facts to comprehend and internalize without discussing the rational logic behind them. Details presented in this style of learning are simply for the sake of providing more information as “facts” accepted and believed as “truths; they are not presented for the sake of convincing the reader of the legitimacy of their truth claims, or for arguing the logic or soundness of the claims presented. The only evidence that is used in such a practice is referring to verses from the Quran or the sayings of the prophet (PBUH).
A good example is the theme of “Oneness of God” which was examined in both the first grade and fifth grade texts. In fifth grade, this theme is presented in a lesson titled “Tawhid” the Faith of all Muslims” (p.31-35).

All information included in this lesson is presented in statements. Each paragraph starts with a concept or an idea related to Tawhid, and it provides details about this concept. The first paragraph, for example, reads:

We are Muslims. We believe that there is no God but Allah (SWT). This belief in only ONE GOD is called Tawhid. Tawhid is the foundation of everything in Islam. (p.32)

To authenticate this statement in Islamic knowledge, the following two paragraphs in the textbook present and explain, in English, a short chapter from the Quran that describes the meaning of the concept Tawhid. Referring to verses from the Quran and the sayings of the prophet to authenticate certain concepts or ideas is a well-known traditional practice in Islamic discourse. The seven paragraphs that follow these verses in the text are statements about Tawhid, providing information Muslims need to know about it. An example is the following short paragraph:

We believe in Tawhid, Alhamdulillah! However, we may find some people who think there is no God. They think that this universe came into being all by itself. They do not believe there are angels or prophets. They believe all of Allah’s books are made up. Such a belief is called Kufr, and one who believes in Kufr is called Kafir (p. 33).

The following paragraph in the book presents the concept of Shirk and what it means by stating that “there are some people who believe in many gods “(p. 33). The last paragraph

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14 Tawhid is an Islamic expression that refers to the Oneness of God. It is also a genre of Islamic knowledge that specializes in studying the concept of Tawhid. In Islamic universities, there are departments that specialize in this genre of Islamic knowledge.
15 SWT is an abbreviation for Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala and it means “Glorified Allah”.
16 “Shirk” means associating partners with God.
states that “for Muslims Kufr and Shirk are two great sins. We believe that there is only One God, Allah (SWT) and He has no partner” (p. 33).

**Faith in Action.**

As mentioned above, this lesson section presents a story that illustrates the theme of the lesson. In the first lesson, titled “In Pursuit of Excellence: To Become the Best” (p.1), the textbook recounts a story of an Indian king who worked hard to bring victory to his defeated country. The lesson, titled “Being Trustworthy and Reliable” (p.6), includes a story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and one of his companions when they both were reliable and worked to protect each other. In one of the lessons where Zakah (alms) is discussed, this section of the lesson includes stories of individuals around the world who benefited from alms given to them by other Muslims, including a charity foundation in the U.S. The “Faith in Action” section is included in all lessons in the textbooks, except in the lesson titled “Zakah Calculation and Distribution” (p.91). The topic of this lesson is how Muslims should calculate how much of their saved money they have to give as alms. This lesson is about Zakah calculations and does not present a certain theme.

**Lesson Review (We Have Learned).**

The section labeled “Lesson Review (We Have Learned)”, as in the similar section in the first grade textbook, reviews the main ideas or themes of the lesson. In the lesson titled “In Pursuit of Excellence: To Become the Best” cited above, this section states:

- Ihsan is doing the best we can for Allah’s sake.
- Ihsan means perfection and excellence.
- If we want to have Ihsan we must have persistence and concentration.
- Allah (SWT) will help us if we work hard to gain Ihsan.

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17 The Arabic word for excellence.
Do We Know These Words.

The Do We Know These Words (DWKTW) in the fifth grade textbook is similar to the DYKTW section in the first grade textbook. It includes a summary of key words studied in the lesson. Words listed in this section are the same words highlighted in bold in the “Read And Think” section earlier. In the first lesson titled “In Pursuit of Excellence: To Become the Best”, words highlighted in the passage are *Ihsan* and *Muhsin*¹⁸. Words listed in the DWKTW section are “persistence”, “concentration”, “muhsin” and “ihsan” (p.5). In this lesson, this section includes the words highlighted in bold in the passage, in addition to the two main concepts that support the main idea in the passage: concentration and persistence.

This section includes English words used in their literal meaning such as demands, compromise and concessions in the lesson titled “Managing Conflicts: Ways to Compromise” (p.116). It also includes Arabic words that refer to Islamic concepts, such as *Tawhid, Shirk* and *Kufr* explained above. More importantly, the section contains English words that have connotations specific to the Islamic context, such as the word “remembrance” (p.50) used in the lesson titled “Remembering Allah” (p.46). The word “remembrance” is used in the Islamic context as a synonym of the Arabic word “*Dhikr*”. To define the word “remembrance” in the Islamic context, the text reads, “*Dhikr* is an Arabic word which means “remember”. To remember Allah (SWT) is a very important duty for Muslims. We call this remembrance **Dhikrullah**. When we think of Allah (SWT), or when we call on Him by Asma Ul-Husna¹⁹, we are making Dhikrullah” (p.47).

¹⁸ *Muhsin* is the one who practices *Ihsan*.

¹⁹ Asma Ul-Husna are the attributes of Allah. They are 99 names referred to as attributes of Allah.
In this section, I have analyzed the Islamic Studies textbook for fifth grade. Key findings are 1) central ideas are clearly explained, 2) central ideas are supported by details and other concepts/themes, 3) stories are used to further explain the central ideas, and 3) words are used literally and in manners specific to the Islamic context. This is in addition to the “truth-claiming” ways of teaching Islamic knowledge to the children which is not based on evidence. Students are not even required to cite Islamic textual evidence to authenticate the Islamic knowledge they learn.

**CCSS vs. fifth grade Islamic Studies textbooks.**

By fifth grade, the CCSS expects students to determine the main idea or theme of a text, determine and recount main details that support the theme or the main idea, summarize the text by recounting main details, and refer to the text while making inferences or explaining the passage. Students must also determine the literal and figurative meanings of words as used in a text.

As discussed above, central ideas and main messages in fifth grade Islamic Studies textbooks are always made explicit through the title and the introduction, and they are repeated in the main body of the text. This textbook provides the students with the easiest way to locate the main message of the text. In clear contrast to this Islamic Studies pedagogical approach, in the CCSS, where the theme is neither clearly given in the title of the text nor stated at the end of the text, students must draw on pre-requisites to identify the theme. They need 1) the ability to think deductively to find the theme; and 2) to obtain background knowledge relevant to both the content of the text and the implied theme (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). Harvey and Goudvis (2007) suggest the
following mnemonic to guide teachers to help students to make inferences from a text: “Background Knowledge + Text Clues = Inference” (p.141).

Similar to the CCSS, the Islamic Studies textbook provides fifth grade students with details that support the main message. Yet these details are in the form of examples, not in a form that builds a logical argument. Implications of the difference on assessment practices will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The conceptual process of understanding words as they are used in a text is present in the Islamic Studies textbooks not in a form that is similar to that of the CCSS. A number of words used in Islamic Studies discourse carry meaning different than their literal ones; they refer to applications or requisites that can be exclusive to the Islamic context by expressing exclusive Islamic practices, such as remembrances of Allah. Also, the meaning of the word “persistence” has some similar meanings in every context, but in the Islamic context it entails the practice of asking God’s support.

Words used in the Islamic Studies text and explained in certain contexts are usually concepts, not only words. For example, concepts such as “Being thoughtful and considerate” are presented to explain how they can apply in different contexts.

Regarding the meaning of the word “considerate”, the lesson titled “Being Thoughtful and Rational” states that “being considerate can mean arriving on time when you know people are waiting for you. It can mean wiping up the sink after you make Wudu” (p.13).

More importantly, definitions of words are taught explicitly and their meanings in Islamic contexts are explained. The section labeled “Lesson Review (We Have Learned)”

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20 Wudu’ means ablution
includes a question in each lesson about the meaning of words or concepts discussed in the lesson. For example, in the lesson titled “In Pursuit of Excellent: To Become the Best”, a question reads: “Do we know these words? Persistence, concentration, Muhsin, Ihsan” (p.5). Each lesson ends with a similar question that lists words that students need to remember.

There is no evidence that the textbook helps students practice any of the three language standards (Standard 4, 5, 6 of the CCSS) described in the CCSS section above.

**Seventh Grade Textbook**

MIS uses two different textbooks in seventh grade Islamic Studies classes. In this section I analyze one of the two textbooks, titled Islamic *TahtDhib*[^21] *Akhlq*[^22]: Theory and practice” (Lumu, 2013). The book is divided into two sections: the first section deals with morals and values, and the second section deals with stories of prophets and famous Muslim figures, as a means to illustrate “practical models of Islamic virtues using biographical sketches of the prophets, *Sahaba*[^23], and other pious Muslims” (P.Viii).

The CCSS requires students to cite textual evidence to analyze what the text says explicitly and what it implies, and to determine the main theme of the text. In addition, it asks them to analyze the interaction between elements in a story or a drama. They are also asked to compare stories presented in different media, and analyze the impact of an author’s perspective and bias on narrating details of a story or a historical narrative.

[^21]: The book defines the word Arabic word TahDhib as “training and education for personal development” (p.1).
[^22]: Akhlq is defined in the book as “naturally good temper, noble character, and good manners” (p.1)
[^23]: *Sahaba* refers to companions of the Prophet Mohamed
Central ideas and key details are clearly stated.

In all lessons in the Islamic Studies textbook, central ideas and main supporting details are clearly explained in the title of the lesson and its subheadings. The message of the lesson and key details are also summarized at the end of each lesson in the section labeled “We Have Learned”.

The second lesson in the book, titled “Obedience to Parents” (p.5), is supported by the following subheadings: a) The importance of obedience to parents; b) Returning love and kindness of parents; 3) Obedience to Allah comes first; and, 4) How to be obedient and helpful to parents.

Unlike in the first and fifth grade textbooks, main ideas and details in the seventh grade textbook are based on logic and reasoning, two conceptual processes that the CCSS requires students to practice since the FIRST grade Standard 8. For example, to support the point that it is important to be obedient to one’s parents, the text states, “Children sometimes do not realize how much their parents have done for them. Every mother bears the pains of pregnancy and childbirth. She often spends many sleepless nights partially caring for her baby’s needs” ((Lumu, 2013, p.5). Under the next subheading, the lesson quotes verses from the Quran that tell Muslims what to do for their parents. These verses are written in Arabic and translated to English; their meanings are not explained further.

The “We Have Learned” section of the lesson includes a summary of the main details of the lesson. It reads:

- Obedience to our parents is very important in Islam.
- We must be polite and loving to our mother and father.
- We should help our parents in jobs around the house.
Presenting the central ideas to the students is accomplished, also, through short stories whose themes are related to the concepts being taught. For example, the title (and consequently the central idea) of the sixth lesson in the textbook is “Telling the Truth and Keeping the Promises” (p.20). Two stories in this lesson teach students the bad effects of telling lies. The morals summarized in this section, labeled “The Lesson of These Stories” (p.21), help the students understand the logic of why telling lies is prohibited for Muslims. The moral of the first story, which is titled “The Boy Who Cried Wolf\textsuperscript{24}” reads: “It is very important to be truthful and keep promises. Nobody believes a liar. Nobody trusts a person who breaks promises. Liars and untrustworthy people soon find they have no true friends” (p.21).

There is no evidence in the textbook that students need to recount the entire lesson; in the assessment section, they are asked about each of the details separately. The Exercises section for Lesson 12, titled “Helping the Needy” (p. 36-39), includes the following exercises:

EXERCISES

1. Which kind of people need our help and support?
2. What did Rasulullah\textsuperscript{25} (PBUH) say about showing mercy to others?
3. What did Rassulullah (PBUH) say about helping a widow or a poor person?
4. What did Rasulullah (PBUH) say about one who takes care of an orphan?

\textsuperscript{24} The story is also narrated by one of the participants, as will appear in Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{25} Rasulullah is the Arabic word for Messenger of Allah.
5. In what ways can help be given to an orphan, a widow and a sick person? (p.39).

However, the students are asked to answer questions that require them to refer to textual evidence to support understanding of the details of the text. The second, third and fourth questions ask the students to recount what Rasulullah said about certain concepts. This means that they are asked to recount the literal text or the interpretation of the saying of the prophets regarding these concepts. Regarding Quranic verses and Hadiths, the textbook author recommends that “Students should try to memorize these verses and Hadiths and their English translation” (p. viii).

There are no questions asked to measure students’ ability to summarize the text, tracing the central idea as required by the CCSS. The second section of the book, which included stories of the prophets, does not include an Exercises section.

A number of the stories in the second section of the book provide a good description of the thoughts and beliefs of characters who are prophets and Islamic figures. Part of the story of Prophet Abraham reads

As a young man, Ibrahim (PBUH) was always deep in thought. One night, he looked at the bright star and said: “That is my Lord!” But when the star disappeared soon after dawn, he knew that is was not God. Another time, he looked at the moon and said: “That is my Lord!” But when the moon also disappeared in the morning, he knew that it was not God. At last, he watched the sunrise and said: “This is the greatest of them- this is my Lord.” But when the sun disappeared at the end of the day, he knew that God was neither the star nor the
moon nor the sun. He realized that God is unseen and is the Creator of all of them (p. 168).

The text also shows good examples of interactions between characters. The following is an excerpt from a dialogue between Prophet Abraham and people who came to blame him for destroying their idols:

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) replied: “perhaps the biggest idol did it. Why don’t you ask your gods?”

They said in anger: “you know our gods do not speak!”

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) replied: “Do you worship things that cannot help you or harm you?”

The people felt foolish that their gods could not even save themselves or even tell who had attacked them, and in their anger, they tried to kill Ibrahim (PBUH) by throwing him into fire (p. 169).

Interaction between events appears in the development of the story that continues as follows:

But it was not Allah’s Will that Ibrahim (PBUH) should be killed, so He cooled the fire to protect Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) from harm. The king heard what Prophet Ibrahim was preaching and sent for him (p. 169).

None of the stories included in the textbook contains evidence of how individuals interact with places around them. Similarly, there is no evidence that students have the opportunity to examine the different perspectives and how an author’s perspective of bias might have affected the narration of the story.
Chapter 6

Interview Analysis

This chapter attempts to analyze the conceptual processes available to Muslim ESL students in their households, and conceptual processes which are available to these students in their households but not included in the CCSS.

As described in Chapters 3 and 4, participants of this study are four parents from four different households of Muslim ESL students who attend a private Islamic school in a large city in the American Southwest. The pseudonym given to the school is Manar Islamic School (MIS).

This chapter includes findings from interviews with the participants. For analyzing the interviews, I look only at conceptual processes practiced in the households, as manifested in the interviews. The goal of the interviews was not to ask participants directly about every single conceptual process included in the CCSS; instead, the focus was to understand what typical practices and conceptual processes families do in their daily life, and then compare them to those of the CCSS.

Themes and central ideas.

