

Spring 2019

What Can We Learn from Adult ESL Students' Responses to Children's Literature?

Monique C. Stone

University of New Mexico - Los Alamos Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/educ_llss_etds



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Stone, Monique C. "What Can We Learn from Adult ESL Students' Responses to Children's Literature?." (2019).
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/educ_llss_etds/102

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Education ETDs at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Monique Stone

Candidate

Language, Literature, and Sociocultural Studies

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Yoo Kyung Sung, Chairperson

Lucretia Pence

Huaqing Qi

Donald Zancanella

What Can We Learn from Adult ESL Students' Responses to Children's Literature?

By

MONIQUE STONE

B.A., English, New Mexico State University, 2001

M.A., Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, University of
Southern California, 2011

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2019

Dedication

For Miles and Baby Hazel, and Gabbi

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my committee members chairs Yoo Kyung Sung, Lucretia Pence, Cathy Qi and Don Zancannella for their support throughout this process. Particular thanks to Don Zancanella for his patience, kind encouragement, and sticking with me years into his retirement.

Thank you to my husband for his sacrifices in order to support my continued pursuit of education. Thank you to Auntie Em and Aunt Café for baby holding while I completed this work. Thank you to Gail Guengrich and Crystal Howell Beck for being my critical friends and sounding boards. Finally, thank you to Bart Hill and Vanessa Vander Galien for their support of my research and data collection.

**WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ADULT ESL STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS?**

By

Monique Stone

B.A., English, New Mexico State University, 2001

M.A., Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, University of
Southern California, 2011

Ph.D., Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies, University of New Mexico, 2019

ABSTRACT

Some teachers face frequently changing populations of students, making it difficult to gain cultural knowledge that is important to support student learning. The aim of this study was to explore how adult language-learner students in intensive English programs (IEPs) respond to children's picture books portraying their home countries or cultures. Reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1995) and cultural scaffolding (Gay, 2002; i.e., the use of student culture to support student learning) are the initial frameworks upon which the study was developed. The study was qualitative in nature and driven by a desire for the researcher to gain more cultural knowledge about students through their responses to children's literature. This motivation led to considering other teacher-driven research and, thus, teacher practitioner research (sometimes called "teacher action research") was a strong influence on this study's methodology. Participants completed questionnaires, attended focus groups, and participated in interviews in order to capture their responses to children's books. Data revealed unique responses, complemented by overarching themes that both answered and challenged the notion of gaining specific cultural knowledge.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables	x
Chapter 1: A Teacher’s Dilemma.....	1
Background of the Study	1
Study Overview	2
Research Questions.....	2
Significance of Study	3
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	4
Children’s Literature.....	4
What Students Have Said in the Past about Children’s Picture Books.....	5
Chapter 2: How Can We Understand and Approach the Problem?	8
Reader Response and Cultural Scaffolding	8
Reader response	8
Cultural scaffolding	25
Conclusions.....	39
Chapter 3: Ways to Approach the Problem.....	40
Introduction and Overview	40
Research Questions.....	40
Why Qualitative Practitioner Research.....	41
History.....	43
How you know you are doing it and doing it well.....	45
The trouble of having clear goals.....	45

Quality criteria	47
Questions concerning practitioner research	50
What counts as knowledge.....	51
Valued knowledge	51
Transformation and politics	53
Narrative	54
Importance of reflection.....	55
Research examples.....	56
Research Design.....	60
Participant recruitment/research sample	63
Data Collection	64
Data analysis and synthesis.....	79
Data Analysis	80
Ethical considerations	89
Validities	89
Limitations and Delimitations.....	90
Chapter 4: Participant Voices and Teacher Reflection.....	93
Mexico: Valerie, Edgar, and Darlene	93
Venezuela: Bliss, Ellen, and Fred.....	110
China: Joe and Kevin.....	128
Korea: Walter and Mina.....	136
Japan, Nepal, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Germany, and Guatemala	148
Japan: Todd.....	148

Nepal: Yani	162
Iran: Raina.....	167
Saudi Arabia: Geoff	169
Burkina Faso: Cyrus	175
Germany: Carey	181
Guatemala: Jessica	185
Summary.....	196
Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Conclusions	200
Research Question 1	200
Iceberg model of culture	201
Authors and illustrators as insiders and outsiders.....	217
Research Question 2	223
Research Question 3	228
Rogoff and Gutiérrez: Repertoires of practice.....	228
Dudley-Marling and Jones and Clark	230
Conclusions and Implications	234
References.....	242
Appendices.....	251
Appendix A: Key Terms and Acronyms	252
Appendix B: Consent Form	253
Appendix C: Student Questionnaire	255
Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol	256
Appendix E: Follow-up Interview Protocol.....	257

List of Figures

Figure 1. Diagram used to explain reader response theory.....	16
Figure 2. Final coding examples, questionnaire.	84
Figure 3. Final coding examples, focus group.....	84
Figure 4. Final coding examples, interviews.	85
Figure 5. Excerpt from A Piece of Home.	147
Figure 6. Drawing of the cultural iceberg illustrating visible and invisible culture	203

List of Tables

Table 1: Examples of Cultural Scaffolding	38
Table 2: Participants	61
Table 3. Criteria met for Cultural Authenticity	70
Table 4: Books Used in Study	73
Table 5: Timeline of Study	78
Table 6: Round One Codes	81
Table 7. Thematic Overview of Responses	87
Table 8: Validities.....	90

Chapter 1: A Teacher's Dilemma

Background of the Study

There are many nationalities and cultures represented in Intensive English Program (IEP) classrooms. IEPs are designed to help students learn English through several hours of daily class instruction. In 2016, there were 108,433 students representing more than 170 countries studying in the United States. While 58% of students came from China, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and South Korea (Education, 2017), there is a range of cultural diversity within each of these countries for a teacher to consider. Specific knowledge of culture is important for student learning (De Jong & Harper, 2005).

I was most recently a teacher at an IEP at a large university in the southwest United States. My students came from different countries, and the population shifted with every new term. While an IEP is the focus area of my study, it is not the only context in which this study may be useful. In addition to my current university setting, I have taught for the New York City Public Schools, social service agencies, a charter school, and a community college. In all of these places, I taught English in some fashion, be it ESL, literature, basic reading skills, or a combination of all these things. In most of these settings, the student population was not stable, attrition was high, and I constantly had to start over again in navigating the ever-changing cultural landscapes of my classroom.

Given the variety of cultures a teacher may encounter, particularly in my most recent context, it is challenging to develop deeper cultural knowledge of students. While the research explains that this knowledge of students is very important, (De Jong and Harper 2005, Gay 2002, Ladson-Billings 1995) very little is offered on how teachers can develop this knowledge outside of being an insider to the students' cultures. I have been adopted into

the communities in which I worked early in my career, when I was young, poor, and vulnerable. Often, someone one would take it upon themselves to look after me as if I were family, and so I know the significance of being accepted into a community has to teaching. However, in settings where older and more established teachers work with students who attend classes for a short amount of time, or where populations where students are frequently absent and experience high rates of attrition, it is very difficult to learn the deeper knowledge about students to be a better teacher.

Study Overview

Within the context of an IEP, the purpose of this study is to explore how an ESL teacher can develop knowledge through students' responses to children's picture books portraying their home country. I was hopeful that the use of children's books would be a cultural bridge to examine culture more critically from an insider's perspective and at the same time shift positionality of students as readers and reviewers, thus allowing students to use their inside cultural knowledge as a foundation for their response to the picture books and increasing student agency and motivation. Adult ESL students read children's literature depicting their culture/nationality, completed a questionnaire, attended one focus group, and in some cases participated in an interview. Participation was not consistent because of participants' schedules and academic demands. These variations are noted in Chapter Three.

Research Questions

- How do adult English language learners respond to multicultural, international, or global picture books related to their home countries?
- How does using English when talking about books related to their home country engage participants in reading and discussions?

- How can students' responses to children's picture books portraying their home country help me improve my teaching by developing more specific cultural knowledge in an adult English language program?

Significance of Study

By demonstrating critically reflective practices, this study aimed to reveal how teachers could learn about their students through practitioner action research and also to demonstrate the value of using international and global children's picture books in adult English language program settings. The use of children's picture books validates students' identities as readers and critics while supporting language learning. Finally, this study developed the argument against homogenizing students by nationality (or extending to other cultural groups with which they are affiliated) by exploring children's literature as a specific segue into learning about students' cultural positioning and offer an opportunity to increase student agency by positioning them as inside authorities on the text.

This study is also significant because of the elements it brings together and because its major focus is on teacher learning instead of student learning. This study redefines teacher learning through students' discovery that English is the vehicle of communication and discussion, but not necessarily the goal. It puts the onus on the teacher (in this case me) to gain specific cultural knowledge about individual students rather than groups. Such knowledge can improve teaching that incorporates students' cultural knowledge while the teacher develops multiple identities as a reader and a learner. For example, in this study, instead of me reading about Venezuela and making assumptions about my students, I brought the text to my Venezuelan students to see how they would respond. From this response, my hope was to gain a better understanding of the individual students within their larger

framework—that is, to better understand how each student relates or does not relate to the depictions of culture in the picture books they read. Another significant element of this study is that it focused on aesthetic and critical responses in an ESL setting that is often dominated with efferent reading. The aesthetic reading and the discussions that are part of the reader response framework may put more language demands on students, which can increase learning and motivation (Ali, 1993; Carroli, 2008; Hirvela, 1996).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The two conceptual frameworks that shape this study are reader response theory, as developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1995), and the concept of cultural scaffolding, developed from work in culturally responsive teaching. Each framework is discussed in more detail later in Chapter Two. Reader response theory approaches literature as a transaction between the reader and texts and allows for students to negotiate their own meanings based on their own experiences and lived contexts. De Jong and Harper (2009) emphasize the importance of culture in the teaching of English. They explain that teachers need to consider both the linguistic knowledge and cultural backgrounds of their students. In this way, teachers might consider texts that have both linguistic and cultural connections to what students already possess in their framework of understanding (the same framework the teacher seeks to expand). By choosing books that are connected to (but do not entirely encapsulate) the students' culture, this study explored how the students feel using English to talk about culture and how teachers can learn more about how students situate themselves in cultural terms.

Children's Literature

Children's literature is used as a general term to describe literature written for younger audiences. It includes picture books and young adult novels. In this study, only

picture books were used. The books used in this study can be classified as multicultural, international, and most frequently, global. Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson (2013) classify that a multicultural book relates to populations in the United States that are marginalized—for example, immigrants, LGBTQ communities, and African-Americans. International literature are books are originally published for audiences in other countries and are then translated into English for sale in the United States and, finally, global literature is literature about other countries written for a U.S. audience (Short et al, 2013). In this study and in my classroom, I have used all three types of books, based on availability through libraries and booksellers.

What Students Have Said in the Past about Children’s Picture Books

Before embarking on this study, I used children’s literature with adult ESL students, with fascinating outcomes that I wanted to explore more deeply.

“My grandfather and I would climb up the mountain every weekend.”

A Venezuelan student who was often bored in my class said the above words with a slight gleam in his eye and a rare smile. Inviting him to bring a book from his home country to share in class piqued his interest. From this activity, I learned more about the geography specific to Caracas. Caracas has a mountain with a tram, and from the top of the tram you can see all of the city and then further out to the Caribbean Sea. This is similar to the tram up the Sandia Mountains in Albuquerque that provides a view of the city as well as the expanse of desert to the west.