As illustrated in Chapter 5, the CCSS emphasizes students’ ability to identify themes of texts and also to identify the main ideas of informational texts. Regarding themes and central ideas, this study found that in Muslim ESL students’ households: 1) central ideas and themes are mostly explicitly explained to the children orally, rather than being implied in text as the case with the CCSS; 2) central ideas and themes are strongly influenced by families’ histories; and, 3) themes and central ideas are used to educate the children about their families’ morals and values.
Hafsa, the Afghani mother, interprets to her children the message of the cartoons they watch. She said that after watching a cartoon (when she is present), she tells her children how to interpret the cartoon, telling them what they should learn from it. She mentioned that she does not discuss the content of the cartoon in detail. However, she asks them questions to check whether they got the message. She only goes in more detail about the content when the message is about honesty and determination, two values that she highlights in her family’s discourse.

Jameela, the single mother from Senegal, narrates to her children two different types of stories: "funny stories" and stories that "educate". For funny stories, the goal is to make her children laugh. Regarding the content of funny stories, Jameela said, "Some of them are thieves coming to the house and find a dog in there or.. you know… the head of house is in bed sleeping … sometimes .. (laugh) … stuff like that … " (Jameela, 2L248). These stories do not demonstrate a theme or a central idea that listeners need to comprehend or pay attention to.

Hafsa narrates stories to her children, but she does not think that those stories are always educational; she narrates them for “fun” and to be “amusing” for her children, not to teach them certain concepts. She mostly narrates “princess stories” which she views as not educational. It is interesting that she mentioned that she had narrated the Cinderella story to her children, but she does not think that the Cinderella story educates children about anything. Other authors who favor the CCSS (e.g. McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012) suggest that the Cinderella story is a good example for teaching children the theme of good versus evil. To them, good is represented by Cinderella, while evil is represented through her sisters. In Hafsa's case, her children have practiced finding and building
themes through family histories and real life experiences, as well as videos and cartoons, not through listening to or reading stories, as will be discussed later.

Hafsa's son and daughter watch cartoons that illuminate themes. She said about the "jargon cartoon" that her children watch:

Shows how good and bad are… It is a ninja cartoon … They have that martial art in it and then it shows how.. the good and the bad compete and how the good wins all the time. Of course, they see some difficulty, but at the end, it is always good that wins. So, I like this kind of cartoons … (Hafsa 1L175).

Also, Hafsa and her son watch Islamic videos that show fictional movies about the history of Islam. Hafsa discusses what is good and what is bad in people's behavior in specific situations, which is not necessarily the theme of the story. In other words, she helps her children determine what is good and what is bad in people's behavior in certain situations. She does so by asking them questions: "We talk about it, too, what did you learn from it, or what did you think what this person did was good or bad?" (Hafsa 3L022).

In addition to funny stories, Jameela teaches her children educative stories. The goal of such stories is to teach her children certain morals and ethics manifested through the theme of the story. Obeying parents is a theme of one of the stories that Jameela told her children. She did so by telling them a story of a boy who never listened to his parents and "then something bad happened to him". There are two significant points about Jameela's telling stories to her children: 1) she narrates the stories orally; and, 2) the central message of the story is explained by her and made clear. Jameela tells her children, "You see … ooh.. why did he do that?… because he never listen. That is why you should listen
when I am talking to you, you should listen. All I am talking to you, you need to listen" (Jameela 2L262).

Even when reading written material, Jameela explains the main idea to her children explicitly in simplified language. This is partly due to their lack of ability to fully comprehend English. She also noted that they have problems with question prompts in math, but they do not have a problem doing math calculations. She attributed her children's ability to do the calculations to the fact that they did these calculations previously. Her children know how to read the numbers in mathematical problems because “it is the same” as in French, which they studied before. Usually their problem is in understanding the questions. Jameela said: “If there is a question, sometimes they do not know how to get the question (…). So you have to explain to them what the question means and show them the problem” (Jameela 2L253). Jameela mentioned that when she summarizes ideas of reading texts and math problems to her children, she does so in her native language, Wolof. She noted that if she explains the main idea to them in English, they will not get everything. “They might get few words, but they will not get it. But if you do both, then ya” (Jameela 1L300).

Ismail, the father from Pakistan, teaches his children to stay together, to help each other and, through his actions, he wants to establish equality in his household. He does so through intentionally washing the dishes in front of his children so that they know that housework is not only women's work. When asked how he makes sure that his children get the message, he noted: "Sometimes, I verbalize it" (Ismail 1L166). In this sense, Ismail makes the central idea, which is either explicit in teachings or implied in his actions, clear to his children. To justify why he explicitly explains the message behind his
actions to his children, he noted that it is important that children get it, and if they do not get it, they need to be told about the concept that he is teaching them. Also, his children's curiosity motivates him to state these concepts clearly.

Abu Ali, the father from Iraq, explains to his children the themes of the Bedouin soap operas that he watches with them. He noted that his older children understand these themes but his younger ones do not, so he explains the themes to them. When asked about why the older ones understand the content of the Bedouin stories, Abu Ali noted:

> هذا الشيء. أما الصغار لا، قلتلك الصغار سارة طلعت وهي رضيعة جبتها معي الأردن وما مارّة عليها هذه الأمور فأشرحها ياها أنا... لكي لأنه أصلاً ما نسوا يغني....... هما من أجو فهمين الأصل وفهمين التقاليد فهمين عاداتنا. فما نسوا

**TRANSLATION:**

The elder ones have not forgotten yet.... since they came, they know their background and they understand the traditions ... they understand our customs ... they have not forgotten this thing... As for the younger ones, no. I told you the little one left Jordan when she was a baby and I took her to Jordan and she has not seen these things, so I explain them to her (translated from Abu Ali 3L173).

An important notion illustrated here is the importance of background knowledge in understanding the theme or the content of the story. Since this notion was not frequent in the other interviews, I chose not to report it as one of the major findings of the study, but it was very significant with Abu Ali.

Abu Ali uses different media sources to explain certain central ideas to his children. To teach his children the seriousness of aviation engineering, his professional career, he shows them National Geographic videos that show mistakes that aviation engineers make, in order to explain to them how to avoid making those mistakes. Abu Ali said:

> For example, I saw a movie; the pilot put a screw on the co-pilot side. He changed the windshield on the co-pilot side. While doing so, he put the screws next to him and he lost them. So, he had to bring another kinds of screws to put the windshield. This new kind was shorter than the first one. But he did not care
because he did not consult the manual. In aviation engineering, we have to study before doing anything. We have to study the maintenance manual to understand the reason for the defect. He put short screw and installed the windshield on the side of the co-pilot. What happened is that when the plane took off, the windshield fell apart and flew away. (Abu Ali 1L111)

Through showing the movie to his children and through his explanation, Abu Ali makes it clear to his children that they always need to consult the manual before trying to fix anything in aircrafts, and, also that they need to take the requirements of their job seriously. Even though this teaching is directed toward the older children who are in high school, all the children observed such interactions in the household. Furthermore, the fact that Abu Ali made the central idea clear to the older children suggests that he probably does the same with the younger ones.

Furthermore, all participants explain to their children the central ideas of reading passages when they help them do their homework. When she reads to her son to help him understand the passage, Hafsa said, "First, he read it and I explained to him … It was about the White House and …hmm the judges and all those… so I explained it to him and what they are talking about. And then he told me that" (Hafsa 1L308). A detailed description of how reading and writing are practiced in the households of the participants will be presented in a separate section below.

**Themes through morals and family values.**

Themes based on morals and family values are not always in the form of stories from the past. They are also the themes of stories about the future. When taught by parents, these themes have always been made explicit and supported by clear details, to which they are clearly linked. Ismail explains extensively to his children what morals they need to have and what type of humans they need to be, in order to be successful Muslim
citizens. To educate his children, he told them that a key to success is doing good without asking for anything in return. Ismail told his children: "Don’t ask human being to give you credit, they need to get credit from the Almighty (…) You going to see how your life changes and how productive you get in the society, in the family, in the community” (Ismail 2L60). Another value related to success in the future is respect. Ismail said: “This is all about respect and being humble to other people, doesn’t matter who they are" (Ismail 2L60).

To make the story more concrete, Ismail told his children how being grateful to God and seeking reward only from Him has given him many blessings, among which are their mother and his children themselves. This shows how he explicitly explains the central idea of a message to his children, and then illustrates the same message by making it the theme of a relevant story. In this case, the story is his own story.

Other values that function as themes in the lives of Ismail’s children include respecting and protecting the family’s reputation, as well as the reputation of the extended family and the community at large. Ismail encourages his children to do whatever they want to do, feel proud about it, but never do something that they will regret. They need always to consider protecting themselves and their parents’ and community's reputation.

When asked what he meant by protecting the reputation of self, family and the community, he said that he tells his children not to do something that they would regret because if they do something regrettable, "it will fall on your parents, your instructors who taught you in the past… Is this how they taught you? It will put a question mark." (Ismail 1L264). This statement, “Is this how they taught you?”, illustrates an imaginary story where the listener is being blamed for something wrong that he/she has done, and
part of the reprimand is blaming the teacher and parents for the child’s behavior. In order for the children to abide by their father’s teachings of they need to evaluate actions they do in order to see if they fall under the category of action that causes regret. In other words, they need to recognize the themes of regret in every situation where it applies by analyzing the details of the situation. Determining themes based on details is a conceptual process that is included in the CCSS but in a different modality: text-based discourse.

Abu Ali narrates stories to his children with the intent to teach them certain morals. When teaching morals through storytelling, he explicitly tells them the central ideas which illustrate the morals of the stories. For example, he told them a story of a wolf and a shepherd who told lies, to teach them the negative consequences of telling lies. The story is about a shepherd who falsely screamed twice to seek help, claiming a wolf had attacked him. Each time, people came to help him but found out that he had lied to them. He screamed a third time when he truly was being attacked by a wolf, but people did not come to rescue him. The shepherd was killed by the wolf because people thought that the boy was lying to them, as he had twice before. Abu Ali said: "So, I talk to my children and tell them not to lie, so that you do not get eaten by the wolf. Or you waste your rights" (Abu Ali 2L305).

Similarly, Abu Ali taught his children to obey their parents by telling them the story of Abraham and his son Ismail. Abu Ali said, “I teach them how to obey their parents”. Ibrahim (PBUH) was ordered to slaughter his son, Ismail. Abu Ali said, “If the morals of Ismail were not upright and if his upbringing was not perfect, he would not have obeyed his father to slaughter him" (Abu Ali 2L320).
Also, Abu Ali noted that when he reads to his daughters, he explains to them the main message of the book. He noted: "I read to them comic books. I explain to them what is in these books. As for Fatima, I teach her from her books. But no general books" (Abu Ali 1L215). “Her books” are the books that she uses for her school studies while “general books” are the other books that are not related to school studies, such as novels. This means that children do not need to find the message of the text for themselves. He helps them do so.

Hafsa tells her son stories of how children live in Afghanistan and how he is privileged compared to them. Two themes appear in these stories: 1) there are people who are in need of help, and he should help them when he can; and 2) he should be grateful for what he has.

When asked whether her son understands the messages of these stories, Hafsa said:

I think he does because he came back and he had a money jar. He gave it to me and I am sending this money to Afghanistan to poor kids. And then we were in the market one day, he has some money in his pocket. We were there at the Eid time and he had a lot of money for Eid, and he saw a kid. He got so upset that the kid … his clothes were torn and it was freezing outside. (...) He turned back and got money out of his pocket and gave it to that kid (Hafsa 1L215).

Furthermore, Hafsa believes that her children need to experience these concepts in order to fully comprehend them. She said: "We can tell them stories, but I think kids at this age will not understand it until they see it. That is why I wanna keep taking them back home to show them what they have and how they can help people" (Hafsa 1L218).

She believes that children learn better from observing real situations.

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26 "Eid" means feast
A theme that Hafsa teaches to her son Ali is that of not hurting others. Even though Hafsa talks to her son about the concept of not hurting others in general, her son seems to apply this concept in many aspects of his life in a way that affects what he watches and reads. Hafsa said about her son: "He … watched a cartoon once and it was about a bird leaving his friends and started crying. So he is sensitive and he does not like more sad stories" (Hafsa 1L265). Ali, Hafsa’s son, copies his mother when she avoids stepping on ants when she walks. Hafsa mentioned that people tell her that she "messed him up" by making him too sensitive to everything. Ali's sensitivity makes him not like sad stories.

**Themes of family history.**

Participants in this study indicated that they shared their family history with their children to teach certain values that would help them in the future.

Ismail tells his children about his experience of coming to the US to receive education in order to become a medical doctor. He mentioned that he tells his children that his mind and thinking changed due to the circumstances around him. From the way he described it, it seemed as though he tells them that he changed his mind due to very concrete personal circumstances.

His story and how he changed his mind are supported by details that he told his children. He said that this happened because English was not his first language and that he was too poor to pay the medical school tuition. Also, he told them that he needed to pay higher rates of tuition than domestic American students because he was a foreigner. Ismail said:

I have told them that I came to this country, how I was, what schools did I go to, what schools (emphasizing the “s”) did I go to and have I learned, and how, as I was going along, my mind was developing and changing according to what was in
the surrounding and in the environment. For example, I came to the US to become an MD. When I came over here, I came to find out that it was gonna be very, very hard for me to even get in the medical school. Let alone aside the tuition is gonna be out wages for me because I was coming from a different county to get education here” (Ismail 1L60).

To teach her son to appreciate what he has, Hafsa tells him about her school in Afghanistan and how it was less developed compared to the school that he attends here. Hafsa said: “We studied in a tent.. How they have a lot of opportunities and have … how should I say it? A lot of things that we did not have. As far as going to school and having things that he has now” (Hafsa 1L10).

She also tells him about how different the life that he lives here is compared to the life that she and her family had in Afghanistan. Hafsa said:

I want him to always to be grateful for what he has. Like we took him to Afghanistan and I showed … we took to... We call it Bazaar here…. We do not have stores, like they have Wal-Mart here, we have bazaars which has small store. So we took him there, he saw kids were selling gums and chocolate and plastic bags (Hafsa 1L20).

She also teaches her history to her son so that he can learn the theme of persistence from it. Hafsa told her son about challenges that she had in education, and how political and financial circumstances forced her to stop her education, but in the end she persisted in going back to school. Hafsa said: "I usually tell him if he has a goal and want to achieve it, there is nothing can stop him” (Hafsa 1L11). To make the theme specific to her son, she told him, “If you give up. It was easy for me give up, but I did not give up because I know my family needs me here and in Afghanistan” (Hafsa 1L63). Emphasizing that she does not want her children to give up, Hafsa said, “I usually talk to them about my school and how much I struggled” (Hafsa 1L63). This theme is dictated by who she is and where she is coming from. This also impacts how she handles
problems that her son faces. Hafsa’s son plays chess in a chess club sponsored by the school in a famous restaurant in the city where the school is located. Her son is good at chess, but he lost when he played against another child from another school. He told his mother that he did not want to play chess anymore and he would not go to the chess club any more. Hafsa told him that he could stop playing chess whenever he wanted after he wins against this child. Until, he wins, he cannot stop. She also explained to him why she told him that; she said,

I told him, “I don’t want you to stop trying because you lost once. You have to try until you win. If you give up then, it is ok with me, but I don’t want you to give up something just because you lost once”. So now, he is working hard (Hafsa 1L77).

Morals and values dictated by family history.

One of the most common findings among all participants is that themes about morals and family values are strongly influenced by family histories, and more specifically, the challenges that parents faced or are facing.

The main theme that Jameela teaches her children while presenting concepts with details through extensive conversations, is informed by her family history, or in other words, her current situation which is a consequence of her family history. The main theme that she teaches her children is that of accepting that you are not getting what you want. She is currently a single mother who, in her words, "struggles" to raise her children. She has family in Senegal but she is alone here. Common statements that she repeatedly made are that "there is nothing in the house” and “they (her children) do not have many things".
When her children ask why their life looks the way it does, she tells them, "It is not like this person …you must have the same thing. Like we should be… we are not all equal" (Jameela 1L41). If her children ask her why they do not have a father who lives with them like other people do, she tells them that life does not have be the same for all people. They can be different from people around them. She said:

Sometimes we watch the African ones [referring to TV channels]. When something happens. Something in the house or… they say… The family… brothers and sisters, the dad… or something they want to know why. You tell them the way … it is not the same" (Jameela 1L45-46).

During the interview, Jameela did not want to talk explicitly about her life and how she is struggling, but implicitly she was explaining how she struggles with her children.

Another theme related to Jameela's life and which she teaches to her children is that of accepting unexpected and undesired change. She tells them that her life changed, too, over time, and she had to accept this change. She said:

Last Saturday, I was just talking to them about how I was working, how things were and how you see me now. They see struggling now. So, I tell them everything about the past and everything. Sometimes I have to tell them what is going on (Jameela 1L62).

The reason she tells them is because she wants them to be prepared for hardships if they happen in the future. She said:

I want them to know that … you know… you can be … you know… in one way doing something and suddenly things can change. Even though you don’t like it, it can change. It is gonna happen (Jameela 1L65).

The mission statement which Ismail established in his house is an umbrella for multiple themes supported by details. The statement says, “No getting angry in house, no getting angry at anyone, no hurting anybody’s feelings, and do not lie” (Ismail 1L87).
Included themes are: lying is not allowed, hurting others' feelings is not allowed, and getting angry at other people is not allowed. The statement entails an understanding of what lying, hurting others' feelings, and getting angry mean.

In addition to understanding the meaning of each of these concepts, children should be able to identify specific activities which define each of them. These activities can be viewed as details of story/stories that relate to the theme. The mission statement was established in the house after his older son hit the younger daughter, who cried. When Ismail came to the scene, his older son lied to him and told him that his sister fell down by herself. Because Ismail feels it is important to makes sure that his children will stay together in the future and support each other, he and his wife established this statement to make sure his children will remain together. Ismail said: “Another thing I tell them in the family is that mom and dad is not always gonna be with you guys. Ok?” (Ismail 1L115).

What is very significant in our discussion of this family-based theme in Ismail’s house in relation to the CCSS is that this mission statement was not written; it was orally established and maintained. Ismail noted that he expects his children to apply his family's mission statement everywhere. He told them to apply it when they meet their colleagues at school, when they meet their cousins outside the house, and everywhere they go. He also noted that it is normal that his children forget to apply the mission statement occasionally, but they remember when he or his wife reminds them.

**Decisions, inferences, central Ideas, and themes based on details (Detail-oriented conceptual processes).**

After I conducted the interviews, I compared the results of the conceptual processes described by the participants with the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS. I
found that some CCSS-based conceptual processes are included in the households, and others are not. By examining the ones that exist in households, I found key differences between the assumptions of the CCSS regarding these cognitive processes and how they are practiced in the households of the participants. This chapter includes an analysis of cognitive processes that are present both in the households and in the CCSS. First, I will explain how they are required in the CCSS, and then how they are practiced in the households.

**Details in the CCSS and in the households**

The first three standards in all grade levels revolve around main ideas and how they are supported by details. In the first five grades levels, students are asked to comprehend, refer to, and quote details to demonstrate an understanding of the main idea of a text or a story. In fifth grade, they are asked to refer to details related to how individuals in stories behave and how they interact with each other. In sixth grade, they are asked to cite textual evidence to demonstrate an understanding of implicit and explicit messages in a text. Figure 6.1 illustrates what types of details are required by the different standards at the different grade levels.

Table 5.1: Types of details in the standards (Stds.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Std s.</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Types of Details</th>
<th>Are they practiced at home?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Ask and answer questions in a story</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>A reference for explaining implicit and explicit messages in a text</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quoted when explaining implicit and implicit messages in a text</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,7,8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support analysis of text message</td>
<td>Textual Evidence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and of inference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,2,3 Retell stories</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Determine theme of stories or central message</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Determine theme of stories or central message</td>
<td>Details, including how characters behave, or how a poet reflects on a topic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 Describe characters, settings and major events</td>
<td>Key details</td>
<td>Yes. Through major events in family history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Describe character, settings, events in depth</td>
<td>Specific details in a text (e.g., character’s thoughts, words, actions)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Compare two characters in a text</td>
<td>Specific details (e.g., how characters interact)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Details, inferences and conclusions in participants’ households.**

To convince their son and daughter to attend an online high school, Ismail and his wife told them many details about the disadvantages of public schooling. They talked to them about how crimes and drug abuse rates are high in public schools. More importantly, Ismail told them that it is better for them to go to a school where they are recognized for the effort and hard work they do. According to Ismail, this is not the case in public schools. Ismail said:

I said, “You know, you guys are so exceptional that you guys should be recognized for every effort you do in the school”. Okay, and put that in there because I want them to be leaders, I want them to be, you know, do something productive for the society and for the family. How are they going to do this? They need to have a confidence, not over confidence, but have a confidence. I tell them, so that school they went to for couple of months, not a single day that they come in and tell me that they got recognized for doing this or this (Ismail 3L166).
Ismail teaches his children to choose careers that they enjoy doing, regardless to what adults might attempt to dictate to them. He does not want to dictate that his children should follow a certain career, as many Muslim families do. He tells the children that he loves the medical field because he loves to help people, not for money. He tells them:

In medicine you help people. (...) If you have a stomach ache and you come to me, and I figure out what’s wrong with you and I give you medicine, accordingly you feel better, you are going to come back to me follow-up with a smile. The smile pays me….you know. I’ll get reward. So this is how I teach my kids (Ismail 3L108).

Ismail's children practiced making decisions based on details when they bought shoes from the internet. This happened when both his son and older daughter wanted to buy shoes at the same time. Ismail specified to them the amount of money that they could spend on shoes and left them to choose what they wanted to buy; he left to them the decision whether they would buy shoes for both of them, or just use the money to buy a pair of shoes for only one of them. Ismail said: "They get the information off the internet, they get the information off the catalog, they tell me ‘is it worth it?’ And they do that, they analyze it and they tell me, ‘Dad, this is a good deal, this is how much it is going for. I think we should buy it. Both of us will be able to get this pair of shoes.’ So this is how they go and buy it” (Ismail 3L38).

Ismail's younger daughters practice relating details of an incident to plausible conclusions through daily affairs. For instance, their parents convinced them that parents have the right to decide which books are “appropriate” to read or not. Ismail said, “If a ten-year old grabs a vampire book, okay? She is not gonna be able to sleep (...) She can read, she can comprehend, she is not gonna be able to sleep. Mom and Dad, they want
their sleep because we are with you guys all the time. Mom is all the time" (Ismail 1L415).

Ismail teaches his son to draw conclusions while buying and selling. He noted that he tells his son to consider the prices and value of products before buying them. Ismail said that he teaches his son, "Think, is this gonna be a long lasting, is it gonna be affordable, hmm, meaning, are you paying too much for it, or too little for it?" (Ismail 1L153).

A number of the themes of the stories told by Abu Ali to his children are connected to the themes of real life events. An example is the story of Celebration of Al Adha\textsuperscript{27}, which is related to the story of Prophet Ibrahim and his sacrifice of his son, Ismail. Abu Ali noted, "I talked to them about Ismail and sacrifice we do today on during pilgrimage. Why we and other Muslim sacrifice animals every year. It is not a must but we should sacrifice every year on the day of the Eid of Al Adha. I explain to them why we sacrifice animals especially on that day" (Ismail 2315).

Hafsa and her son, Ali, worked together to do his science project. Hafsa and Ali researched science topics and he chose one. The focus of the project was to test two types of glue to find out which one was stronger. Ali looked at the ingredients of each type and he hypothesized that the one with more ingredients was stronger. Also, Hafsa and Ali read about the other one and they found that it was water-soluble. Ali did not understand what that meant, so he asked Hafsa for clarification. She told him that this means that it is water-based and consequently, it can dissolve in water. Hafsa said:

So, he said ‘Okay, if we put that in the water is not gonna be stronger’. So he chose the other glue. Based on the ingredients, and it has more ingredients also and it is not water-soluble. So, he wrote his hypothesis and we are gonna test it." (Hafsa 1L177).

\textsuperscript{27}“Al Adha” is one of two big feasts for Muslims.
Ali and his mother decided not to test the difference between the two types of glue, based on the chemical structure of the glue; they decided not to use water with either of them. To test the hypothesis, Hafsa and her son glued two pieces of wood to a table. Then they put equal weights on each one of them to test which supported the weight for a longer period of time.

There are two remarkable findings here. First, Ali is cognitively capable of drawing inferences based on facts or truths about a topic, as he could hypothesize that the non-soluble glue would be stronger because it might not dissolve in the water. Second, this process of drawing inferences happened verbally, not in writing. It was his mother who read about the two different types of glue and who noted to him that one of them was water-based. This finding is essential because it highlights a major difference between school and home discourses.

Questions and answers regarding details in central ideas.

Abu Ali stated that his daughter asks him questions asking for details about a central idea. When Abu Ali reads the Quran with his daughter, she asks him questions about verses that she does not understand. Abu Ali said:

Another verse, which states that people do not put themselves in danger. What does it mean? I tell her that there are some people who throw themselves into fire. Or they commit suicide. Sometimes she asks how there are some people who kill themselves as watch the TV. I tell her this is because they don't believe in the destiny. If they believed in God and in the Quran, they wouldn't kill themselves. The destiny of those who kill themselves is to go to fire. Not to heaven, so they have lost here and the hereafter. So this is how I explained that to them (Abu Ali 1L293).
Also, details are used in Abu Ali’s household to support how themes are presented by different authors.

My young son asked about the story of the China wall. He is doing that, for how many years.

I talked to him about that because we listen to the Quran narrates the story of Dhul Karnayn, who was a messenger of Allah. He did that for China. From the people of Ya’ghoug and Ma’goug. The messenger of Allah did that for the people of China. He tell me that we listen to another story here in the US. I tell him we believe in this story. I do not know about the American story, maybe it is different. But we believe that Dhul Karnayn, God send to check the (incomprehensible) for Ya’goug and Ma’goug.

Abu Ali continued:

He is ask him, ‘Who make this wall?’ I tell him, ‘Where did you listen about that?’ He tell me, ‘I listen about that …. that the Chinese do that for two thousand years ago.’ I tell him, ‘No, that is before that. That Allah SWT, sent this messenger who used (tar قطران). He used iron and silver. And doing that wall with rocks. Allah sent him because these people of Ya’goug and Ma’goug are very bad. When they drink, they drink all the water from the river, and they destroy all world. Allah sent this messenger and told him to take these people aside. And built this wall and around this wall everybody is safe. Then the culture change and another messenger is coming. We know and believe this story from the Quran.’

Abu Ali tells his children why he does not respect Halloween by explaining to them the Muslim perspective:

We are Muslim people, we have a different culture, we don’t do that (celebrate those holidays). And just one, the Thanksgiving, we go shopping because there are discounts that night, yeah that’s nice (because we are حقيقة لأنو نحنا). About Christmas, we stay home because there is no work, no school. All the kids study at home because we respect the Christmas for this country and we respect the people with that. We just stay home and watch movies and we also go to the mosque (Abu Ali 3 L64).

28 He did not know this word in English, so I looked it up.
Ismail tells his children the details of the challenges he faced when he first came to the U.S, to show them how one’s mind can change and one’s thinking develop.

Absolutely, I have told them that I came to this country, how I was, what schools did I go to, what schools (emphasizing the s) did I go to and have I learned, and how, as I was going along, my mind was developing and changing according to what was in the surrounding and in the environment (Ismail 1L60).

Ismail tells his children details of his past to teach his children to be grateful for what they have.

I tell them that I was 19 years old when I came over here. Before 19 I was there, we were living in two rooms! Just two room flat apartments, or whatever you want to call it, 11 people were living in there! (…) And how I spent my days when I was back home, when I was in 11th and 12th grades I was also going to a primary school to teach. So I was going to school myself, doing college and also helping my parents with the finances by working half of the day and in summer full day (Islamil 2L70).

This is similar to Hafsa’s, Jameela’s and Abu Ali’s experiences, as explained in the section about themes above.

Abu Ali discusses the details of comedy movies with his children without paying attention to the plot. He believes that comedy movies do not have a message to discuss. He discusses only parts of the story that involve a moral. This happens even if the movie is a comedy, where viewers identify with the protagonist because of his/her sense of humor. Abu Ali discusses certain actions of the protagonist he views as being wrong, and consequently he chooses to explain them to his children. Abu Ali said:

I talk with him about the movie, why he doing that, for example. The actor, what he doing that, why he doing that. For example, why he goes to jail, why he steals some money. For my old son or my middle son, he is like see the action movie. I ask him why he is doing that, why he is cursing some people, for example. He tells me he needs the money and he is stealing that. I tell him that is not OK, and ask is that good or no? He tells me this is not good because he can have work and he is can have money, but because he is bad man, he kills people to take their money (Abu Ali 2L160).
In this context, Abu Ali explains to his children only a section of the details of the story, not the content of the whole movie.

**Story details.**

Three of the participants do not expect that their children would remember the details of stories or recount the events. Jameela said they remember only parts of the stories; these parts are usually the first parts of any story (Jameela 2L344). Hafsa and her son do not discuss in detail the Islamic movies that they watch; they discuss isolated incidents or characters. For example, she discussed with her son how the character of the Islamic leader *Khalid* changed before and after Islam. Hafsa said, “Like in the movie they show Khalid, he … was bad at the beginning… Ya, so we say how he changed his life around and how he was one of the best soldiers of Islam, and those things” (Hafsa 2L295). When I asked Ismail whether he reads stories to his children, he said, “No, because I do it all the time they are going to know it. In my heart I know that GOD gave them this much knowledge from me and from my wife that they would know it” (Ismail 2L76).

**Reaching conclusions.**

The way Hafsa explained that she would not force her daughter to do something is an example of how she conveys ideas to her children. It does not show whether she tells the message explicitly or implicitly, or what details she explains to her; but it shows that the focus is to convey the idea, not the conceptual process of reaching a conclusion.