“If I choose a children’s book about the Dali Lama and my classmates tell their parents and my parents will lose their jobs.”

In the example above, I paraphrased what a Tibetan student said about her Chinese classmates. After hearing her concerns, I understood a little bit better about what it meant to her to be from Tibet and the complicated political issues of her region. This experience clarified to me why she identified as Chinese instead of Tibetan, something that had previously confused me.

“People think it’s like this in my country, that it’s over and better—but people are still dying every day.”

This quote was from a Middle Eastern student responding to a children’s book about the protection of an important library during a political uprising. When I heard these words from my student, it immediately challenged my assumptions about him, about where he situated himself within his culture, and about the reasons behind his distracted behavior in class. His response to a children’s book made me reevaluate my own thinking in a very profound way. From the book alone, I gathered the importance of history and reading and the desire for it to be protected even in times of political turmoil in his country. From my student, I gained a sense that there wasn’t a happy ending to the story of the Arab Spring, and that his quiet and distant affect in class was possibly more than a lack of sleep (which I had assumed was caused by his staying up late at night playing video games). I also may have misjudged his motivation to learn. With this text, he spoke more powerfully in class than at any other time.

“You shouldn’t use this book to teach your son about Saudi Arabia because it will be boring for him. He’s too young. . . .”

In this quote, you see the reader sharing an honest and strong opinion about a book based on his experience with the book and what he knows about my son. This is an example

of a book's authority and value in a particular setting, coming from the reader, rather than the text. This is representative of reader response theory in that meaning is not derived from the text alone. The reader makes meaning, and in this case, the reader tells me not to bother with the book because he finds it boring and thinks it will be boring and therefore not instructional for my young son. He doesn't consider the validity or accuracy of the information in regards to his home country, which were the questions I was trying to ask; rather, he speaks frankly and demonstrates his own transaction with the text. He uses his own capital or funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) to support his opinion.

These words from students inspired my course of inquiry and, in this study, my mission to further unpack what adult ESL learners had to say about texts and about their home countries, cultures, and languages.

This dissertation is organized in a traditional format. Chapter Two details my teaching story and the intersections it has had with the theoretical frameworks that inspired my curiosity and research, or, in Mason's (2002) terms, created an intellectual puzzle. Chapter Three outlines the methodological models and inspirations for the study, as well as the reality of how data was collected, coded, and analyzed. Chapter Four is best described as a narrative account of the data and focuses on participant voices. Finally, Chapter Five uses multiple lenses to capture, analyze, and explore the data. The data proved to be too complex to be explained through the use of a single lens. Ultimately, the data showed that gaining particular cultural knowledge to support instruction is challenged by the variations of individuals within a culture.

Chapter 2: How Can We Understand and Approach the Problem?

Reader Response and Cultural Scaffolding

While I have encountered multiple theoretical frameworks that have most certainly shaped my thinking on unconscious levels, two have had a significant and explicit impact on both my academic and teaching understandings and practices. Reader response theory has made me more confident in allowing a wider variety of acceptable answers in response to literary texts, and has also made me long to incorporate more literature into my teaching contexts, where informational texts dominate. Cultural scaffolding is a part of culturally responsive teaching that allows the teacher to use more specific cultural knowledge to support student learning. The two frameworks overlap because both rest on the premise of teachers having a deeper understanding of the students' backgrounds and leveraging that knowledge to support learning. What follows is an in-depth discussion of each framework, beginning with reader response theory and continuing into a discussion of the concept of cultural scaffolding based on the term's appearance in educational literature.

Reader response. How do we make reading meaningful to students in more profound and unique ways, ensuring that basic comprehension, interpretation, and personal responses are balanced? In other words, how do we allow a student to respond to a text on their own while negotiating the myriad relevant factors that contribute to what a text "means"? These factors include (but are certainly not limited to) authorial intent and meaning viewed through social, cultural, historical, political, and economic lenses. Reader response theory is one approach. This section reviews the foundations of reader response theory and its possible applications in classroom contexts, especially English as a second language (ESL) settings.

In this chapter I choose to focus mostly on the Rosenblatt (1995) development of reader response theory by explicating her key themes: efferent reading, aesthetic reading, the role of the teacher, the value of literature, and transactional theory. I focus on Rosenblatt because she is arguably the originator of reader response theory, as well as the most influential theorist in classroom settings.

My teaching story. Most recently, I have been an ESL teacher at an Intensive English program. As an ESL teacher, I situate myself within a context of direct approach because English is the common language between my students and is the vehicle for instruction. Kelly (1969) and referenced by Celce-Murcia (2014), explain that in the direct method of teaching only the target language is used based on the “notion that a language cannot be taught, that one can only create conditions for learning to take place” (Kelly, 1969, p. 5). Part of the direct method is the use of literary texts for “pleasure and are not analyzed grammatically” (p. 5).

I use a combination of approaches and philosophies in my approach to teaching English as a second language. Primarily, I use the affective humanistic approach, which is concerned with the students’ feelings and classroom environment. This is paired with a comprehension and communicative approach. The comprehension approach emphasizes meaningful input. In the case of my study design, children’s books were intended to provide meaningful input. The communicative approach looks at language for the purpose of communication. I want my students to be able to communicate their reactions to the literature they read in the classroom. Part of the post-methods era of English teaching includes raising cultural consciousness—that is, “teachers should allow learners to become sources of cultural information so that knowledge about the culture of L2 and other cultures (especially those

represented by the students) becomes part of classroom communication” (Celce-Murcia, 2014, p.11). Notice that the culture of L2 (which in the case of my ESL classes is English) is primary and the culture of L1 is not acknowledged. I hope to be more responsive to the many cultures represented in my classroom.

Prior to my work as an ESL teacher, I was a student of literature and a language arts teacher. Beginning in the early 1990s, I encountered literature as a middle and high school student and finished my formal English literature education as a college undergraduate in the early 2000s. After college, I went on to become a teacher. In high school and college, my literature classes tended to be based on new critical perspectives. According to Brooks (1979), such perspectives emphasize a close reading and an emphasis on the text over authorial intent and reader response. I read the assigned texts and provided interpretations based on what I thought my teachers and professors wanted to hear.

As a teacher, my role was primarily in ESL or developmental classrooms, where the expectations were to simply teach students vocabulary, fluency, and surface-level comprehension. My role was not to foster an appreciation of literature or to broaden critical understanding. In both situations, first as a high school and college student and then as a new teacher, I felt that the literature I studied and later taught failed to capture the reasons I read when I wasn't in school. It circumvented the richness of experience reading could offer. These differences between my experience as a reader and my experience as a teacher working with more surface-level interactions with texts moved me to re-examine and hopefully find ways to transform my own teaching. I spent four years teaching in a high school where my personal goal was to improve students' standardized test scores so that they might move into an English class with a stronger focus on reading literature. Frequently,

when asking students to connect to the texts or trying to activate prior knowledge, I only received blank stares. I rarely had texts rich enough to connect with my students on deeper levels. I wanted to create better readers, but I was not sure how to start. In Chapter Five I will discuss the idea of disconnecting with the texts (based on Jones & Clark, 2007) as a way adult ESL students responded to literature portraying their home countries.

Rosenblatt's transaction theory. Rosenblatt's (1995) seminal text, *Literature as Exploration*, details how to create better readers. The text has five editions spanning from the first in 1938 to the fifth in 1995. The book is organized into four parts. Part one deals with the challenges of literature as well as the literary experience. Part two discusses what students bring to their reading experiences and the teacher's role in expanding the students' framework. Part three delves into major concepts shaping how contemporary culture (as of 1995) works, the possibility for literature to shape behavior and personality, and finally, the promise of literature to shape informed thinkers. Part four is a brief section detailing the history of Rosenblatt's academic career and her hopes that language and literature educators will continue to foster "the nurturing of men and women capable of building a fully democratic society" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 297)

For Louise Rosenblatt, the virtues of literature are its capabilities to develop empathy, broaden horizons, allow for objective reflection upon emotional challenges, and in some cases to act as a catharsis. Rosenblatt states "the teaching of literature necessarily involves helping the student handle social, psychological, and ethical concepts" (1995, pp.102–103). Schools shape the future population, because students learn how to get along with others and how to understand the ways in which society works. Within schools, literature teachers may not realize the impact they have on shaping students' ideas about human nature. Literature

can teach history by leaving a deeper impression on students than reading facts from history books. Besides history, literature teachers teach students about psychology and sociology because of what happens to and between characters in various texts. Teachers may also help students interpret the text and build bigger mirrors for student reflection. To do so, teachers ought to present the larger psychological and social contexts in and around a given text. By examining characters, students learn about rational and irrational behaviors, how guilt and failure shape personalities, and how characters can evolve. The insights gained from such vicarious learning depend on the individual student's particular life stage and past experiences. The student's whole self (personality) is part of the reading process. According to Rosenblatt, real learning occurs through absorption, observation, and experience rather than being taught. The reading process as a potential means of social transformation stems from its potential for individual transformation. It is the teacher's job to help students transform their understanding of the world by enhancing their understanding of a literary text.

The concept of efferent and aesthetic stance is important in understanding Rosenblatt. She explains efferent reading as something someone can summarize and agree upon, such as a newspaper or a textbook. For example, a high school student can ask a friend to tell them the details of their biology reading assignment and not lose much in the retelling. However, if the same student asked a classmate to summarize the chapter of *Lord of the Flies* in which Simon is killed, the student would lose a major part of the reading experience. Aesthetic reading is emotional. In this type of reading, no two people can experience the same thing and agree on how to retell it. Like a highly charged scene in a novel, poetry cannot be conveyed universally. Rosenblatt says, "no one, however, can read a poem for us"

(Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 33). She further explains that reading for an aesthetic purpose requires the reader “to direct more attention to the affective aspects” (p.33). She continues by describing the response to the reading as a “mixture of sensations, feelings, images and ideas” that are structured from “the experience that constitutes the story poem or play” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 33). Aesthetic reading is the focus of *Literature as Exploration*. However, within the reader response framework, literature teachers need to help students understand multiple viewpoints, including more scientific modes:

The literature teacher may not be primarily concerned with giving scientific information, yet it is his responsibility to further assimilation of habits and thought conducive to social understanding. He shares with all other teachers the task of providing the student with proper equipment for making sound social and ethical judgements. (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 21)

The teacher needs to not only understand literature, but also the social contexts and theoretical underpinnings of different fields of study pertinent to literature. Rosenblatt points to economics, history, anthropology, and sociology as the fields most important for English teachers to understand. The teacher cannot look at literature as separate from culture, nor from scientific approaches and methods which are foundational to empirical research in contexts of both hard and social sciences.

The interpretive lens of the hard sciences shapes the development of the social sciences in its approaches to understanding both data and the world. The reading of hard science is certainly more efferent in nature. The social sciences present something more complex in relation to literature. Social science texts lean toward an efferent stance, whereas reading literature is more of an aesthetic experience; however, the two can overlap in

purpose. For example, psychology texts and literature both explore patterns of family life, personal relationships, and romantic love. Literature teachers should be proficient in the basic concepts of psychology and aware of both contemporary and historical approaches to understanding the inner workings of the human mind.