Ismail's 10-year old daughter made a dress for her toy princess by using as a model the previous dress that the doll wore. Ismail noted that his daughter used the previous dress as a model and "she did the measurement, she did cutting, she did everything"
(Ismail 3L70). More importantly, Ismail said that his daughter knows how to program and use all the patterns listed on the side of the sewing machine. He noted, "This is computerized high tech., so all these patterns, she knows how to put that in there in the computer" (Ismail 3L72). To understand the complexity surrounding using the machine, I researched the model on Youtube and found how it is used and what Ismail meant by the statement that his daughter knows how to program these patterns in the computer. Figure

**Figure 6.2: Sewing machine**

In order to use selected stitches, users need to 1) look at the image of the pattern on the right side of the machine; 2) choose a pattern; 3) read the number associated with this pattern; and 4) insert the number of the pattern, using a button that increases and decreases the numbers that appear on the screen in the middle of the machine. There are also options for making the stitch more or less wavy, as desired.
Regardless of how many stitch variations Ismail's daughter can do, she clearly knows how to make connections between what she wants to do and the patterns available. She can link details to conclusions or, in other words, results.

**Uncommon Core Muslim Standards (UCMS)**

Uncommon Core Muslim Standards (UCMS) is a term that I have designed to describe conceptual processes that are strongly entrenched in the practices of the households of Muslim families, but are Uncommon to the CCSS perspective. The UCMS are a genuine contribution of this study that aims to shed light on valuable practices common in Muslim households of which the mainstream American populations are not aware. Among such practices is learning by modeling, truth-claiming ways of teaching and oral-based modes of communication.

**Trust-based learning.**

The CCSS require students to examine details in a passage to verify how the author supports his ideas with details, and he/she provide details to establish the completeness of the claims she/he makes. In the households of participants of this study, information is presented to children without details to support the claims made by the head of the household. This learning, in which the parents or teachers do not have to explain to children the logic behind what they teach them, is what I call Trust-based Learning. Much information is communicated in the households of the Muslim ESL students in this form of learning where details and evidence are the key factors of determining the authority of the speaker. Understanding *Cause and Effect* is a conceptual process frequently used in the households of the participants, but not included in the CCSS. Trust-based learning as a conceptual practice differs from the conceptual process of
drawing conclusions and inferences, which are included in the CCSS, in regards to the significance of authority in the former compared to the centrality of details in the latter. Credibility of the information circulated in the households is established by how credible the speaker is, while in the CCSS, credibility of the text is established through the details that the text provides. It is also different than the conceptual process of understanding reasons, which is included in Standard 8 of the CCSS, because the latter also relies on details.

On occasion Jameela taught knowledge to her children through what could be called Trust-based Learning when she gave them information without explaining the reasoning behind it. In Trust-based Learning, children are given information and told that it is this way, without supporting details or reasons.

When her daughter wanted to lead the prayer like the boys do, Jameela told her that girls do not lead the prayer. The only justification that Jameela gave to her daughter was that "the prophet never let women do it… lead the prayers… when men is there. Always men is the ones leading the prayer" (Jameela 2L53). When I asked her whether she elaborates to her daughter why this is the case, she indicated that her daughter questioned this practice not because she was concerned about why "women" do not do it; instead, she was concerned why she could not take her turn, as she does with everything else in the house. Jameela said, "She is still young. She was not thinking why should not WE … we women. She was just thinking it is turns. Everybody should take turns. That is what she thought. (laugh). It is not about taking turns here" (Jameela 2L59). The learning where reasons are not explained with supportive details is also what I call Trust-based Learning. In the example above, Jameela’s children knew why Muslim women do not
lead the prayer (because the prophet never did it), but she did not provide details to help her daughter comprehend the wisdom behind why women should not do it.

Jameela used this approach when she told her children not to participate in Halloween. Her children wanted to wear costumes and collect candy. Jameela said, "I told them it is not our holiday; we don’t celebrate that. We can stay home and study” (Jameela 2L159). She did not provide her son with reasons why Muslims do not celebrate it.

This is different than the way Abu Ali, for example, discussed why he did not want his children to celebrate Halloween. Regarding Halloween, Abu Ali told his children, “No, that’s not true. We must not do that because that is a big problem for the Muslim” (Abu Ali 2L74). Then he provided them with details which illustrate how Halloween is “a big problem for Muslims”. He first told them that on Halloween, people wear scary clothes and do scary things. Then he showed them a video of a girl who was hit by a car after she rushed into the street, running scared after her friends hid in her apartment, wearing scary clothes. Then he told them that it is non-Islamic to terrify people. He said

"فقلتلهم انو هاد أحد الأسباب المقرفة اللي ما تخلينا نسوي هاد الشيء. وبعدين نحن الإسلام حرم علينا هذا الشيء نسوية، يعني لأنه هذه ليست من تقاليدينا ولا ليست من عاداتنا ولا ليست من ديننا بالدرجة الأولى.

I told them that this is one of the reasons why we do not do these disgusting activities. Furthermore, Islam prohibited us from doing such thing. This is not part of customs or traditions, and more importantly; it is not part of our religion (Abu Ali 2L81).

Trust-based Learning is practiced by Abu Ali when he tells his children about real life events. An example is the story of the celebration of the feast of Al Adha, which is related to the story of the prophet Ibrahim and his sacrifice of his son, Ismail. Abu Ali noted:
I talked to them about Ismail and sacrifice we do today on during pilgrimage. Why we other Muslim sacrifice animals every year. It is not a must but we should sacrifice every year on the day of the Eid of Al Adha. I explain to them why we sacrifice animals, especially on that day. (Abu Ali 2L315)

In Jameela’s household teaching morals also takes the form of Trust-based Learning. Jameela said:

Sometimes one of them might have something. The other one says, ‘I want it’. He says no. So I tell him, You have to give him some. You have to share (...) Sometimes you might need things from other people. If they keep, you won’t get anything. So you have to learn to share it. You need to learn how to give. You cannot just get. (Jameela 1L444).

Jameela taught her children other Islamic concepts in the same manner. She taught them about paradise and hellfire to build their morals. She said, "I told them that good things and bad things can lead you different ways" (Jameela 2L199). She started this conversation because one of her children hit another. So Jameela told her children: "God is watching you. And you have to do what the Prophet (PBUH) asked you to do. You have to be nice to other people… that is how we started the conversation" (Jameela 2L205).

Ismail teaches his children that older children should help younger ones build their confidence while playing games. To tell his older children to let the younger ones win the games, he told them, "When you guys were young and the young ones are not in this world I was doing the same thing to you”, and I tell them this, what I did the same thing to you guys, even though I was bigger, but I let you guys win, so it is your turn to pay the dues" (Ismail 2L38). He did not provide much detail about how building confidence in the young brothers and sisters is more important than winning a game, nor any detail about how such an activity can build younger children’s self-confidence.
Understanding perspectives.

By the end of fifth grade, CCSS expects students to be able to identify the influence of the narrator’s perspective on how she or he describes events. Some knowledge is transmitted in Muslim households in a manner similar to that of CCSS’s understanding of multiple perspectives. Understanding perspectives in Muslim households is practiced in two different ways, related to cause and effect and the building of conclusions supported by details, as described above.

Perspective understanding in Muslim households is sometimes practiced by discussing why certain things make sense in a certain context without necessarily building a judgment of whether the motives or the goals of the act are logical or not. A good example of what perspective understanding means is the way Abu Ali justified to his children his insistence on educating them in Islamic values. He told his children that he would not need to do this with them if they were living in an Arab country. In Arab countries, children learn these things in school, they learn them from people other than their parents, and they would see them in people's actions in their daily lives. He told them that in the U.S., they need to learn from their school, learn from each other and go to the mosque to learn from people there (Paraphrased from Abu Ali 3L238). In this way, Abu Ali explained to his children that the context in which they live justifies why he teaches his children about certain things.

An example of the detail-based perspective-building approach is when Muslim households teach their children which actions are appropriate for them as Muslims and which are not, while justifying to them why this is the case. Abu Ali said they do not celebrate Christmas; he justified that, saying:
We are Muslim people, we have a different culture, we don’t do that ...and this one, the Thanksgiving, we go shopping because there are discounts this night (laugh), yeah, that’s nice. About Christmas, just we stay.... because there is no work, no school. All the kids study in the home because... we respect the Christmas for the... this country, and we respect the people about that. We just sit in the home, just watch the movie and we go to the mosque (Abu Ali 3L64).

To explain the Muslim perspective to his children, Abu Ali did not attempt to convince his children of his perspective with details that would help them understand the wisdom behind the Muslim perspective. Abu Ali said:

We tell them real story because that different story here. The ... Jesus –Peace Be Upon Him (in Arabic) – he is not dead... birth on this night. This different, and I tell them, my son, that’s a different story, he is don’t birth date this night, but w... all the people respect his day and we respect this day like him. But we are different” (Abu Ali 3L67).

In Jameela’s case, she did not need to explain to her children that there are different perspectives about Christmas because her children know that from their home country. She mentioned that two per cent of the population in Senegal is Christian and they have different celebrations, such as Christmas, that her children are aware of. Jameela used to observe a holiday like Halloween back home called, Mardi Gras, and she also was used to Catholics celebrating Christmas. She said “Halloween is like Mardi Gras for us back home. You know my country is like 2 per cent or something like that. .. Christians in my country. So those people celebrate, too” (Jameela 2L145). She said that her “kids used to celebrate it in their schools. Bring their costumes and everything” (Jameela 2L150). She noted that only her daughter participated in celebrating Mardi Gras. Regarding Christmas, she said:

We talked about Christmas and Santa Claus. But Santa, they used to see Santa back home. Because as I said, we have Catholics. So they always. They used to see Santa. And you can see family half Muslims, half Catholics (Jameela 2L167-168).
Hafsa, on the other hand, seemed to feel she had to explain the details to her children because she was obliged to participate in celebrating Christmas with one of her friends. She said:

For Christmas, we do not celebrate, but I have a very close and… I love her so much. She bought gifts… and … I do not wanna tell her…no, because when I was fasting in Ramadan, she fasted a day for me (…) and I thought it is good to return back to her… so, but other than that… for Halloween, I hate Halloween” (Hafsa 2L91).

To explain to her children why Muslims do not celebrate Christmas, Hafsa said:

I tell them that, yes, we believe that prophet Isa (Jesus), we believe that he was born and he was one of the prophets like Prophet Mohammed PBUH, (…) Just like we don’t celebrate anything from Prophet Mohammed. We pray for him, we love him, but we don’t celebrate any day for him. The same we are gonna do with prophet Isa (Jesus) (Hafsa 2L100).

She also explained to them that “Santa Claus is not true and … celebrating a holiday should not be just about … giving expensive gifts” (Hafsa 2L101).

**Self-understanding as one of the Uncommon Core Muslim Standards.**

This conceptual process is necessary for individuals to develop an understanding of themselves without comparing themselves to others. It is different than the conceptual process of understanding perspectives because it does not involve a comparison between different perspectives; it is about understanding one’s own perspective. It is the conceptual processes that individuals develop if they live in a community where they do not have to compare different perspectives or different experiences.
Understanding why Muslims have two *Eids*\textsuperscript{29} is an example of children understanding the wisdom behind certain concepts, but details do not involve a comparison to other perspectives. Knowledge provided in the context of Self-understanding is used to explain why a certain action is practiced.

Abu Ali tells his children: "*Eid Al-Fitr*, that ALLAH -\textit{Subhanhu Wa Taala}- he’s gave the people like a rest like a gift after fasting one month, that *Eid*, especially *Eid Al-Fitr*, is a gift for the Muslims to rest, eat and enjoy for three days" (Abu Ali 3L26). Similarly, Abu Ali explained to his children that Muslims celebrate *Eid Al Adha* (the sacrifice) because it commemorates the incident when Allah saved the life of Ibrāham's son Iṣma’il with a lamb. So, Muslims commemorate this memory by sacrificing lambs, as well.

Hafsa's story highlights very important concepts that differ from those propagated by the standards. Among them is the concept of cause and effect. The way she taught her children why Muslims fast and celebrate *Eids* is a form of cause and effects without details. She told them that Muslims celebrate the Abraham tradition, but there is no indication that she narrated the details of the story in a manner that would convince them to celebrate it. Hafsa said, “I talked to them and told why we sacrifice that prophet Ibrāhim did. For Ramadan we are thankful that we did what Allah has asked us to do, and that is what we are celebrating” (Hafsa 2L18-109).

Non-conceptual understanding is a conceptual process included in home discourses, but not in the CCSS. It is different from understanding different perspectives, and it is also different from helping students to build, comprehend, or develop arguments. It

\textsuperscript{29}“Eid” is the Arabic word for feast.
simply entails teaching students about a fact, providing them with basic information about it, and encouraging them to participate or take an action.

**The role of comparisons in the households.**

*Comparison as a conceptual process required by the CCSS.*

Anchor Standard 8 states that students will have the ability to demonstrate an understanding of how an author uses *comparisons* in texts for different goals, such as providing evidence to support a claim. In third grade, students are expected to examine how authors use comparisons to support evidence. Comparisons are also included in Anchor Standard 9, which stipulates that students be able to compare how two texts address the same topic or theme.

On certain occasions, comparisons in the households of the participants were embedded with other conceptual processes, such as drawing conclusions and inferences based on details and evidence, and explaining the main theme or central idea of an activity or a story. A key difference is that comparisons in the CCSS-reading standards are used to compare ideas, while in the households they were used to compare contexts or situations.

Ismail's children practiced making judgments and conclusions by comparing their own lives to the lives of others. Ismail taught them that actions that benefit more people are more worthy than actions that benefit only individuals. He taught his children that it does not matter who will benefit from an act; what matters is which act benefits more people. Ismail said:

> Nowadays in this modern world, modern life, they want to get all the electronic gadgets that everybody has. So I give examples of third world countries. Sometimes we are watching T.V., some advertisement come, sometimes we come over here (in the mosque) and see folks from the other communities come from
Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan or even Pakistan, you know, and they show slides that how kids are there. Sometimes I give them a break and they get what they want, but sometimes I tell them, ‘Look at the big picture. How much money is it? What can you do better with this money if you have it? If I hand you this money instead of getting this because you already have this. Why don’t you think of the third world country people? This game is going to be only for you, but that money may be good for 50 kids. So think about these things’ (Ismail 2L72).

Ismail got very emotional when he told me that he has seen his children put their "pocket money” that he gave them in the donation box.

Jameela teaches comparisons to her children in light of the theme how things might change over time. In so doing, she compares how things, for her or for other family members, used to look and how they look like at the moment. She compared for them how her life used to be, and how the life of her brother is different than it used to be. Jameela's brother “was doing well in life and ..... now his wife left him, he is living by himself... he lost his job... he does not have anything now. So he is … really on the down side...” (Jameela 1L106).

In the section about inferences and details above, I illustrated how Ismail and Hafsa teach their children to be grateful through guiding their children to compare their lives to the lives of other people in their parents’ home countries.

Abu Ali compared for his children the story of Joseph and why his brother attempted to kill him, to how Abu Ali was about to be killed by the Shiites, because in both situations the act of killing was inspired by greed and jealousy. Abu Ali said:

Like Youssef (PBUH) why his brothers wronged him and they left him inside the well and they did not like because he is beautiful and he is smart. And why his brothers do not like him. We are smart and we are rich and that is why the Shia do not like me. Do not like my brother; do not like all the Sunna. They think that Sunna is better than them (Abu Ali 2L277).
In all examples listed above, Muslim parents practiced comparisons with their children in contexts where the same theme is present in different situations. In other words, Muslim ESL students have access to comparing different situations to examine how similar themes are present; i.e., they examine the similarities between two different situations, not the differences between them.