This proficiency is necessary so that teachers can then share it with their students, thus expanding the students' framework and increasing the possibilities for making meaning from the text. The teacher needs to understand that there are other approaches to interpretations of literature, specifically those that include scientific lenses. The social sciences offer something different in understanding characters and texts, but they alone are not enough to help students through the more emotionally intimate demands of literature. Rosenblatt states, "In contrast to the analytic approach of the social science, the literal experience has immediacy and emotional persuasiveness" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 7).

Literature teachers end up teaching psychology and sociology indirectly because of what happens in various texts. Teachers may work to help students accurately interpret the text in consideration of questions pertaining to the larger psychological and social contexts in and around the text. Rosenblatt (1995) outlines the ways literature overlaps with psychology and other social sciences. Concerning the psychology of characters, students explore the relationships between motive and action; the influences characters respond to; examples of rational and irrational behaviors; how guilt and failure shape personalities; and finally, how both characters and real people may evolve. Instructors need some knowledge about psychology so they can provide their students with a "critical framework" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 16). The critical framework that a literature teacher helps the students develop is part of

the larger transaction the teacher helps foster with the text. This transaction is at the heart of where a reader makes meaning.

Transaction theory is the result of the student's experience with the text rather than a close reading that is strictly limited to the words on the page. However, transaction theory does not preclude careful reading and the use of textual evidence to support interpretation. Rosenblatt (1995) describes the process of interpretation as including the use of textual evidence, awareness of assumptions, and a neutral teacher who can help students understand how an author presents a character. The reader first needs to use what Rosenblatt calls "clues" to support their reading. The clues are then interpreted against the framework of the reader's assumptions. The clues and assumptions may evolve while students make sense of a text. If the reader is aware of their own assumptions and has negotiated them against their understanding, they are less likely to have "irrelevant or unjustified" readings (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.12). It is important for the teacher to walk a fine line between helping students understand the presentation of characters and interfering with the students' critical understanding and views of human understanding.

No teacher can be completely neutral, so it is important to remain aware of any bias he or she may possess, even when the authors are clearly presenting one way for the text to be interpreted. The teacher's duty is to help students develop understanding through negotiation, not indoctrination. "The teacher's task is to foster fruitful interactions— or more precisely, transactions between individual readers and individual literary text" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26). The teacher's role is ultimately to create an environment where rich transaction is possible: where the student is able to have a unique first reading that they can then

compare to what they know of the world. Further, students need the opportunity to discuss their understanding of a text with peers.

Transactional theory underlies what happens when someone reads. The initial transaction with a text is the first step in which the student begins the process of making meaning. Appleman (2000) suggests using a simple diagram (presented in Figure 1) with students to explain how transaction theory works.

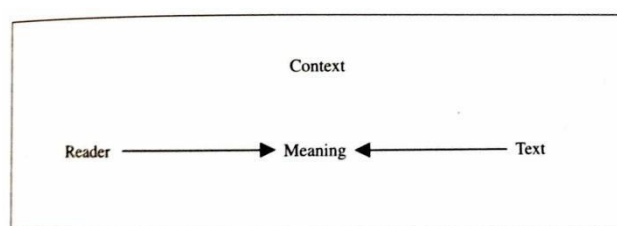


Figure 1. Diagram used to explain reader response theory. From *Critical Encounters in High School English: The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* (p. 35), by D. Appleman, 2000, New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

In this model, the context molds the reader, the text, and the meaning. The place where the reader meets the text is where meaning comes from. Meaning, therefore, is individual; however, there is a larger process of negotiation of both the text and context that Rosenblatt promotes. By learning more about the context from the teacher and hearing peers' different interpretations through discussion, the reader has more to negotiate in creating a unique understanding. As the student's awareness of context and multiple perspectives increases, so do the ways they might interpret the text and make meaning.

Literature often wrestles with big questions, such as what is possible in life and what defines human nature. When talking about characters, teachers should keep in mind that human nature is not universal and is fundamentally shaped by context. Students interpret literature based on their assumptions of human nature. When students learn from peers or

teachers that other assumptions exist, they may find new and different meanings from a text or a character's actions.

Reader response interpretations and criticisms. Rosenblatt is not the only theorist working with reader response, but her work and emphasis on endowing citizens with the critical skills to participate in democratic society widely impacts classrooms. Four other key authors and their seminal texts are worth mentioning. These include: Bleich's *Readings and Feelings* and *Subjective Criticism*; Fish's *Is There a Text in this Class?*; Holland's *Poems and Persons* and *Five Readers Reading*; and Iser's *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading* (Harkin, 2005). These first four thinkers appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to the new critics of the 1930s. The new critics placed an emphasis on the text over an emphasis on the reader.

Bleich is known for his work with subjective criticism, which combines the fields of language, psychology, and literature into a single discipline. "Subjective Criticism assumes that each person's most urgent motivations are to understand himself and that the simplest path to this understanding is the awareness of one's own language system as the agency of consciousness and self-directions" (Bleich, 1978, pp. 298–299). Holland argues that the reader's identity shapes textual interpretation. Fish considers not only the reader, but the context of the reader in how meaning is made. He writes, "it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or reader, that produce meanings" (Fish, 1980, p. 14). Finally, Iser (1979), considers the imagination of the reader in the interpretation of text, as well as how the interactions of the author's intent can shape the reader's understanding. While these thinkers were influential in university English departments in the 1970s and 1980s,

Rosenblatt, with her much earlier work, has had a stronger influence on classroom practices of literature teaching.

Critics of Rosenblatt come from different angles. In some cases, they argue that the students might not be analyzing the power structures involved in the creation of texts (Cai, 2008). Other critics argue that it is too open of a critical framework and allows any reading to be valid without consideration of author intention or close reading. Brooks (1979) sums up the new critics' argument against reader response by saying, "to put meaning and valuation of a literary work at the mercy of any and every individual would reduce the study of literature to reader psychology and to the history of taste" (p. 598). However, by analyzing the cultural situation of both text and reader, teachers and students will escape the merely personal and the anecdotal responses to texts to gain a fuller understanding of the social contexts, purposes, and functions of a theory of teaching literature. Corcoran (1991) articulates the importance of addressing the cultural situations of the reader and text in light of resisting historical and linguistic power structures, stating: "The movement from transaction to resistance abjures the assumption that literature provides a stable platform from which the authentic voice of self may speak by reasserting the place of history, and by restoring the other 'live circuit' that necessarily connects language and power" (p.160). To refute both of these criticisms, I point to the role of the teacher in allowing students to consider multiple fields of study in their textual interpretations. Rosenblatt expands, rather than reduces, the study of literature by including the psychology of the individual and historical contexts. Also, consider that she expands literary thinking into the sciences, as well, writing: "Scientific knowledge is essentially a cooperative product. Only as a fact of

theory is tested and verified by many competent minds, often widely scattered in time and space does that fact or theory come to be accepted” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 132).

In some ways, the students’ initial reading is like a hypothesis that is then tested against the mirrored reflection the teacher has helped to build, as well as the readings of peers. Literature provides a unique process of understanding that includes a personal element that other sciences, be they hard or soft, do not. To address both criticisms simply, Rosenblatt sees the teacher’s role as helping students to scientifically justify their reading and to consider the larger context of the text.

Notable literary scholar Wayne Booth, in the foreword to the fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration*, points to one of the biggest mistakes made regarding reader response theory:

What Louise Rosenblatt offered us in 1938 and offers us still is a cogent defense of the essential reasons for teaching literature in the first place. To talk of this book in those terms, however, may have the unfortunate effect of perpetuating the biggest mistake we have made about Rosenblatt’s work— that is, thinking of it as relevant only or mainly to primary and secondary teaching. (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xii)

From this statement, I again consider how there is possibility in a variety of English teaching contexts to help students manifest meaningful textual transactions using reader response theory.

Critics have failed to see that Rosenblatt’s ideas have value outside of teaching adolescents. The leading paradigm at the time Rosenblatt was developing her theories was that the teacher needed to tell the students the one correct reading of the text. Rosenblatt did not agree that there was one right reading and gave credence to interpretations and responses

of multiple close readings. Booth writes in the foreword of the fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration*, “She cared more about turning all students into better readers than about turning a few disciples of the one right reading or kind of reading” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. x)

Reader response theory has maintained its core ideas while manifesting different interpretations. Imagine walking in the desert after a torrential rain. The landscape is generally the same, but the movement of water over the ground has brought about a different architecture and also springs forth new patches of life. Consider Tompkins (1980), who states that “reader-response criticism is not a conceptually unified critical position,” because it is connected to thinkers who investigate the areas of the “reader, the reading process and response” (p. ix). Tompkins notes that over the course of time, the thing that has evolved or progressed is “the status of the literary text” (p. ix). Tompkins traces the development of scholarship that dismantles the idea that a text can be objective, and as texts became more and more subjective, the critics began to consider the moral values and purposes of literary study.

McCormick (1994) designed a framework that includes three reading models: cognitive, expressive, and sociocultural. Reader response falls under the expressive model. McCormick describes the three frameworks as “not diametrically opposed to each other, rather exist(ing) in a dialectical relationship” (1994, p. 9). All three recognize the reader, text, and context as part of reading; however, the terms differ in meaning and significance among the three models. Within the expressive model, the role of the reader is central, but it is not clear what the role of the text is. McCormick criticizes the expressive model for its inadequate consideration of the social context of the reader, particularly when dealing with issues of belonging and positionality. However, Rosenblatt’s insistence that teachers be

versed in social sciences gives ample opportunity for the teacher to guide students in their own reflection on social positioning. Within reader response, the teacher may broaden the context of how students understand where they may fit into society; the reader has the agency to position themselves in regards to the inner world of the text and to the outer world in which they live. Students, not the author (with their intent) or the teacher (with their interpretation), define their own positionality.

McCormick (1994) encourages a dialogue between reading theorists and reading teachers. Such a dialogue is seen in the work of Beach (1993) as well as Rabinowitz and Smith (1998). Rabinowitz and Smith further argue that considerations of the author's intentional meanings are not at odds with the reader's freedom. They hope to see readers "engage intelligently with authors" (McCormick, 1994, p. xv). To do so, readers need to pay attention to what the writers and their characters are doing. Ultimately, Rabinowitz and Smith contend that "only after readers learn how to respect authors, can they resist them. Such resistance is an assertion of readers' authority in the strongest sense" (McCormick, 1994, p. xv). Without such a dialogue like the one presented in Rabinowitz and Smith, "work in reading remains fragmented and its transformative capacities are limited" (McCormick, 1994, p. 5).

Reader response in research. Reader response theory is understood in different ways and used in multiple research settings, including settings where students are learning a second language (L2)—which includes ESL/EFL (English as a Second Language, English as a Foreign Language) —such as elementary, middle, and high school language arts classes, as well as university classes.

In a second language classroom where the students' motivations and self-concepts are important influences, the reader response approach seems to provide a meaningful path to the study of literature because it is concerned with the students' development as independent makers of meaning (Ali, 1993, pp. 294–296). In a second language learning context, it is a means to increase communicative language teaching by creating more meaningful and less superficial readings and discussions (Hirvela, 1996). In reader response or transactional theory, the meaning is not based on authorial intention or teacher interpretation. The transactional idea of creating meaning springs from within the reader, rather than from without. This, as Elliot (1990) notes, increases competence: "Competence comes from the ability to confer meaning from within. So, it's necessary to find activities that help students with the processes of defining their process" (p. 192). In agreement with Hirvela, Elliot sees transactions with the text as well as discussions with classmates as examples of authentic language use. They provide students with an opportunity to speak beyond the confines of what vocabulary and grammatical structures a textbook provides. The meanings students negotiate are their own, and they will have to find a means to express their interpretations of the text in the target language.