A very powerful example of how comparison between different situations takes place through examining similarities is presented in Hafsa’s account of comparing a story in a book to her son’s actions:

It was the story of a child who bought ice from the mountain and it kept melting and he was panicking because he could not sell it. I told him, ‘your life is like this if you don’t pray.’ He said, ‘I pray one time a day.’ I told him that is not enough. He said, ‘I am very busy’, typical like all of us do that. So, I told him, ‘You have time to watch movie, to play soccer and to do your homework, but you don’t have time for five times a day to pray.’ And he started crying.

He staying for 30 minutes, I was happy that I will last for a long time, but… I was happy that he did (Hafsa 2L305-309).

It is evident that comparisons demanded by the standards include metacognitive skills while Muslim household-based comparisons include cognitive skills. The cognitive skills of comparisons that take place in the households involve parents helping their children compare contexts to each other. Comparison in the CCSS, on the other hand, asks students to think about the processes involved in comparing ideas or things. In other words, households teach the children to use the tool of comparison while the CCSS ask them to think about and understand how the tool works. In order to do this in third grade Standard 8, students need to compare sentences and paragraphs in the text to identify how they are used by authors to convey meanings.
Imitating and modeling.

Disciplinary Literacy is argued by Zygouris-Coe (2012) to be embedded in the CCSS in the sense that the standards require students to read and write in content area classes. *Imitating and modeling* are two conceptual processes which are similar to reading and writing in the disciplines, but 1) they do not involve reading or writing, and 2) they do not expect students to function as experts in the field. They are similar to DL because they give children the opportunity to think in a certain context like members of the context, but they are different in the sense that students can function as members of the context by simply imitating the actions of elders without consciously thinking about the contextual practices in which they are engaged. *Imitating and modeling* as conceptual processes help learners to identify and adhere to the details of a certain event or context on their own. Theoretically speaking, children might discover which skills they lack and try to attend to these, by observing and imitating others.

Imitating and modeling are common practices among Muslim ESL students’ households. Ismail indicated that after his family established the mission statement, some fights still occurred among his children, but lying has not. He seemed to appreciate his children’s adherence to the values included in the mission statement, and he recognized that the fights that continued to happen are due to the nature of children.

Ismail noted that he himself does all the religious activities that he wants to teach his children. This includes Quran recitation. He noted, "Anything religious that I want to teach my kid, I do over and over again for myself. So I can show my kids. ‘Watch, I am doing the same thing’" (Ismail 1L379).
Hafsa and her family go camping at least once a year, but last year they went twice because they organized an additional camping trip to celebrate her son’s birthday. When he invites his friend to his home, Hafsa's son, Ali, plays many active games. Among these games is camping. Hafsa said: “We all love camping. And that is his … we all love camping. When his friend comes, they make the camp, the fort, the tent and everything (...) He usually packs his pack with his clothes and everything” (Hafsa 2L153).

To teach her son how fortunate he is, Hafsa and her husband took him to a place in Afghanistan where children sell gum and plastic bags. Hafsa said, "We showed them how they work half a day and they go to school. Just to be able to go to school and also provide for their families" (Hafsa 1L23). Hafsa said that she teaches religion to her children through daily interactions. She said, "Like if she wears something short, then we tell her. We do not force her not to do it, because that is not gonna work, but we teach her why it is not appropriate to do it.” (Hafsa 3L92).

She also said:

I think religion is every day. When they do something that is wrong… let’s say if they lie. We talked about it. Why you should not lie and connecting that to the religion. Because it is every day. We do not just sit and talk about religion (Hafsa 3L91).

Jameela said that her children learned Islamic rituals from people back home. Regarding how her son learned praying, she said:

He learned back home, from the family. He sit with the family and they prayed together every day. So, he practiced with them and then… she was doing Quranic School, too. You know the teacher there always put in the right direction and show them how to do it.. He is the one who taught them to do Wudu and everything (Jameela 2L62).

When Abu Ali teaches the Quran to his children, he does not teach them conceptual
processes that they need to master or practice in order to memorize the Quran. He focuses solely on language components of correct recitation of the Quran. He teaches them that they should attempt to read the short and long vowels and consonants correctly. He teaches them the duration of each sound and how it is correctly pronounced. As for the process of memorization itself, he helps them repeat the verses several times until they memorize them. Abu Ali said:

Also when I help her memorize the verse, I don't give her the whole verse at once. Instead, I teach it to her piece by piece. Then I give her a chance to review so if you want her memorize (a verse from the Quran). I read it to her then I tell her to repeat it more times. Then I move to the next verse” (Abu Ali 1L276-278).

Abu Ali recognizes that fact that this form of teaching does not help his children retain the information easily. He said that it is common that his children forget the verses memorized a few minutes after they had memorized them.

Reading and writing.

Reading.

Textual reading and writing are the key modalities for meeting the goals of the CCSS. However, reading and writing practiced in the households of participants are for academic skills which are different than the higher thinking skills of the CCSS. Most parents do not read with their children, and when they do, they simply help their children read to complete their homework.

Jameela. Jameela does not do reading assignments with her children because "she has a lot to do". Nor does she assess her children after they do the readings; she just looks at the test score they get after completing the test online. By examining the website that Jameela's children use for reading and math, I found that it has the feature of reading the
text aloud. It asks students to click on the word they do not know and it will read it to them. Perhaps this feature helps students hear words that they cannot read, and consequently the modality of communication will be oral rather than text-based.

When she gets the chance to read with her children, Jameela explains to them the central ideas of a text in easier language that they can understand (either in French or Wolof). She also noted that they have problems with question prompts in math, but they do not have a problem doing math calculations. She attributed her children's ability to do the numbers to the fact that they did these numbers in the past, when they were living in a French-speaking situation.

When her children come to her to help them with a word problem, she explains to them in Wolof because if she summarizes the ideas for them in English only, they will not get everything: "They might get few words, but they will not get it. But if you do both, then yeah (Jameela 1L300). As for reading fluency, she has to sit next to them to make sure they pronounce the words correctly. After they read the words, Jameela translates the words for them in French.

Jameela noted that she encourages her children to read so that they build their vocabulary. When asked why she focuses on vocabulary, she said, "If they don’t have, they cannot go along, it is difficult for them. They see the problems they are having right now. Just because the language keeps them from going. So they need to build their language" (Jameela 1L284). When Jameela selects books for her children to read, she chooses the ones with pictures and words highlighted because she thinks these books will help her children build their vocabulary. It is worth mentioning that she does not ask
them questions when they read because her focus now is to help them build their vocabulary.

**Ismail.** Ismail's children read the Quran at least once a day. Before they learned to read the Quran itself, they studied the Arabic alphabet and learned how to read Quran. The younger children read a few verses each day. The older ones have read the whole Quran, but the younger ones are still going through it. The father indicated that they all read to get a reward from God. The son who is 13 years old is memorizing it.

However, none of the children is reading the Quran for comprehension. Regarding the child who is memorizing the Quran, Ismail noted: "His main goal right now is to memorize it… and *Insha’Allah*, I am hoping that he goes towards. Memorizing, after the memorization, he goes towards the meaning. Okay?" (Ismail 1L377). Understanding the meaning comes later, in the third stage after the child finishes reading the entire Quran from cover to cover in the first stage, and memorizing it in the second. In that third stage, according to Ismail, a person does not need to read much of the Quran, instead; his/her focus should be on understanding the meaning of the sections read. This means there are still a few years left until Ismail's older children would read the Quran for comprehension.

Ismail noted that he does not assess his older children's comprehension in regard to any of the readings, whether they are religious or literary. He simply asks them about what they are doing and he trusts the reports they give him. He noted that the reason he trusts his children's reports is related to the house mission statement.

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*Means “God willing”.*
Ismail did not read to his children, but his wife read to the "little" ones. She read to the older ones when they were young, too. Ismail said that his wife reads story books, "little kids' stories" (Ismail 1L288). The older children, on the other hand, read literature. The goal is to help them build their vocabulary. Ismail felt the urge to encourage his children to read when they scored below average on reading in a standardized test, although they scored above average in science and math. Ismail noted that now the children read by themselves.

Ismail and his wife do not monitor their older children’s reading because they want them to feel trusted. Ismail only asks his children if they read and whether they benefited from what they read. Ismail said:

That is all I need from them because I want them to have this from us that we trust them, okay? (...) So, at the end we get the results and we know if they have not done that (...) So I don’t need to do anything… my older kids are auto pilot per se (Ismail 1L318).

As for the younger children, Ismail's wife checks that they comprehend what they read. The wife asks her daughter questions to check whether she understands what she read and whether she remembers what she had read before, in case the book has been read more than once. The focus of the mother most of the time is on reading fluency. Ismail said, "My wife is there, listening to her, looking at the book while she is reading. Whether she is reading right or not. And then wife asks her what happened next, if the book had been read a couple of times" (Ismail 1L334). It is worth mentioning that all readings Ismail's children do are in English. Genres include literature for older kids and bedtime stories for the younger daughter.
Ismail explained that he encourages his children to read because he wants them to build their English vocabulary to be ready for future education. He noted:

Reading is gonna do is enhance their education for the future. Also, due to us coming from foreign countries, we speak different language and the kids is born and is growing, and me and my wife are speaking language for kids, so the kids get sense of that language more. Then English, English is being taught here. This is why I want them to read to get more .... Understanding of.... understanding and vocabulary (Ismail 1L49).

Abu Ali. Unlike the case of Hafsa, Abu Ali reads to his daughters books other than those required by her school. When asked why he does so, he said, "Because I want them to understand the future. Children until now they don't know existing animals, which animals God has created" (Abu Ali 1L248).

More importantly, Abu Ali gets involved in meaningful communications with his children while reading such outside books to them. Providing reason is a big part of such interactions. For example, his daughter asked him about a book about dinosaurs he read to them. She questioned whether dinosaurs were real creatures and she questioned how humans could live with such gigantic animals. Her father explained to her that dinosaurs existed long before humans were “descended” to earth. This discussion led her to examine how humans were sent to earth. The father explained the story of original sin.

In helping his children understand the meaning of the verses in the Quran, Abu Ali does not explain everything to them. Sometimes he is too busy to help them, so he asks them to seek help from their teachers. When helping his children do their reading, Abu Ali focuses on the topic needed for their homework. To this end, he tends to understand the topic himself and then he helps his children understand it. In other words, he does not lead them to comprehend it themselves. In this manner, the focus is on the outcome, not
the process. Also, the way he helps his children comprehend the content is through oral, not text-based, communication.

**Hafsa.** To help her son read Arabic words correctly, Hafsa reads the words to him, then she tells him the meaning in English, asks him to write them down, and then finally she asks him to read them. She said that he can read a whole sentence and understand the meaning correctly, but with words he does not know, she helps him. In other words, all she asks him to do is to read the sentence and translate what it means. More importantly, Hafsa refers to translation as comprehension; she said, "His comprehension is good… he knows …. He can translate the sentence" (Hafsa 1L128).

Hafsa said that her son is asked by his teachers to read or have one of his parents read for him. She said that she helps him read only if he asks her, but if he does not ask her, she wants him to read to himself "to be more fluent" (Hafsa 1L272).

When asked whether she cares about comprehension, she confirmed that she does. However, she explained that she wants him to comprehend expressions in English in order to understand what is in the text. Hafsa said, "Because we do not speak English a lot, I want him to be able to understand some phrases and some things that are normal for other kids who know English, who speak English at their home" (Hafsa 1L292). In order to help her son "understand" the phrases that he does not know, Hafsa "googles" them to find their meanings.

Her goal is to help him understand what he is reading through translating it. She said, "If he knows the English, he can translate that. Then he can understand what he is reading" (Hafsa 1L296). This is different than in the focus of the CCSS, which is higher thinking skills for reading comprehension. She also wants him to know "everyday
things", but he usually will not ask what they mean if he does not know. Regarding the importance of such everyday things to her son, Hafsa believes that they might affect his confidence if he does not know them. She said, "I don’t understand them, I ask them. But he is a kid and he might be shy to ask someone. And I don’t want him to lose his confidence on those little things, that I don’t think that matter a lot, but for kids they do" (Hafsa 1L340).

Even though she said that she asks him questions to find out whether he understood what he read, she asks specific questions about sections of the passage that she guesses might have been too hard for him to understand. If she finds out that he does not understand these parts, she would explain them to him in different ways to make sure he understands them. This is also different from the comprehension of details that the CCSS advocates. Hafsa does not assess whether her son relates the details to the main idea. Instead, she checks if he understands isolated segments from the passage. More importantly, when Hafsa's son does not understand the idea of the passage, she explains it to him orally, not in writing.

Writing.

Jameela's children write for homework. Writing for English homework focuses on improving their reading fluency and memorizing vocabulary. Writing for Arabic homework focuses on phonics and copying words for spelling accuracy and writing legibility. The most sophisticated form of her children’s writing is in French when they write letters to their friends back home. The only form of help that Jameela offers to her children when they write is correcting any mistakes they make.
Ismail. Ismail's children write only for homework assigned by school teachers. All homework writing is done in English. Corrections that Ismail makes to his children's writing include grammar and spelling. As for content, he looks for whether the essay has enough facts. He said:

Nowadays writing is all about facts. I mean… schools are not asking you to write stories. Schools are asking you to write … they give you factual topics to write about. What are you gonna write about? Are you gonna start writing stories? NO. You are gonna write facts (Ismail 1L491). Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of doing research to gather facts. The essential finding here is that he does not expect school to ask students to write what the CCSS call narrative writing. The factual writing he mentioned can relate to the CCSS argumentative writing in the sense that it expects students to write sound arguments based on concrete evidence. The fact that his children practice such argumentative writing in their households makes teaching such a writing style easy to do. Ismail's wife, on the other hand, helps the younger the children who are six and 10 years old in choosing topics that the children know enough to write about.

Abu Ali. Abu Ali's sons write in Arabic and English to improve their writing skills. They write in Arabic by copying material from Arabic newspapers which their father brings to them. As for English, they copy material from their books. Abu Ali does not pay much attention to whether they understand what they read or not. Consequently, he guides them to understand the meaning only when they ask him about what they do not understand.

When Abu Ali and his wife help their children with their writing, the focus is on making sure that their children place the dots in the Arabic script where they are
supposed to be. As for ideas, Abu helped his daughter develop her idea about ants and how they resemble humans in their hard work, day and night.

Abu Ali indicated that his son helps him write applications for aviation engineering jobs. Most importantly, he attributed his son's ability to help write the applications to the experience that his son accumulated in aviation engineering through helping his father maintain the latter's tools. About his son, Abu Ali noted; "He has experience with that because he help for the maintenance minimal help. Help for my tools because I must have special tools for my job. He is have experience" (Abu Ali 1L60).