Students learning a new language need ample support or scaffolding for their learning. Teachers must anticipate more linguistic needs in an ESL class than an English literature class of native English speakers (Carroli, 2008). This poses a challenge to teachers who wish to help students develop stronger economic, historical, sociological, and psychological lenses. Besides supporting the formation of the aforementioned lenses, a teacher also must select appropriate texts for students to read. At the same time, teachers need to consider student comprehension and vocabulary needs and development. Reading

classic texts is possible in any classroom, but it needs to be scaffolded by beginning with the use of more accessible and familiar materials (Rosenblatt, 1995). This is one of the reasons this study examined children's literature.

The use of reader response has shifted the authority of the author and the teacher to the reader in critical and classroom spaces. In the realm of research, reader response shifts the authority more to the participants because it is the students' ways of making meaning that shape the research. This shift is seen in the examinations of pre-readers all the way to undergraduate students, all of whom make their own meaning. The research shows the possibilities that Rosenblatt lays out in her argument for the value of literature, the role of the teacher, and the importance of reader response to democracy.

Reader response's significance and potential. As a new teacher, I did not have the experience or the knowledge base of reader response theory. I was hyper-focused on improving a particular test score that would move students out of my class and into a class that was less skill-based and more about understanding literature. If I were given an opportunity to revisit my high school teaching, I would find a way to move my focus to more aesthetic reading because, as Rosenblatt asserts, "...to lead the students to ignore either the aesthetic or social elements of his experience is to cripple him for a fruitful understanding of what literature offers" (1995, p. 30). When you read and your jaw drops, you tear up, or you feel a deep emotional connection to a text, you have experienced aesthetic reading. You have experienced something profound within a text. This type of experience is what I want to help foster in my classroom. As noted in the preface to the fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration*, "Traditional teaching—and testing methods often confuse the student by implicitly fostering a non-literary, efferent approach when the actual purpose is presumably

an aesthetic reading” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xvii). While I am glad I helped students perform better on the test they needed to pass to exit my class, I still feel a deep sadness that many of my students had so little opportunity for an aesthetic reading experience.

Reader response theory has relevance to the many settings in which I have taught English in the past and may teach in the future. More importantly, it supports a way of teaching that aligns more closely with my values as an educator. While I teach in a context that values efficient and measured readings, I am learning that there is more to offer my students than fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and improved test scores. There is an ability to negotiate the complications of human relationships, to identify tensions in belief systems, and to develop an understanding of self-positioning in light of both a literary text and the larger contexts that we all inhabit.

As Booth (1995) wrote in the preface of the fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration*, Can we hope for a generation of viewers who engage fully in thinking through their emotional responses, moving toward deeper self-knowledge? Can we hope for teachers who will educate students to resist passive absorption and develop active *transaction*? (p. xiii)

Reader response theory is an approach in education that allows all students, both advantaged and disadvantaged, to look critically upon the causes of the situations a character may face in a text and also the world they inhabit. More significantly, it may offer insight and agency that could lead to better understanding and perhaps even action for positive social change. If, as a teacher, I take on the awesome responsibility Rosenblatt has set forth for me—to know how the social sciences impact the context of the reader and the text; provide guidance in close

readings; choose appropriate texts; and, I think most importantly, guide students in real and honest negotiation of meaning with their peers—I wonder: what is possible?

Cultural scaffolding. The knowledge needed to support our students using reader response theory is not innate. It requires a sense of the student as an individual, and also their greater cultural positioning. In order to use reader response framework adequately, I believe it is important to also learn how to begin a process of cultural scaffolding. How that happens is at the heart of my research questions.

What follows is a discussion of the concept of cultural scaffolding and how it has appeared in multiple contexts. I chose a thorough discussion of different contexts because cultural scaffolding's applications in adult ESL learning are currently limited. In order to discuss the role of culture and cultural relevance in adult ESL learning, I've decided to work with a term that seems most relevant to my work as a classroom teacher: cultural scaffolding. In order to learn how to support adults in my ESL classes, I need to first understand the term in multiple contexts, specifically in teacher preparation.

As most ESL professionals will tell you, culture is important in the classroom. More information is found in the fields of comparative education and intercultural communication, which help promote deeper understanding of more specific groups. However, there is still something lacking in the professional conversation about *how* teachers can really learn about different cultures and, in turn, use that knowledge to enhance student learning.

Kramsch (1991) discusses the relationship between culture and teaching with an emphasis on the student learning about the culture of the target language. In one example, she explains how a teacher uses knowledge of the student's culture and that of the target language, with the standing assumption that the teacher has knowledge of both cultures.

However, in the case of native English speakers teaching in classrooms where multiple cultures and nationalities are represented, this assumption of deeper cultural knowledge often fails. When a novice teacher is faced with multiple cultures all at once, a Rolodex of generalizations about teacher authority, classroom interaction, and learning styles will fail. While this is important knowledge that is often developed while in the preservice phase of teaching from textbooks and lectures, it is not as helpful in navigating the cultural differences between teacher and student as is the knowledge gained through years of teaching experience.

How should teachers support the learning of ESL students when the teacher lacks knowledge of the students' cultural backgrounds? A term developed in the field of culturally relevant pedagogy called *cultural scaffolding* is a promising concept that might provide a solution. This section explores precisely what *cultural scaffolding* means within educational academic literature in hopes of yielding insight into how to help ESL teachers provide not only language instruction, but also crucial cultural support.

Cultural scaffolding background. I first encountered the term “cultural scaffolding” in the work of De Jong and Harper (2005) and Pawan (2008) while researching how to best serve ESL students in a small alternative high school in the American Southwest. I was tasked with starting a professional development program for content area teachers addressing how to support ESL students, and I chose to focus on cultural scaffolding. Cultural scaffolding, like so many other concepts, has a content-dependent meaning. The research (Lee, 2004; Pawan, 2008) shows its value as a pedagogical tool to help all students succeed in school.

I was curious about what exactly cultural scaffolding meant. My initial intention was to understand cultural scaffolding as it applies to teaching English language learners (ELL), primarily in U.S. public schools. Upon reflection, I realized that looking at cultural scaffolding in regards to students who possessed cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD) was a better fit. CLD represents a wide variety of students from many backgrounds including speakers of other languages and of non-standard English varieties. This also can apply to adult ESL learners.

My purpose in writing this section is to share what I have learned about cultural scaffolding. I will start with the literature on cultural scaffolding and how it counters deficit understandings of students. Next, I will look at literature that discusses cultural scaffolding in different dimensions of education, beginning with a discussion of white female leaders of teacher education programs. I will also look at literature making recommendations for teacher education programs; school-level administrators; and finally, classroom teachers.

Theoretical foundations of cultural scaffolding. You cannot serve people by giving them orders as to what to do. The real servant of the people must live among them, think with them, feel with them and die for them...The white worker in Negro institutions, too, can never be successful without manifesting some faith in the people with whom he has cast his lot. (Woodson, 1933, pp. 88-89)

Understanding teaching primarily as an act of service frames the arguments developed in this paper. I would like to complement my findings with what Woodson (1933) recommends. I want my research to contribute to this overarching philosophy as a way of framing education. As I believe teaching is an act of service, I think that the way for a teacher to really know a culture outside of one's own is, as Woodson says, to engage in "manifesting

some faith in the people with whom he has cast his lot” (1933, p. 88). Before this manifestation is possible, the educator must “live among them, think with them, feel with them and die for them” (Woodson, 1933, pp. 88-89). This is echoed in Gay’s 2002 work with an assertion that there is a moral imperative involved in teaching. Part of this process entails building rapport and trusting relationships with students. The concept of cultural scaffolding rests on a foundation of teachers truly knowing, caring about, and building relationships with every student.

What is cultural scaffolding? Scaffolding, rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1978), details the complex involvement of language, thought, and interaction with others who are more knowledgeable. Based on different interpretations and scholarly work developed around Vygotsky’s ideas, Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010) determined three common characteristics of scaffolding based on an extensive review of literature published from 1998 to 2009. While recognizing that there is no fixed understanding of what scaffolding means, these researchers are able to narrow it down to three characteristics. First is *contingency*, or teacher support that is based on an assessment of where the students’ current abilities lie. Support is then offered at or a little above each student’s current ability. The second characteristic is *fading*: removing the contingency support over time. Third, the *transfer of responsibility* involves the student taking control of his or her own learning (Van de Pol et al., 2010, pp. 274–275). Van de Pol et al. (2010) provide useful explanations of scaffolding; however, their work is devoid of any specific mention of cultural scaffolding.

Gay (2002) explains cultural scaffolding as part of the framework for equipping culturally responsive teachers “with the knowledge, attitudes and skills” (p. 106) to meet the needs of ethnically diverse students. Cultural scaffolding is concisely understood as “using

their [the students'] own cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement" (Gay, 2002, p. 109). Pawan (2008) also references Gay's (2002) discussion of how culturally responsive teaching uses "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diversity students as conduits for teaching them effectively" (Pawan, 2008, p. 106). Pawan provides a more in-depth explanation by situating cultural scaffolding among the concepts of primary and secondary discourses (Gee, 2005), funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992), and culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings states, "Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge" (1995, p. 20). Pawan's understanding also incorporates the perspective of Salomon and Perkins (1998), who define cultural scaffolding as involving the manipulation of cultural tools and artifacts, which include different types of information sources and shared symbol systems. These tools and artifacts "are themselves culturally and historically situated, carrying the wisdom and hidden assumptions that went into their design" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 5). Part of the research goals of my study were to gain insight into cultural referents and artifacts.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students and culturally responsive teaching.

Using Pawan's (2008) more thorough explanation shows that cultural scaffolding is embedded in culturally responsive teaching. Because the literature available on culturally responsive teaching is vast, I've restricted my discussion to articles and book chapters that also mention cultural scaffolding. Along with culturally responsive teaching comes the explanation of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). Cultural

scaffolding often appears in discussions of the education of African American children and explores the cultural elements of African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Countering deficit understandings with cultural scaffolding. Other languages and non-standard varieties of English are sometimes viewed as a liability rather than a resource for a student. Therefore, the presence of other languages and language varieties may also signal to some educators a deficiency in the student's readiness to learn. Lee (2005) counters this deficit understanding concerning Black children. She provides ample empirical evidence that Black students are not inherently behind in academic ability and concludes that:

The overwhelming evidence suggests that Black students come to school prepared to learn; this is despite the perception of some teachers who report that poor Black children are not prepared for kindergarten because they do not know the alphabet or some other form of declarative knowledge. This is not meant to suggest that knowledge of the alphabet provides no advantage in reading readiness as children enter kindergarten. Rather the argument here is that a lack of such knowledge does not pose an insurmountable challenge to read between kindergarten and grade one. (pp.47–48)

Deficit understanding of learners is the antithesis of the funds of knowledge approach (Moll, 1994) that Pawan (2008) draws on in developing her understanding of cultural scaffolding. In a deficit understanding, CLD students are seen as academically underprepared and lacking in prior knowledge, rather than viewed as having valuable experiences that teachers can draw on to support learning. In Lee's (2005) work, we see the argument that the students come to school with a knowledge base that does not make learning to read insurmountable.