**Hafsa.** Hafsa’s son’s writing is not for the sake of building arguments supported by evidence; he writes merely by copying the material from the book. He does so in order to do the summaries requested by his teacher in school. Hafsa said,

He is into a book called (...) *Diary of a wimpy kid*, he has the whole collection now. We tried other books for him but he likes this one.
If he does not like it, it is very hard to get him to read.
We found out if we buy diary of wimpy kid it is easier. We have less struggle. I ask him to read, then he reads and writes his summary” (Hafsa 1L244).

Hafsa continued:
It is not a great book, but I think as long as it is keeping him interested in reading, it is okay. It is not a bad book, but it is not very educational book. But he is, it is … it is helping his reading grades go up. That is good, because what he reads and he understands (Hafsa 1L251).

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the analysis of the interviews and home visits. The most remarkable finding is that reading and writing in the households of the participants are strongly restricted to doing homework. Most parents do not read to their children books other than the school textbooks. In cases when parents attempt to read to or with their
children, they focus on decoding, vocabulary memorization and single word translation. It is almost impossible to find any of the CCSS reading skills practiced in the reading activities in the households.

As for writing, students write only for homework. When parents help their children write, they focus on correcting spelling and grammatical errors that the children make. None of the parents focuses on building arguments, establishing themes, or even writing narratives. Similar to the case of reading, the households are far behind the CCSS-based writing conceptual processes.

There are, however, several CCSS-based conceptual processes included in the households in oral communication, not in reading and writing. Children of the participants have opportunities to practice detail-and evidence-based conceptual processes, such as drawing conclusions and inferences. Yet contrary to the CCSS, central ideas and themes are always made explicit in household communications. Use of educational media and storytelling is very common among Muslim households.

Also several conceptual processes common in the households are not included in the CCSS, such as Trust-based Learning, and learning by modeling.
Chapter 7

Assessment

In this chapter I discuss the implications of the findings of this study for assessment practices based on the CCSS. In order to do so, I show the reader how the Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) applies the standards in their model of assessment posted on their website. I present challenges to assessing Muslim ESL students, as well as opportunities that assessment practices can utilize, that the findings of this study reveal. Finally, I present recommendations for both the standardized assessment designers and the MIS staff and educators.

PARCC Assessment

The state where this study was conducted has chosen to use the assessments which are being developed by PARCC. For their assessment, PARCC indicates that they will use authentic texts, i.e., not texts adapted to young learners. They also indicate that test items which are designed to measure students’ ability to meet the standards will match the scope of the standards themselves (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), 2012). PARCC (2012) shows an overview of PARCC prototypes.

The sample test items (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), 2013) listed on the PARCC website verify these claims. Figure 7.1 shows a snapshot from an English Language Arts sample reading test for students between third and fifth grades listed on the PARCC assessment website.
Part A of this sample asks students to demonstrate their understanding of how two paragraphs in the passage relate to the story in the text. In order for the students to answer Part A, they need to determine the theme of the story, and then determine how these two paragraphs relate to the theme. This aligns with CCSS Standard 5 for fifth grade students. In grade five, students are expected to determine how parts of a text relate to its topic, whether the text is a story, a drama, or a poem. The part of the passage included in this snapshot does not help the reader to determine what the theme of the story is, because the two paragraphs have two completely different ideas. Both ideas are listed among the responses in Part A, from which the students are asked to choose only one. Consequently, students need to read the whole passage to determine what the overarching theme of the passage is. Part B of the questions in the same snapshot asks students to
provide evidence for their answer in Part A. Determining and using evidence is one of the main conceptual processes that the CCSS require students to demonstrate and use.

Figure 7.2 is another snapshot from the same sample test. Here, Part A asks students to determine the meaning of a word as used in a text. This is what CCSS Standard 4 requires students in first and second grades to demonstrate. The same conceptual process is being measured by Part B below.

Figure 7.2: ELA sample test item #2

In addition to basing their assessment model on the standards, PARCC indicates that their focus in their design is three layered: practicing complex academic texts, evidence-based reading and writing, and building non-fiction content knowledge (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), 2012).

Table 7.3 shows key conceptual understanding processes included in the CCSS and whether they are practiced in the households of the participants and in the Islamic Studies
textbooks. This table shows that many conceptual processes included in the standards are not practiced in either the households or the Islamic Studies textbooks. Furthermore, it shows that conceptual understanding processes included in the standards are practiced in the households in genres or modes different than those used in the CCSS-based assessments. These findings highlight key challenges that Muslim ESL students might encounter with the CCSS-based assessments.

**Challenges for Assessing Achievement CCSS Among the Children of the Muslim Participants**

Figure 7.3 illustrates differences between conceptual processes included in the standards and those practiced in the households and the Islamic Studies textbooks.

**Figure 7.3: CCSS conceptual processes vs. conceptual processes in the textbooks and the households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS Conceptual Processes</th>
<th>Islamic Studies Textbooks</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine implicit messages and central ideas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Central ideas and themes are explicitly stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehend based on evidence</td>
<td>No (not until seventh grade)</td>
<td>Yes (Oral-based)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and write evidence and detail-based texts</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine and contrast perspectives</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Orally, not text-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw inferences and conclusions based on details</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Orally)</td>
<td>Details in textbooks are not only text-based, they are also explained through pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize and</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the analysis of interviews with participants shows, most activities where conceptual processes similar to those of the CCSS are practiced in these Muslim households are oral-based, not text-based as in the CCSS. Oral communication is used in the households to communicate to children morals, values, history, details, comparisons, and other conceptual processes that can be related to a few of the conceptual processes of the CCSS. Based on Gee’s (2001) definition of genre as “more or less fixed patterns of language associated with more or less fixed patterns of actions and interactions” (p.34), there can be a great discrepancy between the traditional oral genres of language used in these Muslim households and the text-based conventional genres of the standardized assessment. Reading is the language genre not only of the reading standards of the CCSS, but also of the standardized exams themselves.

Also, the concept of social language presented by Gee (2001) is essential to this discussion of the discrepancy between oral and text-based traditions. That is, the language structure and semantics of oral communications are simpler than those of written texts, especially the complex academic texts favored by the CCSS. In order for students to communicate with parents, they need only to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS); while in order to succeed at the written assessments, they need to develop a satisfactory level of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.
(CALP) (Cummins, 1981). Also, as I noted previously in Chapter 3, Jameela’s children rely on an internet website to study and to do their reading and math homework. The website that they use provides the option of listening to the text read aloud. This helps Jameela’s children hear the words that they cannot recognize in the text. This alters the fact that the practice exercises provided on the website are text-based. In reality, they are mixed-modality with both written and oral features. The fact that three of the participants, Jameela, Hafsa and Abu Ali, noted that they communicate with their children mostly in their native languages, not English, adds to the complexity of English text-based assessments as a challenge for Muslim ESL students. Also, Gibbons (2009) noted that academic writing which is not adapted to the needs of younger learners is more complex than both spoken language and other forms of writing. Gibbons noted that,

> the difficulty of academic language is related not simply to unfamiliar vocabulary but to the way the language is structured – for example, the use of nominalization and nominal groups that “condense” information and make it possible to be more precise and concise (p.56).

Since many conceptual processes are embedded in the CCSS but not present in the households, and since the ones that are present in the households are practiced in a different genre than those of the CCSS-based standardized assessment, there is a clear discrepancy between the discourse of the CCSS and that of the households of the participants. Hence, the conceptual processes of the CCSS are “secondary discourses” (Gee, 1989) for Muslim ESL students. That is, the students have not internalized these skills in their primary modes of interaction. Interaction in the households is oral-based while interaction on the standardized assessments is text-based.

In reading CCSS informational texts, the PARCC assessment requires readers to attend to how arguments are supported by details and facts. The ultimate product of such
practice in both literary and informational texts is to present clear arguments supported by details and facts in a written form (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). This is not how the participants in this study help their children read and write. In Chapter 6, I explained how parents focus on helping their children memorize vocabulary in order to translate texts to aid comprehension. Close reading is not the focus of any of the participants with their children. Similarly, the Islamic Studies textbooks focus on providing students with specific, declarative, truth-claiming statements, even in seventh grade. As for writing, I noted that parents focus on correcting grammatical and spelling errors rather than helping their children write argumentative essays.

The first time the Islamic Studies textbooks teach students arguments supported by details is in seventh grade. Perhaps this is the case in sixth grade (texts I did not analyze), but this conceptual process is definitely not included in the fifth grade textbook. Writing activities in the first grade workbook and exercises of seventh grade textbooks refer to specific examples in the lessons and/or ask students to answer questions referring to pictures or ideas stated clearly in the text.

One might argue that it is important that children internalize their Islamic beliefs, as well as be instructed in knowledge or truth claims about them. The counter-argument is that, to do so, students do not need to be experts in CCSS-type cognitive skills and processes (e.g. developing and analyzing arguments based in details, determining themes and central ideas, and writing complex texts).

Muslim families use alternative approaches to instruct their children in the faith. Three parents indicated that they teach their children through what I called “modeling” and through context. Jameela and Hafsa noted that they do not teach values explicitly to
their children; instead, they wait until an incident happens and then use it to teach morals and values to their children.

As discussed in Chapter 5 and as Figure 7.3 shows, Islamic Studies textbooks are not designed to teach conceptual processes similar to those of the CCSS. The focus in these textbooks is on conveying Islamic truths rather than teaching students cognitive or meta-cognitive skills about how to reach conclusions by making inferences, or any of the CCSS-related cognitive processes. All conclusions and inferences in the textbooks are explicitly explained.

As for themes, they are clearly explained in a separate section in the first grade textbook and through the lesson titles in the fifth grade textbook. In Chapter 5, I argued that the concept of theme is viewed differently by the CCSS and the authors of the Islamic Studies textbooks. That is, the theme in the latter’s perspective does not have to be the idea around which the other parts and content of the text revolve. Rather, it is an idea among other ideas discussed in the text. According to this perspective, both paragraphs 1 and 2 in Figure 7.1 above can be a theme of the passage. However, this is not the case with the CCSS perspective on the concept of theme. A theme, in the perspective of the CCSS, is the take-home message of the text, and readers can find it by relying on different clues such as “the title of the text, how the characters feel, what the characters think or say, what the characters learn, and the conflict, events, or actions in the story” (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, Chapter 8, Section 3, Paragraph 2), or they can rely on their cultural understanding, understanding of history, or background knowledge.

Regarding language standards which include metacognitive skills, Islamic Studies textbooks do not present different perspectives or determine the meaning of figurative
expressions. The seventh grade textbook brings examples of how characters interact with each other and how their perspectives are contrasted, but students are not asked to explain the different perspectives because there are no questions at the end of the story. In earlier grades, the only perspective included is the Islamic one and it is not supported by details to explain the logic behind it. In households, on the other hand, determining perspectives is practiced orally and it is based on details, as when Abu Ali explained to his children why Muslims do not celebrate Christmas but respect the culture of those who celebrate it.

The CCSS pay much attention to the use of figurative language. Figurative meanings of words or expressions are not used at all in the Islamic Studies textbooks analyzed in chapter 5. This might be related to the intent of the Islamic Studies textbooks to convey knowledge to students in a clear, comprehensible manner.

**Opportunities for Teaching and Assessment**

Several of the conceptual processes of the CCSS are present in the households discourses, but in oral-based genres. This provides an opportunity how to make the assessment practices of the CCSS more relevant to the households.

Also, interviews with the parent participants revealed many literacy opportunities that educators could rely on to tap into Muslim ESL students’ background knowledge to better teach and assess them in regards to the CCSS. I present two concepts that I believe can help educators find out ways to reduce the gap between these students’ secondary discourses (those of the CCSS) and their primary home discourses: the concepts of context-mandated learning, and the concept of funds of understanding.

**Context-mandated learning.**
Children have to learn certain concepts or conceptual processes because of who they are and where they come from. Parents believe their children must learn these conceptual processes in order to succeed in life. Findings of this study reveal that concepts and conceptual processes that parents insist on instilling in their children are related to families’ histories and backgrounds. In other words, students’ backgrounds might determine to a large extent what they learn in their households. Such conceptual processes and concepts are influenced by who students’ parents are, where they came from, and what previous experiences they had. The issue of context-mandated learning is more than merely the conceptual processes that students somehow access; it refers to conceptual processes that students must learn because the environment where they live dictates such learning.

Ismail noted that he teaches his children to stay together. He told them that he and their mother will not be with them forever, so he teaches them the importance of staying together. He illustrated for them visually how it is more difficult to break matches when they are together than when each of them is broken alone. He brought the matches and asked one of his children to break them first when they were separated, and then when they were united. He concluded his illustration by saying to his children, "So when mom and dad are gone, you brothers and sisters have to stick together for each other. If you are single, you can break easily. Together, nobody will be able to break you guys." (Ismail 1L121).

Part of context-mandated learning is what could be called “situational learning”, where children learn something that their parents choose to teach them in a certain situation when parents feel the need to do so. In such situations, parents might be urged
by their beliefs to teach certain concepts to their children. For example, if a certain incident happens and the children misbehave (compared to what their parents believe is appropriate behavior) or misinterpret the situation (compared to what their parents view as a valid interpretation), parents might decide to guide their children to behave and to interpret the incident appropriately. This is an example of what I call situational learning. Situational learning from the perspective of the students is a sub-group of what I call context-mandated learning.

The best way to describe what I mean by situational learning is what Jameela meant when she noted, "You know, sometimes you have to wait until the right time and tell them so they understand better" (Jameela 1L92). She said that if she attempts to teach them something, it might be possible that they are thinking about something else and not really paying attention, even if they are listening to what she tells them. So, it is better to wait until they see something happening somewhere and ask questions; then she explains to them what needs to be explained.

Jameela used this method to teach her children to be accepting of whatever they have and whatever happens to them and to the family. To explain such things to her children, Jameela used examples from the family to help them understand these concepts better. To help her children understand how people's lives can change, she used the example of her brother who "was doing well in life and ….. now his wife left him, he is living by himself… he lost his job… he does not have anything now. So he is … really on the down side …"(Jameela 1L106).

Jameela narrated a story when her children saw a homeless person approaching her and asking her for food. The children asked Jameela why these people do that. Jameela
told them, "It is not something they wanna do. It is because they do not have .. they need to eat, they wanna do a lot of things but they cannot. Because some of them do not have a place to live" (Jameela 1L28).

Jameela discussed these themes with her children because they asked why their life looked the way it did. She said, "Sometimes they are the ones asking question. Why this that way? Or why we should not have been …. They are the ones who start the conversation and I start explaining to them" (Jameela 1L37). In this example, Jameela’s children understood comparisons between people’s lives in the present in a context related to themselves and their mother.

Similarly, Abu Ali said that he teaches Islam to his children through activities of their daily life. This means that his children learn Islamic values as these values appear in real life contexts. This is similar to what Hafsa said about teaching religion to her children. She said she teaches it as it appears in their daily lives. Ismail also created his home mission statement because his children were fighting with each other.

On a different note, Ismael told them that what is Islamically acceptable is clear and what is not acceptable is also clear; so wherever they go, they should be steadfast in doing their prayers and keeping their good morals. While explaining this, he pointed out to his children that he would not need to say this to them if they were living in an Arab country. In Arab countries, children learn these things not only in school, but from people other than their parents, and they see it in people’s actions in their daily lives. He told them that in the U.S. where their beliefs and values are not socially supported, they need to learn these things from their school and from each other, and they need to go to the mosque to learn from people there. (Translated from Abu Ali 3L238).
In order for Muslim children to be Muslim children, they have to abide by such ways of understanding transmitted to them by their parents. The values they need to abide by require them to make judgments and decisions daily. Situations where students must make these value judgments could be investigated as possible sites where they could internalize other conceptual processes, such as those of the CCSS.

From “Funds of Knowledge” to “Funds of Understanding”.

Believing that people possess knowledge gained from their life experiences, and that teachers can enhance the educational process if they learn about and utilize the background knowledge of their students, the “funds of knowledge” approach was examined in the 1990s by a group of researchers to make teaching practices, especially for minority students, more effective (Gonzalez, Andrade, Civil & Moll, 2005). Understanding families’ funds of knowledge helps break the “simplistic dichotomy between community (practical, out-of-school, intuitive, tacit) and academic (in-school, deliberate, explicit) knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. 266). Instead, it creates a new space where teachers and academic personnel learn from experts in household activities. Funds of knowledge of households can be used in assessment of the different content areas, as well (Sandoval-Taylor, 2005). Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (2005) defined the term “funds of knowledge” as “[t]hese historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 72).

Furthermore, Moll and Greenberg (1990) noted that the sources of funds of knowledge are not only the practices of the households, but also activities in “cultural relations”, as well, such as the relations between uncles and nephews, and linguistic and
cultural forms of interaction between them. The concept of funds of knowledge can be defined as cognitive and physical skills “generated through the social and labor history of families and communicated to others through the activities that constitute household life” (Gonzalez et al., 2005b, p. 18). Families’ histories are also significant sources of funds of knowledge because “some of the patterns of interaction observed in the homes can be attributed to adaptive responses to sociohistorical processes” (Tenery, 2005, p. 125).

Based on findings of this study, I suggest using a similar approach for teaching and assessing the conceptual processes of the CCSS with Muslim ESL students. In this approach, parents’ household activities can be investigated to reveal activities through which conceptual processes of the CCSS are practiced. Then, teaching and assessment practices can be designed to model those practices, both in form and content. A key difference between the concept of funds of knowledge and the concept of funds of understanding that I am proposing here is that the latter looks specifically for what conceptual processes are practiced in the households and how they are practiced. This is different from the funds of knowledge approach that examines household practices to inform the content of classroom teaching, not necessarily the conceptual processes to be taught and assessed.

In the following example from Abu Ali’s discussion with his children about a Bedouin Soap opera that they watched on TV, the Bedouin cultural values and perspective could be used with his children as a basis for communicating and assessing CCSS conceptual processes:
Mud yhid karamah yhid karama ahalhe. Sho lili xlah ysoi halshyidesha? Fiishofun an bishr almarata miyla byacall! Aqallaym "hadsa alyans hal ybaltal" fiisturbdihun, aqullaym "alahehida ya defaq wnh hqsh, aaqahu ybhal." Ahna undnay ysmo wthal. Fibiqiy wnlbi hada (Abu Ali 3L155).

I explain to them why people act in certain ways. For example, the story of Tiger of Aggression is about Nimer (literally means “tiger”) who lived on the Iraqi-Jordanian borders and whose tribe was conquered by another tribe. As a result, his tribe were scattered in the different places. Then he started to gather them again and formed a strong army and started winning against his enemies. My kids see him killing sometimes, and they ask why he is doing that. I tell them this is a person who is killing to retain the honor of his people. This is a noble act because he is killing the killers” (Translations of Abu Ali 3L155).

This is an example of certain CCSS conceptual processes: examining the perspective of the author, understanding details of a story, asking and answering questions about details in a story. It also exemplifies how Abu Ali uses media sources, TV in this case, to teach his children certain concepts and details of the Bedouin life. In this activity, Abu Ali’s daughter practiced asking questions about details of the story as she wondered about Tiger’s actions, for example, and as Abu Ali noted above, why Tiger killed people.

The author’s perspective is revealed at the end of the vignette when Abu Ali explains to his children how the killing of people that Tiger does can be viewed as a noble act; this is because Tiger kills people to defend his people and regain their dignity. Also, this story includes many details that relate to the theme of story which is established through its title “Tiger of Aggression”. Abu Ali noted, as indicated earlier, that he explains to his children details and ideas that they do not understand.

It is worth noting that Islamic Studies textbooks analyzed in this study do not present an example of funds of understanding. They focus on promotion of knowledge and truth claims more than on building understanding. The Truth-claiming Learning approach does not constitute a conceptual process that students practice and internalize; it includes information that is presented to the students explicitly.
Recommendations for Standardized Assessments

Based on findings of this study and the above described discrepancy between the discourses and social languages of the participants’ households and those of the CCSS text-based assessment, I recommend that assessments based on the CCSS should incorporate the oral modality of communication. They should also incorporate visual media, because many of the participants indicated that they rely on DVD, TV and YouTube material to teach significant concepts to their children.

Also, ESL students should be given the chance to take the exams in their own language since the focus is academic skills that include conceptual processes. This is to assure that students: 1) understand the question prompts; and, 2) can demonstrate their knowledge and academic skills, including conceptual processes, as needed.

As for preparing the students to acquire the conceptual processes of the standards, the International Reading Association (IRA) and other agencies that fund the CCSS should fund publishing companies that publish reading material related to the Muslim culture(s), in order to align these publications with the CCSS. More importantly, agencies that support the CCSS should allow the districts, and even schools, to research and write their own assessments that are not only related to, but also based on, the conceptual processes valued in the different communities.

Recommendations for MIS Regarding Its Muslim ESL Students

As indicated previously, there are many conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS but that are not practiced either in the households of these students or in the Islamic Studies textbooks. Consequently, the school: 1) should assure that they are teaching and assessing these students in manners appropriate to their students’ needs; and, 2) should
NOT base their retention and promotion policies on the scores of their students on the CCSS-based assessments.

The school can achieve the first recommendation through utilizing other forms of assessments, such as formative assessments (Bloom, Hastings & Madaus, 1971) and portfolio assessments, during the school year. Formative assessments provide a good opportunity for the teachers to help the students utilize their background knowledge in the classroom. Such assessments are also good opportunities for teachers to find out which conceptual processes their students have internalized and which they have not. As a result, teachers can focus on teaching their students the conceptual processes they have not yet attained.

Also, the school should utilize research conceptual processes and activities that the students practice in their households and base their teaching and formative assessment practices on them. Such context-mandated learning and funds of understanding approaches can be used to research conceptual processes valued in the households, in order to locate conceptual processes that students are capable of and ways these are practiced in their households.

Similarly, portfolio assessments provide an excellent opportunity for teachers to work with their students over the course of the semester or throughout the academic year to advance toward goals decided at the beginning of the academic year. The process of portfolio assessments gives the teachers and the students time to work, edit and rework a specific set of conceptual processes that students need to internalize by the end of the academic year.
As for the second recommendation, semester that grade retention not be based on CCSS assessment, I am aware that such practice might be problematic for the school to apply. I indicated in the literature review section that Islamic schools in the U.S. rely strongly on donations from wealthy community members and on student tuition. I indicated in Chapter 4 that this is the case for MIS, as well. Using standardized exams is critical for the school as it proves to the donors and parents that the school is capable of meeting their aspirations for helping Muslim children to achieve academically as well as or better than public schools. However, it is assumed that these same community members would acknowledge the importance of maintaining the Islamic nature and values of the MIS and other faith-based Islamic schools. Therefore, I strongly recommend that the present CCSS assessments, which are not based on or even aware of Muslim values and household practices, NOT be used to penalize students by grade retention. Rather, new assessments which include CCSS standards but embed them in appropriate Muslim cultural exemplars need to be developed.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine the answers to each of the study’s sub questions individually. This will provide the foundation for me to respond to the main research questions of this study. Then I will point out the limitations of the study and suggest directions for future research. Finally, I will comment on assessment of Muslim ESL students based on the CCSS-based conceptual processes and how they relate to the scope of the study and Islamic discourses at large.

Sub-question 1

What conceptual understanding processes do Muslim ESL students need in order to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA)?

Textual analysis of the CCSS, as well as relevant literature, revealed that detail-based and evidence-oriented conceptual processes are key concepts in the CCSS. Students need to locate details to both read and produce complex texts by the end of eighth grade. In order to do so, the CCSS requires them to practice locating and using details as evidence, beginning in first grade. Detail-oriented and evidence-based practices in the CCSS develop in depth and extension from first through eighth grades. CCSS uses evidence and details as essential prerequisites for determining and explaining a text’s theme or central idea, the arguments made by the authors, and each author’s perspectives. Summarizing texts, recounting key details, and referring to details in texts as textual evidence are also conceptual processes that students must master by the end of fifth
grade. In seventh grade, students are asked to cite textual evidence to demonstrate their understanding of what the texts says implicitly and explicitly. A detailed analysis of the types and uses of details in the CCSS is included in Figure 6.1.

Also, students need to understand how authors rely on textual tools to convey a certain message. This involves a conceptual understanding of how authors create ideas in texts through interactions between and among events, characters and settings in the text. A detailed analysis of the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS standards in grades 1,2,3,4,5 and 7 are included in the Figure 5.1.

Sub-question 2

What, if any, conceptual processes that can inform Common Core Standard-based assessment practices are available to Muslim ESL students at home and/or in the textbooks of their Islamic Studies classes?

Islamic Studies textbooks do not have many conceptual processes that can inform the assessment of the CCSS. The above-mentioned conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS are not included. However, the differences between the conceptual processes included in the CCSS and those in the textbooks highlight certain challenges that Muslim students might face when assessed on CCSS-based standards, because the Islamic Studies textbooks value a set of conceptual processes different from those of the CCSS (This will be explained in the answer to Sub-question 4). Also, conceptual processes included in the CCSS and present in the Islamic Studies textbooks are either: 1) practiced partially; 2) practiced later in the seventh grade; or 3) practiced in a different manner than that of the CCSS. For example, details are present in the Islamic Studies textbooks but they cannot inform the CCSS-based assessments because they are practiced in a manner different than
these required by the CCSS. In the Islamic Studies textbooks, details provide examples that relate to the message of the texts, but in the CCSS details are used to draw inferences, make conclusions, to support claims and to explain perspectives. Further, the concept of theme, an essential concept in the CCSS, is perceived differently by the CCSS and the Islamic Studies textbook for first grade. (This point will be explained further in the answer to Sub-question 3 below). A conceptual process present in seventh grade Islamic Studies textbooks but embedded in the CCSS since first grade is that of understanding how central ideas in a passage are supported by evidence related to a theme. This required CCSS standard was not found in the Islamic educational materials reviewed for this study.

Drawing inferences is a conceptual process practiced in first grade workbooks in a way slightly similar to that of the CCSS. Students are asked to examine pictures and read two sentences below each picture to determine whether a certain person has to perform the Islamic pilgrimage or not. A snapshot from the textbook is presented in Chapter 5. In this activity, students can rely on both the picture provided and the text written below each picture to draw the correct inference. Yet, relying on the picture alone will not help the students, because the picture provides only half of the information about the person, not all the information needed to draw the inference: it is not enough for a person to be healthy to do pilgrimage; the person needs to be both healthy and have enough money to make the trip. The picture in the exercise shows a healthy person but does not indicate whether the person is rich or poor. This activity provides an example of how inferences can be based on cultural and religious practices/values, or at least issues that relate to real life events.
Households, on the other hand, can inform the assessment practices of the CCSS because conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS standards are present in households, but in different genres and social languages. That is, all conceptual processes practiced in the households are oral-based, while the conceptual processes included in the CCSS are meant to be text-based. The difference between the genres and social languages through which conceptual processes are practiced in the households and the CCSS mirrors serious differences between structures and complexities of languages used in both contexts. According to Cummins (1981), oral interactions are simpler and more context-embedded than text-based interactions. For instance, participants’ households practice supporting central ideas with details orally, not in a text-based genre. Also, they practice making comparisons using visual media, as in the example of Abu Ali comparing for his children the stomach of a person who eats pork to an image of his own stomach. In this activity, Abu Ali’s children did not read about the physical changes that happen to individuals’ stomachs when they eat pork; instead, they watched a Youtube video and looked at images of their father’s stomach. Next, Abu Ali orally explained to his children what conclusions can be made based on information included in both the images and the video.

Other CCSS conceptual processes that are practiced in the households orally are:

- using details to ask and answer questions in a story
- using details as a reference for explaining implicit and explicit messages in a text
- quoting details when explaining implicit and explicit messages in a text
- Using details to determine the theme or central message of a story
- Using details to describe characters, settings and major events
Themes are strongly present in stories that Muslim participants narrate to their children, but they are explained explicitly. The moral and values-based content of these themes can provide topics and stories through which valuable themes and central ideas can be taught and assessed. Similarly, Abu Ali taught his children different perspectives when he explained to them that he and his family as Muslims do not celebrate Christmas but they respect the culture of the U.S. where this celebration is pervasive. Jameela, on the other hand, indicated that her children are aware of the differences between Muslim and Christian celebrations because the population in Senegal, where they have spent several years is 2% Christian. The manners in which different perspectives are practiced in households can inform the assessment of the CCSS in meaningful ways. For instance, the differences between the different cultures can be used to inform the content of teaching and assessment practices.

Sub-question 3

*Are there conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS that Muslim ESL/LEP students do not have access to in their homes or in religious classes?*

In their households, Muslim ESL/LEP students do not have access to most of the conceptual processes that are included in the CCSS. Figure 7.3 shows the discrepancy between conceptual processes of the CCSS, on the one hand, and those of participants’ home discourses and the Islamic Studies textbooks on the other.

In this study, Muslim ESL students were not shown to have access in their homes to any of the three language standards of the CCSS: Standards 4, 5, 6 (which include metacognitive language skills). Metacognitive skills embedded in the CCSS are: determining and explaining how a paragraph in a text relates to the main message or the
theme of the text; determining an author’s perspective; determining and comparing perspectives of characters in a story; and comparing a certain theme or idea presented differently by different authors. The only metacognitive skill/conceptual process documented in these Muslim ESL students’ households was that of understanding different perspectives. Yet, these children were not asked to explain those perspectives. Also, interactions between and among characters and events were embedded in the stories that Muslim parents told their children, but these interactions were not explained or assessed.

In their interactions with their children, households of participants made the central ideas and themes explicit to their children, so determining the implicit messages or central ideas was not practiced. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, there is a discrepancy between use of details as embedded in the CCSS compared to how they were used in these households. Ways in which details are required by the CCSS but not present in the households included: recounting stories, summarizing texts, supporting analysis of a text’s message, and inference with details. Ways in which details are embedded in the standards but for which no evidence was found to support or refute their presence in the households were: using details to compare characters and describe thoughts of characters in depth, and comparing characters and events to each other.

Also, Muslim ESL students did not practice any of the writing standards in their households because priorities of writing in their households were different than those embedded in the standards. When they helped their children write, these Muslim parents focused on spelling and sentence structure; they did not focus on argumentative,
descriptive or persuasive writing. They did not pay attention to writing with details that
either support an argument or attempt to persuade.