Drawing from the work of Cartledge and Kourea (2008), Taylor (2010) argues for the urgency of intervention as part of culturally responsive teaching. However, his statement about limited background knowledge shows how even in trying to promote achievement for all students, hints of deficit understandings of CLD students underline how the students are so often seen as lacking. One specific problem facing CLD students is:

... low-income culturally diverse students begin their formal schooling behind their more affluent peers in language and readiness skills. Specifically, their vocabulary knowledge and verbal ability are limited; they have less experience with complicated syntax, and have limited background knowledge. Without immediate identification and intervention, the alarming result is that these students systematically fall further behind as they move through the grades. Given the fact that students who fail to reach grade level in reading by the end of the third grade are unlikely to ever catch up, culturally responsive instruction demands that we intervene as early as possible with sufficient intensity and urgency to remedy existing skill gaps and to prevent further loss (Taylor 2010, p. 26).

Consider an example of cultural scaffolding from a study in a language arts classroom focused on supporting and exploring the culturally situated linguistic practice of *signifying*. From this study, Lee (2004) asserts, “The lessons from this example of cultural scaffolding are important. First it demonstrates the practical power of building on the language patterns of students from speech communities whose language varieties are devalued in traditional school settings” (p. 340). This indicates that students who speak another language or a non-standard variety of English may benefit from cultural scaffolding.

Lee (2004) investigated how cultural elements of language were a part of cultural scaffolding. *English Only* policies place a higher value on English over the home languages of students. This extends to variations of English, as well. Lee recognizes that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has been stigmatized in the larger society, and specifically in schools. One prominent feature of AAVE is the use of *signifying*. *Signifying*, Lee notes, is a language feature whose meaning is not static and changes from generation to generation. Generally, signifying involves, “speaking with innuendo and double meanings, playing rhetorically upon the meaning and sounds of words, and being quick and witty in one’s response” (Lee, 2004, p.338). Lee points to significant reading gains that students made when their teachers used signifying as a cultural scaffold. Students were given examples of signifying and initially explored and explicated what happens within signifying. Students were then given texts and asked questions that demanded they read between the lines and make textual inferences. The teacher continued scaffolding by providing coaching to small groups. Finally, when students later read new texts, in the spirit of scaffolding, the teacher provided less coaching and guidance.

The end results were promising. “The lines of authority had changed . . . students were now initiating the questions, rather than the teacher, and the students were dominating the talk” (Lee, 2004, p. 340). This example illustrates the importance of supporting characteristics of students’ home languages, and Lee sees this as part of a much-needed conversation regarding the academic achievement of ESL students, as well. Lee argues that schools lose a very powerful tool when they “ignore or depreciate indigenous language competencies”(Lee, 2004, p.343). In response to the work of Heath (1983), Lee concludes that the “admonition that Heath makes of African American youngsters rings true for

students from all corners of the tapestry of languages and language varieties that constitute language use in the United States” (Lee, 2004, p. 343). Lee’s work shows the relevance of cultural scaffolding to all CLD students, including adult ESL students.

Cultural scaffolding in multiple dimensions. Much of the literature that touches on cultural scaffolding also makes recommendations for teacher education programs to prepare more culturally responsive teachers. Several scholars who discuss cultural scaffolding also look to teacher preparation programs to help educators develop more cultural knowledge (Brown, 2007; Cooks, 1998; De Jong & Harper, 2005; Galda & Beach, 2001; Gay, 2002; Lee, 2005). Specifically, De Jong and Harper (2005) say that teachers need to have knowledge of other groups’ achievements in multiple arenas, but that isn’t enough; they also must develop a “knowledge base about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups” (p. 107). How do teachers gain such knowledge to become culturally responsive? The environment and leadership of teacher preparation programs is one starting point, but as my data in Chapter Four will show this is a difficult and problematic task.

Both Brown (2007) and Taylor (2010) use Gay’s framework for culturally responsive teaching to make recommendations for teacher education programs. In the literature, there is a consensus that teachers need to be prepared to be culturally responsive (Brown, 2007; Cooks, 1998; De Jong and Harper, 2005; Gay, 2002; Lee, 2005; Taylor, 2010). Part of this preparation includes learning how to provide cultural scaffolding. But how does a teacher education program cultivate this skill, particularly when cultural scaffolding and culturally responsive teaching require specific cultural knowledge?

Taylor examines three dimensions concerning teacher education, beginning with institutional elements. Taylor (2010) draws on Brown’s (2007) call for teacher education

programs and K–12 schools to work together in order to move toward an environment where culturally responsive teaching and the practice of cultural scaffolding is a possibility. The institutions need to view diversity as an asset.

The personal dimension of teacher preparation is similar to Rogers' call for leaders of teacher education programs to understand their positioning and to reflect on their practices. Teacher candidates need to know their own positioning and understand it in relation to their students. This can begin by practicing self-reflection and reconciliations of bias.

The final dimension Taylor discusses is instructional. This dimension includes teachers assessing their own cultural knowledge of students; urgently assessing gaps in students' vocabularies and verbal abilities, so that students don't fall further behind; and promoting high rates of measurable learning outcomes. Taylor (2010) uses words-read-per-minute and correctly completed math facts as example of observable and measurable outcomes. Given Taylor's view on the importance of culturally responsive teaching, the use of measurable outcomes such as words-per-minute-read seems to contradict the complexity of learning that Lee (2005) advocates.

Gay (2002) includes five important aspects of preparing culturally responsive teachers that are important in both K–12 settings and, I suggest, adult ESL classrooms. To begin with, teachers need to develop an understanding of the groups they are working with and examine their own practices and beliefs. Educators need to develop relevant curriculum in consideration of the students' backgrounds. Specifically, teachers need to be able to recognize "multicultural strengths and weakness of curriculum designs and instructional materials" (Brown, 2007, p. 59). Additionally, teachers need to be prepared to demonstrate their care for students while building a sense of community, be proficient in the concepts of

cross-cultural communication, and deliver instruction that takes students' cultural diversities into consideration. The trouble with this approach occurs when teachers encounter students in the classroom setting whose backgrounds fall outside the teacher's areas of cultural knowledge. Classroom demographics and well as individual variations aren't always predictable.

De Jong and Harper (2005) address the aforementioned challenges of culturally responsive teaching in an ESL setting in particular. Teachers, they contend, need to specifically understand and support students based on their prior experiences regarding classroom participation structures and the "role of students' prior learning experiences" (p.111). From this foundation, they propose a framework that makes "linguistic and cultural learning visible and explicit within the context of mainstream teacher preparation in order to influence mainstream classroom practices" (p.118).

To illustrate this point, De Jong and Harper consider how a common graphic organizer used to scaffold learning is problematic for ESL students. The KWL chart asks students to complete a three-column chart. The first column, "K," is where the students write what they know about a topic. The second column, "W," is where students write what they want to know about the topic. In the third column, "L," students write what they learned. For ESL students, this demands the English vocabulary to write about their prior knowledge and the linguistic forms to craft a question. It also assumes that the students' prior knowledge will easily transfer to the task at hand, and that the prior knowledge is valued, which is not always the case for CLD students.

Instead of focusing on ESL students strictly in the ESL classroom, De Jong and Harper look at ESL learners in all subject areas. They argue that there is a place for cultural

diversity in all subjects. Teachers need to develop culturally relevant curricula and teaching methods and know how to assess curriculum for its merits and problems. Moreover, Taylor (2010) agrees and says,

Teachers need to develop rich repertoires of multicultural instructional examples to use in teaching ethnically diverse students. This is not something that happens automatically or simply because we want it to. It is a learned skill that should be taught in teacher preparation programs. (Taylor, 2010, p. 112)

Cultural scaffolding for in-service teachers. To provide students with cultural scaffolding, a teacher can't just celebrate Black History Month, Cesar Chavez Day, or the Lunar New Year with a poster or a bulletin board. It is important that the teacher knows the intricacies of the students he or she serves, particularly in an ESL context. Within the languages represented in a classroom, there are a variety of cultures and countries. While there may be multiple Spanish or Arabic speakers in one class, language populations are not culturally homogenous, and therefore, providing cultural support requires more in-depth knowledge on the teacher's part. The goal of my study was to explore how responses to children's picture books might help a teacher gain such knowledge.

Many questions arise for teachers as to how they can provide cultural scaffolding based on language varieties to students when there is often a wide range of languages and language varieties in their classrooms. A single intervention, like the support of signifying in Lee's (1997) study, would be inappropriate in a classroom with students from several different countries and language backgrounds who do not share this culturally situated linguistic practice. However, the idea of supporting culturally situated language practices in a classroom is possible when the student population shares similar home cultures and first

language (L1). In this scenario, it may be possible for the teacher to learn more about the students' L1 and then support learning drawn from culturally based linguistic practices. However, in adult IEPs or in other settings with frequently changing populations or high attrition, there is not always time and opportunity to do so.

It is important to think of teaching as an ongoing process. As classroom demographics change and shift, so does the knowledge needed by a teacher. The processes of self-reflection and recognition of biases, recommended as part of teacher education programs, ought not to end when the teaching credential is earned. Teacher participation in out-of-school communities is one way to gain the needed knowledge to provide cultural scaffolding. Teachers might try eating at local restaurants, building relationships with community leaders or gatekeepers, and asking students to share about their lives (when students are comfortable doing so). Ultimately, these recommendations suggest that a teacher needs to have rapport with his or her students.

There are very few specific examples of what cultural scaffolding looks like in practice, and the three elements that Van de Pol et al. (2010) suggest: scaffolding—contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility—are often lacking. The one exemplar I found was Lee's study of the use of signifying to support learners in a language arts class. In that example, there was a fading from the teacher and then a transfer of responsibility for learning, as demonstrated by the students' increased and the teacher's decreased participation. Perhaps there aren't many examples yet because cultural scaffolding requires in-depth and specific knowledge of each student (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Gay, 2002). The following chart is not intended to provide a "how to" for cultural scaffolding, but rather, to strictly illustrate how the educational literature documents its application. The chart also

serves as a starting point for teachers to reflect and think about how cultural scaffolding may be possible in their own classrooms. Note that none of this is specific to adult ESL classrooms.

Table 1: *Examples of Cultural Scaffolding*

Citation	Example
Gay (2002)	Using illustrations of ethnic architecture, fabric designs, foods, recipes- using culturally relevant examples in teaching. making inferences, vocabulary building and translation. added a period
Smith (2003)	Using Anasazi observational methods to track the moon, emulating what the Anasazi did at Chaco Canyon, an ancient site in New Mexico. “At the same time, students interviewed their parents, relatives, and neighbors to collect stories and legends about the moon. The students learned that people have various, often interesting, notions about the moon and they recorded these stories to share later with students from other schools” (p. 28).
DeJong and Harper (2005)	Understanding classroom participatory structures to which students are accustomed Understanding home practices of literacy
Lee (1997)	Teacher has students analyze the use of signifying in African American Language (AAL) Students work in groups to discuss the use of inference, metaphor, and innuendo in a novel. Students read a second novel, and student participation in discussion increases as teacher support fades.

Conclusions

Culturally responsive teaching is being called for in different dimensions of education—from leaders of teacher education programs, to the teachers they prepare, as well as K–12 administrators and teachers currently in service. It is entirely absent from IEP, where there are many nationalities and cultures represented. Given the variety of cultures an IEP teacher may encounter, it is challenging to develop deeper cultural knowledge of students. While the research explains that this knowledge is very important, very little is offered on how teachers can develop this knowledge outside of being an insider to the students' cultures. The ideas behind building relationships and knowing students to create cultural scaffolding seem more important to me than creating a precise definition or recipe for cultural scaffolding. My research is needed to help teachers learn how to build those relationships to make cultural scaffolding happen.

The knowledge Rosenblatt demands teachers have of their students in order to broaden the possibilities of readings are not far from the knowledge demands of cultural scaffolding. Both types of knowledge change contextually and are difficult to precisely measure, define, or replicate. In many respects, these concepts are a way to describe the magic of teaching and learning that is so often conjured in the relationship between student and teacher. The use of children's literature is the method I used to explore building this relationship, and my research revealed how challenging it is to build such knowledge.

Chapter 3: Ways to Approach the Problem

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this study is to explore what happens when students encounter children's literature that is representative of their national identity within the context of an IEP. Often there are students from cultures I am unfamiliar with in my class. Sometimes I may be familiar with some of the cultural norms of the country a student is from, but I may be unfamiliar with more particular ethnic, class, or regional customs. To further complicate matters, a student might only attend my class for 8–16 weeks. Because of the gaps in cultural knowledge and sensitivities I experience, I hope to uncover ways to become a more culturally responsive teacher, despite the continuous introduction of new cultures. I have used children's literature in previous classes and have been intrigued by students' responses and what they have revealed to me about students and culture.

This chapter includes a discussion of the reasoning behind using qualitative methods, the setting for and means of data collection, a description of data analysis, considerations of research ethics and trustworthiness, and finally, limitations of the research.

Research Questions

- How do adult English language learners respond to multicultural, international, or global picture books related to their home countries?
- How does using English when talking about books related to their home country engage participants in reading and discussions?
- How can students' responses to children's picture books portraying their home country help me improve my teaching by developing more specific cultural knowledge in an adult English language program?

Why Qualitative Practitioner Research

The context of this study and my understanding of knowledge do not lend themselves to quantitative inquiry. This study does not provide a sampling that is generalizable to a population, nor could I limit or control for the many variables involved in teaching and learning. Therefore, an approach under the larger framework of qualitative research aligned well with my personal beliefs about what knowledge is and what it means to know something. Practitioner action research is a natural fit for my research questions as well as my hopes to transform my teaching practice.

Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007) choose the term “action research” to describe the idea that the person doing the work in education examines their practice and their context. In order to be more respected, practitioner research must carefully enter a process of self-definition that negotiates and synthesizes the multiple tensions surrounding it. However, settling on too strict a definition of action research may cause the vital critical edge of action research to wilt (Anderson et al., 2007). In this paper, I often use the terms “practitioner research” and “action research” interchangeably. One distinction is that action research has a connotation of wider social change, whereas practitioner research is focused more on the person doing the research and has less deliberate concern for broader transformation. In this study, I used a practitioner-driven qualitative approach with the intention of improving my teaching practice. Because of the often-overlapping nature between practitioner and action research, I will discuss both in the following paragraphs.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) explore six themes that define practitioner research: emphasis on issues of equity; engagement and agency; the development of new conceptual frameworks; the continued growth and reinvention of inquiry communities; the use of

practitioner research to shape school and district reform and educational policy; and finally, the persistence of efforts to alter the relationships of research and practice in universities. They emphasize and celebrate the power of practitioner research as a counter-hegemonic vehicle, with a wide range of epistemologies, methodologies, and methods drawn from different fields. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) see inquiry “as a powerful affirmative and constructive idea that repositions the collective intellectual capacity of practitioners and suggests a framework for aligning it with other larger social and political movements that aim for radical transformation of teaching, learning and schooling” (p. 4).

Lankshear and Knobble (2004) have a broader understanding of teacher research that includes teachers researching different things of interest to them, not just their classroom. This shows how fluid and nebulous the definition of teacher research is, and that it fosters significant debate and conversations about what it can and cannot be.

Participatory research, largely attributed to Paulo Freire, is another variety of action research. This thematic research is developed through a highly inductive process in which research is viewed “as a form of social action” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 24). Freire’s work around adult literacy originated in Central and South America and extended into North America through work in Appalachia. In this view, the researcher and the participants have a subject–subject, rather than subject–object, relationship. That is, the researcher is not the subject doing the research upon the participants (as objects). Furthermore, the application of findings is immediate to the particular social reality instead of being processed out of context, unlike when teachers are simply data collectors and have no say in their findings. There is an assumption that this type of research faces resistance from above because it

interrupts power structures and hierarchies. In Chapter Four, the data is primarily presented as participants' voices.

History. Teachers were initially the front-line data collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as conceptions of education became increasingly influenced by the scientific method. The data that the teachers collected at the behest of university researchers were statistically analyzed away from the classroom in which they were collected. Instead of the teachers working with the collected data and finding contextual meaning, they passed the data back to the university (Anderson et al., 2007).

The Progressive Era, which overlapped the rise of scientism, looked at inquiry differently. Dewey (1929) saw the potential for the teacher as an investigator, giving teachers due credit for their work with students. Dewey remarked that many people assumed teachers lacked the training necessary to give “effective intelligent cooperation” (1929, p. 47). He quickly retorted that this idea undermines the use of the scientific method in education: “It is almost fatal to the idea of a workable scientific content in education” (p. 47) because teachers are the ones with the tacit knowledge to apply the findings appropriately. Dewey noted that teachers are more than receptacles and transmitters of the theories science develops. Without teacher participation, these theories can easily be distorted “before they get to the minds of pupils” (Dewey, 1929, p. 24).

In the 1950s, action research in education was led by S. M. Corey at Columbia's Teacher's College. Corey believed that teachers would get more from what they themselves researched than from the findings of outsiders. However, because of the strong hold of empirical research at the time, and the prevalence of the “cult of the expert,” Corey's efforts

were discounted, and practitioner research greatly subsided until its renaissance across the Atlantic in 1970s Great Britain.

Frequently credited to Lawrence Stenhouse, the teacher-as-researcher movement in Britain came from curricular reform driven at a national level and was born out of teachers' concerns about the new curriculum they were given. This movement spread from schools to state-funded projects. Debates in this movement concerned how to find a guiding paradigm, the challenges of looking at institutions that didn't want to look at themselves, and how to negotiate the usefulness of quantitative approaches within action research. Anderson et al. (2007) found that the most interesting debate came from feminist action researchers who feared that teacher action research was encouraging social engineering rather than emancipation from the patriarchy. This debate continues today when professional development focused on faithful dissemination of curriculum is disguised as practitioner research.

According to Anderson et al. (2007), six sets of circumstances have shaped practitioner research in the United States. First, the prominence of positivistic study was challenged when narrative and ethnographic forms gained legitimacy. Second, school-based problem-solving was shown to be more effective than outside problem-solving. Third, problems arose concerning scripted curricula and teachers lacking opportunities to be reflective. Fourth, contributions to research by language arts teachers focusing on insider knowledge increased the importance of sociocultural perspectives in education. Fifth, teacher education programs began to emphasize teacher research. Finally, the school shifted to the center of the inquiry within school restructuring efforts (Anderson et al., 2007).

How you know you are doing it and doing it well. In the 1940s, the theoretical framework of Lewin established him as one of the originators of action research. This framework, respected in other social sciences, was later adopted by Stenhouse during the 1970s in the United Kingdom. In the 1980s, a four-step process was developed that Anderson et al. (2007) summarize: Make a plan to improve what's happening, act on it, observe it, make changes, and start again. This four-step process is very similar to Huberman's (1996) summary of the "classical cycle of critical reflection and action" which he attributes directly to Lewin: individual and group inquiry, diagnosis analysis, intervention/action, reflection, and new inquiry" (Huberman, 1996, p. 125).

Ideally, the research process often begins with a nagging question or persistent curiosity, but perhaps it begins in a methods class with a looming deadline or as part of a mandatory professional development plan. Generally, in qualitative research, you can count on these steps: a proposal is formed; IRB protocol is followed; consent forms are signed; the research begins with data collection, analysis occurs, and then conclusions are drawn; and findings are developed. How the data collection and analysis proceed depends on the researcher and context. How the researcher develops conclusions will vary, but we hope it is based on the careful evaluation of the data collected. In the case of this study, the nagging question was, "Can teachers gain cultural insight through students' responses to children's literature?," and the traditional qualitative process was followed.

The trouble of having clear goals. There are a variety of different goals for practitioner research that can help shape methods, standards of quality, and the ways and means of evaluation. These goals are described in two categories. First, professional goals include "staff development and adding to the knowledge base of teaching" (Rearick &

Feldman, 1999, p. 335). Staff development and adding knowledge are vague descriptions and could imply improving test scores, increasing attendance, organizing a classroom garden, or learning more about a student's home environment. Because of the wide diversity of practitioner/action research, a more specific definition could easily fail to encompass the breadth of intention and goals set by practitioner researchers. Second, there are practical goals, which include individual teachers "becoming more familiar with the development of their knowledge and educational theories which can lead to understanding themselves and others" (Rearick & Feldman, 1999, p. 335). In Chapter Five, I will show how my study met both of these goals through my major finding that gaining insight into culture cannot be entirely achieved through the use of children's literature or any other means that doesn't involve more lengthy involvement with specific student populations.

Oolbakkink-Marchand et al. (2014) developed a concept of both primary and secondary validities. What is primary and what is secondary will depend on the research goal. The primary and secondary validities align with the primary and secondary research goals. The challenge in clarifying what the goals are resides in the problem of overlap. Does the teacher only want to improve his or her practice in the specific ways outlined in a research plan, or are there other underlying goals of larger systemic change that the teacher might be addressing? For example, my goal might be to improve my own ability to understand how students situate themselves culturally. I cannot deny that I want others to be more aware of students' identities, because this is integral to having a more compassionate and empathetic school culture. However, I am not so naive to think that this is the only, or even the best, culture for a school—it is simply my philosophical preference. Despite this acknowledgment, there are many problems that can manifest from this type of school culture,

I have had students who want a rigid and authoritarian classroom that is orderly and subscribe to the more traditional teacher-as-source-of-knowledge dynamic. My own orientations are problematic, so why wouldn't (or shouldn't) these challenges blur into my research or the research of others who might be like me in their uncertainty around what learning looks like and what students need?

Quality criteria. “Our sense is that practitioners themselves are beginning to develop criteria for distinguishing rigor from sloppiness in action research” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 7). Rigor is important in establishing the importance of knowledge gained through practitioner research. Sloppiness, with its negative connotation of imperfection, is the reality of the social world and, of course, the classroom. Teachers must navigate sloppiness in their everyday lives, from sloppy student work to sloppy decisions made all the way up the educational chain of command. A difficulty of this type of research is identifying how to manifest rigor, logic, and linear organization in a sloppy world. To do so, there need to be some standards and some criteria from which to build.

The standards for practitioner action research are different from those of other qualitative forms of inquiry. Action research does not maintain the “fly on the wall status” that other types of qualitative inquiry value. The fly on the wall is analogous to academic outsiders looking in. Practitioner action research values the teacher and other insiders trying to examine their own personal and professional realities. A layer of complication to the positionality and criteria of research is that many academics in education are also practitioners or have been practitioners, so they are both an insider and an outsider. Perhaps these other educators have had a similar learning experience as me in that they've gained

teaching insight from the stories of colleagues. This can be at odds with what educators have been taught in academia is valid knowledge.