As in the households, in the Islamic Studies textbooks, central ideas and themes were
explicitly explained, so students did not practice determining implicit messages and
themes of texts. More importantly, the concept of theme is used differently by the authors
of the CCSS and those of the Islamic Studies textbooks. A theme to the CCSS is the
central idea around which the text evolves. In Islamic Studies textbooks, on the other
hand, the theme is a topic to which other sections of the passage are related in diverse
ways. The difference is that in Islamic Studies textbooks, it is possible that the theme of
the passage can be the importance of prayer, for example, but the details as well as other
sections of the passage might be about how to conduct prayer. This is does not mean that
themes of the CCSS do not have subtopics; subtopics in the CCSS build up to the main
theme of the text in a more direct and focused way than in the Islamic Studies textbooks.

Comprehension based on evidence is a conceptual process that is embedded in the
CCSS, but is not present in these Islamic Studies textbooks until seventh grade.
Determining and contrasting perspectives, summarizing and recounting key details, and
determining metacognitive language skills are conceptual processes which are embedded
in the CCSS but not in the Islamic Studies books. Determining how characters interact
with each other is practiced in the seventh grade Islamic Studies textbook in the story of
Abraham. The story illustrates a dialogue between Abraham and a king through which
the perspectives of both characters are made clear. Yet, there is no evidence that students
are asked to explain the perspectives because the story in the book is not followed by
questions to measure understanding.
Recounting and summarizing key details in a text are two conceptual processes which are included in the CCSS standards, but not in the Islamic Studies textbooks. It is worth noting that details in the Islamic Studies textbooks and workbooks are examples of the theme or the central idea of the text; they are used to support the main message of the text.

Sub-question 4

Are there any conceptual processes familiar to Muslim ESL students in their homes or religious textbooks that are overlooked by the CCSS?

There are valuable conceptual processes included in the households and in the textbooks of Islamic Studies that are not embedded in the CCSS. An example is the Learning by Modeling and Trust-based Learning practices available in the households, and the Truth-claiming Learning practices available in the Islamic Studies books respectively. In both Trust-based and Truth-claiming Learning practices, information is presented to the students without details that support claims made by the parents in the households or by the authors of the textbooks. Also, self-understanding is a conceptual process present in the households but not included in the CCSS. Self-understanding refers to these practices where individuals are involved in interactions that aim to help them learn their own cultures and practices, without comparing their practices and perspectives to those of others.

As indicated above, the CCSS require students to use details to describe characters, settings and major events. In addition to practicing these conceptual processes orally, Muslim ESL students practice comparing contexts based on details. Families’ histories include contexts different from those of the U.S., and comparing the contrasting contexts
is used by families to teach their children certain values and morals. Hafsa, for instance, compared the context of her school in Afghanistan to the context of the school that her children attend in the U.S. to teach them to be grateful for what they have, and to teach them to be persistent about what they want to achieve. She explained to her son that she had to stop going to school several times due to economic, political and linguistic circumstances, in order to illustrate to her son how persistent she was.

**Sub-question 5**

*Based on findings of this study, can assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS be relevant to Muslim ESL students’ home discourses and the academic expectations of their Islamic Studies textbooks? If so, how? If not, why not?*

Assessment practices based on the CCSS can be partially made relevant to the home discourses of the Muslim ESL students, but it is very difficult to make them relevant to the academic expectations of their Islamic Studies textbooks. This is because there are more CCSS-based conceptual processes practiced in the households than in the Islamic Studies textbooks.

All CCSS conceptual processes which are present in the households are practiced orally. CCSS assessment practices can be made relevant to these Muslim households if the assessment practices are offered in oral genres of communication, rather than in reading and writing. If Muslim ESL students are given the chance to communicate orally, rather than in a text-based modeling, they might be able to meet the expectations of the assessment practices because Muslim ESL students are accustomed to communicating orally in their households. Of course, this recommendation applies only to assessing conceptual processes which are included in the households, such as drawing inferences.
based on details and understanding perspectives. Assessing these two conceptual processes, for example, in text-based genres will be challenging for Muslim ESL students because Islamic Studies textbooks do not offer text-based interaction tasks.

There are several CCSS conceptual processes that are practiced in neither the households nor the Islamic Studies textbooks, such as the metacognitive skills and conceptual processes of the language standards. Neither the Islamic Studies textbooks nor the households prepare the students to understand or explain how paragraphs in a text or a story relate to the main idea of the text. Making such conceptual processes relevant to the discourse of the households or the Islamic Studies textbooks would be a challenging task. Also, assessing students’ abilities to determine meanings of figurative expressions would be a challenge because Muslim ESL students are not used to explicating such language usages, either in their Islamic Studies textbooks or in their households.

Findings of this study indicate that assessment practices based on the CCSS should incorporate the Uncommon Core Muslim Standards, which are the conceptual processes which are included in Muslim households and in the Islamic Studies textbooks but not in the CCSS.

After answering the sub-questions, I turn to answering the two main questions now.

**Main Question 1**

*How prepared, if at all, are Muslim ESL students to display the conceptual processes embedded in the academic literacy skills which are included in the Common Core State Standards?*

In this study, Muslim ESL students were partially prepared to display the conceptual processes embedded in the academic literacy skills which are included in the CCSS. They
practiced many detail-based conceptual processes, but in oral, not text-based, interactions. Evidence-based conceptual processes were also practiced orally, but not in text-based genres.

Students were also capable of understanding different perspectives as a cognitive skill but not as a metacognitive skill. They were capable of identifying different perspectives, but they were not prepared to explain how different perspectives are demonstrated by authors or in oral interactions.

Main Question 2

*How can Muslim ESL students’ degree of preparation and cultural forms of acquisition of the CCSS conceptual processes inform assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS?*

Assessment practices which will be based on the CCSS can be informed by the degree of preparedness of Muslim ESL students to meet the standards in two ways: first, to recognize which conceptual processes the students are not familiar with in their households or Islamic Studies textbooks, and second, to incorporate what I have called Uncommon Core Muslim Standards, the learning practices that students familiar with in their Islamic Studies textbooks and households, but which are not included in the CCSS.

As indicated previously, CCSS-based assessments should incorporate oral-based assessment tools because those CCSS conceptual processes practiced in the Muslim households were in oral-based genres. Assessment practices should incorporate alternative forms of assessment, such as formative assessments and portfolio assessments, where students have the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension in both text-based and oral-based forms of interaction.
Limitations of the Study

The researcher is an insider to both the school setting and the Muslim community; his biases are recognized and consequently procedures were taken to make sure that his biases did not affect the analysis of the data and the reporting of the findings. The researcher is also biased by his conceptual framework, so data analysis might have been affected by the limitations and boundaries of his conceptual framework. Meaning-making processes in the households of Muslim ESL students can be investigated through different conceptual processes, so the data analysis presented in this study is a limited one, based on a narrow conceptual framework.

Findings of the study can be critiqued for their minimal generalizability to a broad population because the number of participants is only four Muslim parents. In a qualitative research study, researchers are more interested in transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Detailed information about the participants, their linguistic and cultural background knowledge, and lengthy interviews were the researcher’s key to achieving transferability of findings. Data is generated from only two interviews with each participant and one home visit.

Also, the study was conducted over a short period of time and this might have affected scope. The number of conceptual processes investigated is small compared to all conceptual processes included in the CCSS standards. Additional inquiries designed to investigate a wider range of conceptual processes included in the standards are needed.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused only on the English Language Arts (ELA) CCSS standards, with the main focus on reading standards. Research is needed on the math standards
investigating writing and speaking standards in more depth. Also, the tenth standard of
the CCSS, which is about text complexity, is not included in this study because
investigating this standard would require more concrete quantitative measures not used in
this study. Such an inquiry remains to be made.

This study focused only on what parents reported that they do with their children;
there can be other skills or conceptual processes that students have, but which were not
mentioned by the parents in the interviews or during the home visits. Observation and
autoethnographies are needed to investigate what Muslim ESL students are capable of
doing in more detail.

Similarly, only a small sampling of Islamic Studies textbooks were investigated and
they were analyzed without examining how they are usually used by teachers.
Consequently, an examination of what conceptual processes are practiced in the Islamic
Studies classes (not only in the Islamic Studies textbooks) is still needed. It can be done
through classroom observations and interviews with the teachers.

Closing Remarks

Educators and policy makers should be critical of the claims and promises of the
CCSS. This study suggests that the Common Core State Standards are NOT really
“common”. There are, as shown in this study, other alternative practices valued by
different communities and contexts.

Since previous research suggests that differences between home and school
discourses affect students’ achievement on standardized exams (Bielenberg & Fillmore,
2005; Callahan, 2005; Keisler & Bowers, 2012), educators need to seriously consider
developing other forms of assessment to measure students’ ability to display the skills and the cognitive/conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS.

The clear discrepancy between the CCSS academic conceptual processes and those present in the Islamic Studies textbooks might make one wonder whether the Islamic Studies textbooks need to raise their expectations in terms of the conceptual processes they require their students to demonstrate. Such a possibility may have merit, especially if the skills and conceptual understanding processes of the CCSS would help Muslim students internalize and become confident about their beliefs and values. Still, faith-based texts and discourses in many religious traditions are more prone to truth-claiming statements rather than the multiple perspectives and logical argumentation promoted by the CCSS.

If it is important for religious discourse in general and Islamic discourse in particular to encourage conceptual processes such as comprehending and building logic based on evidence and details, helping students internalize these conceptual processes should take place in diverse genres, in social situations and even in the native languages of the ESL students. If the focus of instruction and assessment is the skills and the conceptual processes themselves, then students should be given the chance to be taught and assessed in forms appropriate to their linguistic and cultural needs. Perhaps authors of the Islamic Studies textbooks are taking into consideration that many, if not the majority, of students who attend Islamic private schools in the U.S are ESL students. The fact that these textbooks demonstrate academic skills which include conceptual processes less advanced compared to those of the CCSS should be respected, but students should be cognitively
challenged while being taught English skills as several scholars suggest (e.g. Gibbons, 2009).

**Orienting Parents about the CCSS**

Findings of the study indicate that an understanding of CCSS academic skills and the conceptual processes embedded in them is not documented in interviews conducted with these Muslim parents. When parents referred to comprehension of text, for instance, they meant simply memorizing meanings of vocabulary so as to translate sentences.

If educators value the conceptual processes embedded in the CCSS, then they need to educate parents about the conceptual processes that the standards include. This can be done. Yet, assessment of these processes might still be an issue because students will practice them in their native language, not in English, and perhaps in oral-based rather than text-based genres. Consequently, serious changes to the assessment practices themselves are essential.

**Are Findings of the Study about Islamic Studies discourse in general, or discourse specific to these textbooks?**

Do the findings of this study demonstrate a difference between Islamic discourses in religious education texts versus the discourse of western style education as presented in the CCSS? Or is it possible that the Islamic Studies textbooks analyzed in this study are simply a small and unrepresentative sampling of Islamic educational materials for young students?

The textbooks analyzed in this study are designed in a format similar to that of many traditional Islamic Studies textbooks. Evidence in traditional Islamic books is provided by citing verses from the Quran and/or quoting sayings of the Prophet or any of the
prophets. To be sure that the conceptual processes documented in this study as pervasive in Islamic Studies textbook are good representations of the conceptual processes included in most Islamic textbooks, I examined other textbooks in the school to learn if there are other conceptual processes included in them that are not included here. I can confidently state that the textbooks which I analyzed here are good representations of the conceptual processes present in other similar textbooks, at least in their respective grade levels.

Yet, this perspective will not be accurate if we compare the discourse of the households to that of the CCSS, because the Muslim households that participated in this study are different than most, if not all, households of Muslims who live in participants’ countries of origin. Consequently, if we think of Islamic discourse versus western discourse as two geographies, participants in this study are different than either geographic context. However, findings of this study suggest that these Muslim households, despite their location in the U.S., are more similar to the Islamic discourse in terms of conceptual processes that they practice with their children. This may be because they are not aware of the difference between their discourse practices and those of western style education. Ismail, who is an educated physician’s assistant, indicated that he does not read with his children; he just buys them books that they read on their own without being assessed by either of their parents. He indicated that his wife helps his younger daughters to make sure they understand (are capable of translating) what they read.

Finally, this study highlights the necessity of educating all parties involved in the educational process about the cognitive needs of the ESL students, and the cognitive
demands of the school discourse. School teachers and educators, parents and policy makers should be trained to link the discourse of the school to that of the households.
Dear Parents:
My name is Radi Abouelhassan and I am a PhD candidate in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. I am also a member of the education committee of (name of school).
I would like to invite you to participate in a study about a new initiative which will be adopted by (name of district) and (name of school). The initiative is called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The goal of the study is to provide (name of school) and (name of district) with insights about how to better adapt the Common Core State Standards to Muslim students who speak a language other than English at home.
If you are willing to participate in the study, I’d like to meet with you in person at a time and a place convenient to you so that I can explain to you the details of the study and answer any questions you might have. In that meeting, I will give you a form that will help you understand the design of the study. The form will show you how I will protect your privacy and it will confirm to you that participating in the study is optional and that you can withdraw at any time without any penalty.
If you agree to participate in the study after I explain it to you in detail, I will send you a survey with a few questions about your linguistic and cultural background. In addition, I will interview you twice and visit you in your home once for about 90 minutes. When I visit you, I will not talk to anyone in your family except yourself and you will decide where we can sit. In all of the three meetings we will have, I will ask you questions about daily activities of your child. The goal of the questions is to find what academic skills you teach to and practice with your child at home.
If you would consider participating in the study, please e-mail me at radimostafa@gmail.com, or call me at 505- 903-4956 to set up a time to meet.

Thank you very much. I would greatly appreciate your willingness and participation.

- Radi Abouelhassan
Appendix B
Sample Interview Questions
Interview Questions

What activities or experiences do you like share with your children?
Why do you share those particular activities and experiences with them?
Do you think they benefit from those experiences? In what ways?
Can you tell me the process of how you share those experiences or activities with them?
How do your children respond?
Do you consider yourself a teacher to your children?
What do you teach them at home?
What do you want them to learn from that?
How do you teach them that?
How do you know if they understand you?
If they do not understand what you are teaching them, what do you do?
How often do you repeat this exercise?
Do you read to your children?
IF YES,
What do you read? What do you focus on when you read to them?
How do make sure they understand what you are reading?
What topics do you read about?
What do you want them to learn about these topics?
What kinds of books do you read?
Are these readings related to your children’s lives? If so, how?
IF NO,
Who reads to them?
What do they read to them?
Why do you have those people read to your children?
Do you know what they read about?
What do you want them to read that?
How do you make sure they understand what they read?
Do you help them if they do not understand something?
Appendix C
Initial Survey

What is your country of origin?
What is your first language?
How long have you been in the US?
Do you speak languages other than your English and …?
How many children do you have?
How old is your son/daughter …?
Where was s/he born?
What is main language you speak with your children at home?
Does s/he speak your first language at all?
Which language do you consider to be his/her first language?
What language does your child speak with other people in your house?
Does s/he speak English at all in the house?
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