General criteria to use when considering the trustworthiness of research, according to Anderson et al. (2007), include five different types of validity, beginning with outcome validity and trustworthiness. This criterion asks: Is there resolution to the problem initially sparking the research? Often the problem is reframed and new questions are asked that require more research, creating frustration for the researcher. Second, process validity and trustworthiness ask if the research offers opportunities for ongoing learning: Did the research open an ongoing process evolving from reflection and analysis? Third, democratic validity and trustworthiness ask: Have multiple perspectives of those involved been included, and is the research relevant to its context? Fourth, catalytic validity and trustworthiness ask: Does the inquiry help the researcher and participants rethink reality in ways that inspire them toward transformation? Finally comes dialogic validity and trustworthiness, which ask: Is there dialogue around findings with critical friends and stakeholders?

Oolbekkink-Marchand, van der Steen, and Nijveldt (2014) applied the validities Anderson et al. (2007) developed and argued that what determines quality may be different depending on the research goals (i.e., practical goals vs. theoretical goals). Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014) examined the quality of practitioner research and impact on professional development. They applied the validities to eleven studies and found some outcome and catalytic validity overall, but only a few studies out of the eleven had democratic and process validity. Consider these findings in light of Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) emphasis on the potential for social transformation. This might illuminate a key difference between practitioner and action research: action research tends to be more

focused on change and transformation than the more generic term, practitioner research. Regardless, there is an effort to develop workable standards for quality.

Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014) say that “researchers agree on the importance of the internal constancy, clarity, and explicitness of the research process” (p. 125) and also that,

Researchers emphasize the importance of improving practice with the conduct of practitioner research, but the improvement can have different faces: it can be both personal and thus concern the intentions, insights and actions of the teacher-researcher, but also concern the broader school. (p. 125)

Ultimately, more needs to be known about the relationship between criteria and the goals of the research. This relationship is not simple. Another option is to surrender to the messiness of social realities and social research. In order to surrender, the role of science and the importance of certainty would need renegotiation. Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014) don't look toward such a surrender, but rather recommend including more measures in future studies and evaluating more practitioner research in a broader timeframe:

Attention should stay focused on developing and evaluating the quality of practitioner research in relation to the goals of the research. Given that the quality of the research operationalized as the validity of the research plays an important role in both the professional development of the individual teacher and school development, high-quality research is crucial (p. 138).

This suggests that the surrender mentioned above is unlikely and that the tension between knowing and not knowing is far from resolution. The small influence of individual research on whole school development implies that there is a need for more research on democratic

and dialogic validity. Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014) conclude that doing so “should lead to the involvement of more stakeholders in practitioner research and thereby a greater influence on the school with the establishment of a school culture in which research plays an integral part in the end” (p.138).

To expand and replicate practitioner research is risky, because the replication or spread of practitioner research could undermine its intent of transformation. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) and Anderson et al. (2007) believe that the same spread of transformation by creating a rigid criterion could also lead to a lack of freedom in the wider diversity of classrooms participating in practitioner action research. Thus, the same criteria that may give more respect and credibility to practitioner research may also undermine its original goals and intentions.

Questions concerning practitioner research. There are many assumptions and questions around practitioner research concerning the establishment of what knowledge is, which knowledge is privileged, and how knowledge is created. As demonstrated by the discussion of participatory research, action research differs from traditional academic research but is not necessarily less rigorous. However, it may be viewed as much more subjective, making collaboration with others paramount in the triangulation of data, trustworthiness, and validity.

Another assumption is that action research is political. It changes the role of practitioners from passive consumers of knowledge to those who can create and challenge it. Practitioner researchers can challenge reformers who are further distanced from the classroom and challenge varied vested interests at all levels of the educational system.

What counts as knowledge. Teacher practitioner research in education rests on the assumption that knowledge gained by and for teachers is a legitimate form of inquiry that offers valuable ways of deepening our understanding of classroom practices and, by extension, contributes to the broader field of education. Some problems relate to the tension between academics and practicing teachers, especially given that much of the literature on the topic is written for academics. The elevated prose in academic texts can be a turnoff for many practitioners, not because they can't digest the discourse, but because their work is so tiring and demanding that they often don't have the energy to engage texts that aren't simple and straightforward. This relates to another problem, what Andersen et al. (2007) call a "growing anti-intellectualism" on the part of those teachers who simply want to answer the question "What do I do on Monday?" (p. 5).

I think there is a place for recipes and "safe" curricula so that teachers have time and energy left to explore other elements of their teaching. As a teacher, sometimes I do not have the wherewithal to create good curricula because my contexts and students' needs change so frequently. An appearance of an attitude of anti-intellectualism from teachers may indicate that teachers are overwhelmed with too many demands, not incompetent. Teachers often lack the opportunity to collaboratively unpack the reasons behind the problems we face in our classrooms. "Part of the task of action research is to strip away the unexamined theoretical baggage that has accumulated around everything we do in schools" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 6). The more frequently opportunities toward this end are presented, the more teachers will benefit.

Valued knowledge. The problems often studied by teacher research are not divorced from the individual, and some conflict arises over which knowledge is more privileged—that

of the collective or of the individual. Practitioners need to decide how much they want to challenge the status quo of their teaching contexts. If teachers do not begin to question the status quo through their research, Andersen et al. (2007) caution that the research “runs the risk of legitimizing what may be— from the perspective of equity considerations— unacceptable social relationships” (p. 35). However, I wonder if this is too much pressure to put on a teacher who simply wants to improve his or her own practice. The underlying message to teachers is that transforming your own practice is not useful enough. As a teacher, I find this amount of pressure daunting and problematic, because there is not a concurrent argument for the necessary support. Consider this metaphor: A teacher is drowning and wants to be a better swimmer. The literature on how to improve their practice is often also asking them, the teacher, to learn to swim while carrying the entire weight of systemic problems.

Some criticism of practitioner research stems from the debates about what knowledge is valued, privileged, and accepted. From a critical and feminist perspective, knowledge for transformation is different than knowledge for observation. Huberman (1996) criticizes teachers’ research findings as exaggerated claims and hubris. He contends there is practical vs. formal knowledge and that formal knowledge is perhaps more privileged.

Widely known for work in qualitative methodology, Huberman (1996) recognizes the potential and importance of teacher research, noting that the true purpose of teacher research is valuable. He challenges the teacher research movement to stay familiar with local knowledge, stay in communication with others sharing the same interests, develop what he calls “robust yet tailored methodological repertoire,” and finally, to develop a “conceptual mastery over the visible and unseen processes that account for pupils’ learning” (p.138).

Without these guideposts, he cautions, “teacher research might just turn in on itself, examining its states of mind and possible courses of action, with the attendant risk of narcissism that serves a far less meaningful purpose” (p. 138).

Like Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) and Anderson et al. (2007), Lankshear and Knobel (2004) are disappointed in the high value placed on empirically focused inquiry, noting that there is a place,

for well-conceived and well-executed quantitative research that does not overplay its hand so far as ‘proof’ and ‘truth’ are concerned, and does not forget that the social world cannot be reduced to numerical abstractions – To our chagrin, we often find that the ‘feel for’ and emphasis on design we believe lies at the very heart of research as a process of systematic inquiry is often much better understood and respected by people working in quantitative research than by people undertaking qualitative and document-based projects. (p. 7)

This statement encapsulates the tensions that teachers experience in their daily practice and as they attempt to prove they are doing their job well. Is it the test scores or the more abstract and often delayed results of teaching that really matter? As Lankshear and Knobel (2004) remark, both are useful, but they are valued differently.

Transformation and politics. Not everyone wants the social transformation or even the institutional change that may be instigated from practitioner findings. Taking a hypothetical example: What if teacher research reveals that large class sizes are correlated with poorer test scores? This might mean hiring more teachers and straining already tight budgets. Anderson et al. (2007) point action researchers to Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985), because their work “points out why so many institutions may not be thrilled at the

ideas of close examination,” and insists that “unless solutions to classroom and school problems under study tap into the complex theories of action that underlie the status quo, problems will only be solved in a superficial and temporary manner” (Anderson et al, 2007, p. 27). Some of the theories that need to be reframed are at the root of some of the problems practitioners must solve. Theories in practice around schooling may have to change to address the problems encountered in practitioner research.

Because it presents a challenge to the way things currently function, action research becomes political in different ways. Anderson et al. (2007) believe action research should challenge the status quo and benefit all that are involved. Schools are like a microcosm of greater social problems; things that play out in larger contexts are connected to, or amplified by, what happens in schools. What is questioned inside the school reflects larger questions. Action research allows insiders to begin questioning in their smaller sphere of influence and can problematize different parts of institutions as those same institutions shape what happens in the classroom. Of course, in any setting, when teachers start asking questions about an institution, it may lead students to begin to question their teachers. In the university setting, how to count service, teaching, and research hours becomes problematic when professors engage in inquiry regarding their own practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). If teachers don't maintain a critical edge, they can lose professional autonomy and become more like production workers than thoughtful leaders.

Narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) express how teachers may reject outsider knowledge, because it is what they call a “rhetoric of conclusion” (as cited in Anderson et al., 2007, p. 39). However, the narrative accounts that teachers so often value, and Clandinin and

Connelly champion, are viewed as an inadequate or inauthentic form of research/knowledge/science. Narrative accounts are often still viewed with suspicion.

Huberman (1996) is not confident that narrative accounts are a legitimate source of findings: “Narratives are seductive vehicles, but they are slippery. They are nearly impervious to verification, which may be a covert reason for using them” (p. 136). Despite the strong criticism, teachers are still using narratives to share their stories. As a teacher first and a researcher second, I come with nothing but teaching stories. Facts don’t last in my classroom. As soon as they might be proven, something occurs to undermine them; yet, my stories prevail. So, while classroom stories may be dangerously seductive, they are also, in the context of practitioner research, a source of legitimate knowledge. I choose to use a narrative form of writing to present my data in Chapter Four.

Importance of reflection. Careful reflection is vital throughout the research process, which accounts for the importance of critical friends and collaboration. Being able to discuss the process, the results, and the developing conclusions enhances the democratic research validity. Having the support of colleagues offers many advantages, allowing the practitioner to consider more points of view than they could independently. However, reflection can also be a more solitary endeavor, which offers a quiet place for the researcher’s ideas to develop more fully before being shared and further cultivated in a public space.

In the examples of research in the next section, each scholar demonstrates reflection throughout their presentation of findings. Reflection often comes in a narrative package, and such a package is deemed suspect by those subscribing to a more empirical concept of evidence, but when opened, it offers a deeper and more immediate connection to the findings. The findings, after all, are inextricably enmeshed in the human experience. Such

experience is not entirely captured with concrete descriptors like numbers and measures; rather, the human experience may be better captured through the recounting of events through the eyes of those immersed in the research context. The reflection process can often mimic art and, by doing so, offers a more complex critique of the research (McIntosh, 2010; Power, 1999; Schön, 1987). The following examples of research all include reflection that articulates the process and story behind the findings.

Research examples. In this section I will review three studies that all use a practitioner action research perspective. Macphee (1997) began with the question, “When is equal, not equal?” (p. 33). Macphee wanted to explore the responses of young (6- and 7-year-old) readers to multicultural literature. Drawing heavily on Rosenblatt, the research aimed to uncover how the students responded to representations outside of their own culture. Her study included 31 primarily European American youth at a private school in a Midwestern city. Besides Rosenblatt, Macphee drew upon Banks’ (1994) use of literature as a means for transformation. Choosing to use fiction and voice, for example, allows students to experience life vicariously, in context, through aesthetic readings in the Rosenblatt tradition.

Macphee (1997) collected her data through student interviews and drawings in response to the following texts: *Black Like Kyra, White like Me* (Vigna, 1992); *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991); *Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad in the Sky* (Ringold, 1992); and one nonfiction text, *Jackie Robinson* (Sabin, 1985). She chose to present her findings based upon student responses to each book, intermixing students’ drawings, interviews, and classroom discussions in her data analysis. In her conclusions, she not only drew upon the data, but importantly, her 30 years of classroom teaching experience and her own critical reflection upon changes happening in her teaching. Although she had used literature as a way

to expose children to ideas about people with whom her students might not have had contact, through this work, she moved toward a more directed focus, consciously “encouraging dialogue among students through the use of multicultural literature as a way of confronting social issues and vicariously experiencing other sociocultural contexts” (Macphee, 1997, p. 39).

The roles of the researcher and participants can vary. Some teachers include their students for the entire process, parts of the process, or not at all. In the case of Macphee, the students were not noted as participants, but it can be assumed that their cooperation in class was important to the success of the study. Some teachers work alone, while some teachers work with colleagues. Some teachers may use data from testing, Likert scales, and more traditional instruments, whereas others may rely on their teacher diaries, open-ended interviews, or more subjective assessment of student work. There is room for all of these variations in teacher action research because of the great variation in the classrooms, teachers, and students that may engage in the process. What we can expect, though, is that the teacher will gain a different, and hopefully deeper, understanding of some element of their teaching from which they can then grow. This was certainly the case in my study, where I found greater insight into students through their participation. I also honed my interviewing skills, helping me to ask better questions of future students.

In another study, the burning question arose from an incident, and this incident informed how later research developed. McNair (2003) experienced resistance from her preservice teachers in examining children’s literature against socio-political critiques. Unlike the youth in Macphee’s class who responded with cries of, “That’s not fair!” when learning about history and social inequalities, McNair found students resistant to acknowledging how

children's books not only reflect some of those same inequalities, but perpetuate them, as well. In a class of mostly white preservice teachers, McNair offered a critical reading of the book *The Wagon*, specifically dealing with questions of insider and outsider positioning. When inquiring if the writer of the book was African American or white, most of her students who were white assumed the author was black, because the protagonist was black. This was not the case; the supposition reflected the cultural positioning of the readers. The African American students disagreed and did not believe that the author was African American. One of the students responded, "The depiction of Lincoln as the central focus of the story and as a 'savior' of black people was an indication to her that the author was a cultural outsider" (McNair, 2003, p. 47). As McNair dove deeper in critiquing the book, her students reacted with anger and hostility. From reading students' responses, McNair developed her research question, motivation, and teaching goals. She states:

I realized that addressing racial issues within the context of children's literature had generated an enormous amount of discomfort and animosity among many of the mostly white, preservice teachers towards me, whom I believed they situated as an African American with an agenda that a white person would not have. I decided that the next semester I would conduct research in order to understand why preservice teachers exhibit such resistance, hostility and denial when given opportunities to conduct sociopolitical critiques of children's literature, and I also intended to reflect upon my teaching practices and how I could improve them. (McNair, 2003, p. 48)

This research statement shows insight into self and teaching context. McNair addresses her students and her own positionality while also recognizing the underlying implications. She is also willing to address how her teaching practices could adjust to help students conduct

important critiques and reflection when dealing with children's literature. The issue of insider and outsider authorship became one way I conceptualized my data in Chapter Five.

Another teacher-researcher of note who follows a different path is Vivian Paley. Instead of hewing to the traditional method of data collection, coding, analysis, discussion, and conclusion, Paley performs her research in a narrative form. She uses the stories of her classrooms to address bigger issues and then applies what she learns to her own teaching. This accessible source of critical reflection covers issues that are relatable to practicing teachers. Her stories inform the stories of the teachers who read her work. Her work focuses on longer time frames and a broader classroom view than Macphhee or McNair, who wrote about a discrete portion of their teaching. Paley goes into more detail about her relationships with other teachers and how they inform her teaching.

In *Kwanzaa and Me*, Paley (1996) asks difficult questions regarding school integration. Interviewing parents, teachers, and students not only in her school, but other schools and institutions, Paley's work is personal and engaging, interweaving the story of her classroom with the story of her research. Through her questioning, she finds that many of her black students do not feel engaged in white schools, but rather feel a sense of alienation. Through story and careful reflection, she traverses into the difficulties of school integration and the continued racial divide in America. Paley remains in a constant state of reflection and interaction as she writes her conclusions. In Paley's framework, there are not exactly conclusions so much as a beginning and continuation of dialogue. Paley asks a coworker, Lorraine, one of her key informants, "What do you think is the value of this book I'm writing? You've read parts of the manuscript, mainly to see if I'm quoting you properly, but

you've never told me how you feel about it." (Paley, 1996, p. 140). Paley describes

Lorraine's response:

It's all about the dialogue isn't it, to me, colleagues can read your book and see they can sit down and talk to each other and to the parents. And parents can read the book and see that it is a good thing to talk to the teachers. You are encouraging the dialogue, not necessarily the answers, but the dialogue. This points to the need for more people of color in the school, so there can *be* the dialogue (Paley, 1996, p. 140).

This excerpt illuminates the reason and the need for practitioner research. Practitioner and action research are not looking for universal solutions to local problems, nor local solutions to universal problems. Researchers are looking at the stories and the possibilities for something different and something better. Sometimes the research might achieve its goals by simply starting some of the hard conversations we need to have in education.

Research Design

The purpose and design of my research was intended to facilitate a dialogue around culture, with my students positioned as experts. Like McNair (2003) and Macphee (1997), I explored ideas and themes around representation of race and culture. Like Paley, I positioned myself as inquirer rather than expert. What we all share in common is a desire to create better classrooms through hard conversations and reflective practices.

What follows is a table describing the realities of my research. It includes an overview of participants, how they participated, and the books they read.

Table 2: *Participants*

Pseudonym	Country	SWUIEP/SWU Status at time of Data Collection	Questionnaire Complete	Focus Group	Interview	Sex	Book Read
1. Valerie	Mexico	Academic Bridge Student	X	X		F	<i>Funny Bones: Posada and his Day of the Dead Calaveras</i>
2. Mina	Korea	Academic Bridge Student	X	X	X	F	<i>Invisible Boy</i>
3. Joe	China	Academic Bridge Student	X	X		M	<i>A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story</i>
4. Geoff	Saudi Arabia	Academic Bridge Student	X		X	M	<i>Going to Mecca</i>
5. Bliss	Venezuela	Undergraduate Student	X	X	X	M	<i>Roberto's Trip to the Top</i>
6. Todd	Japan	Graduate Student	X	X	X	M	<i>The Sound of Silence</i>
7. Ellen	Venezuela	Undergraduate Student	X	X		F	<i>Roberto's Trip to the Top</i>
8. Edgar	Mexico	Graduate Student	X	X	X	F	<i>Funny Bones: Posada and his Day of the Dead Calaveras</i>
9. Raina	Iran	Undergraduate Student	X			F	<i>Pea Boy and Other Stories from Iran</i>
10. Cyrus	Burkina Faso	Graduate Student		X		M	<i>All Aboard for the Bobo Road</i>

11.Fred	Venezuela (parents from Palestine)	Graduate Student	X	X		M	<i>Roberto's Trip to the Top</i>
12.Darlene	Mexico/ Columbia	Graduate Student	X	X		F	<i>Funny Bones: Posada and his Day of the Dead Calaveras</i>
13.Yani	Nepal	Graduate Student	X	X		M	<i>I Doko</i>
14. Kevin	China	Advanced/Academic Bridge	X	X		M	<i>A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story</i>
15. Walter	Korea	Advanced/Academic Bridge	X	X	X	F	<i>A Piece of Home</i>
16. Carey	Germany	Advanced/Academic Bridge	X	X	X	F	<i>Germany ABCs</i>
17. Jessica	Guatemala	Undergraduate Student	X		X	F	<i>Abuela's Weave</i>
18.	<i>Consented, but did not participate in study</i>						
19.							
Summary:	<p>Participants' National Origins: 3 from Mexico and Venezuela, 2 from Korea and China, 1 from: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Burkina Faso, Japan, Germany, and Guatemala 9 females and 8 males. 3 former SWUIEP students who are now undergraduate students. 6 Former former SWUIEP students who are now graduate students. 7 Current current SWUIEP students taking advanced or academic bridge-level classes. 16 questionnaires 14 Fourteen participants in focus groups 8 Eight interviews</p>						

Participant recruitment/research sample. I recruited 19 students from Asian, Latin American, African, and European countries who are taking, or have already taken, the advance level classes at the Southwest University Intensive English Program (SWUIEP) where I taught part-time. SWUIEP is an intensive English program that serves students from all over the world who wish to improve their English language skills. The program consists of five different levels (low-intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate, advanced, and academic bridge) and four skill areas (reading, writing, conversation, and grammar). Participants often study in the United States for a brief amount of time with the intent to return to their home country. “Transnational” is one way to conceptualize or unify this diverse population, because all have their feet in two or more countries. (Vertovec, 2011). In consideration of logistics, such as the difficulty of predicting enrollment numbers, I chose to collect data outside of my class. My intention was to improve my practice of teaching. As a language teacher, this is specifically useful in choosing vocabulary to teach, subjects to read about, and even how to start a conversation with students whose schooling cultures are not necessarily taking students’ oral performances. Most of all, I wanted to develop wider reading repertoire for students besides typical language learning texts so that my teaching adds additional components of validating students’ cultures and knowledges. This way, their language learning is not students’ only goals, but help them to experience English language is a type of vehicle for communications. Thus, practitioner action research is the most appropriate description for this work, though it may be understood as more of a general qualitative study.

Data Collection

Step 1. Throughout the study, I maintained fieldnotes in which I recorded my own thoughts, reactions, interpretations and reflections about the research process and notes on relevant literature that I continued to read.

Step 2. Each student was given a book. This presented a challenge, because it was difficult and time-intensive to procure books representing particular countries. Because of the difficulty of locating books and the necessity of using interlibrary loan, it was necessary for me to purchase the books for the participants. In one instance, I did not provide a book for a participant and relied on them going to the library. They did not go and consequently could not participate in the study. The books used in this study were identified based on four criteria: prior classroom experience with the text, expert recommendation, the potential for the book to elicit an aesthetic rather than efferent response, and the timely accessibility of the book in order to provide it to the participants. Issues of authenticity were not at the forefront of my initial book selection; however, it became an important factor in the participant's responses to book because their critical responses were often associated with cultural accuracy or pointed out misrepresentations. Authentic quality of Germany ABCs was not clear . There was little information about the author's background, but the illustrator was American and never even met (Millet, personal communication, 2018). The book was not of high literary quality and steeped in stereotypes. The reader resisted the text. This combination of factors helped me determine the inauthenticity of the text. However, it was valuable to examine the cause of readers' resistance to the text.

Another book in the study, *A New Year's Reunion*, appeared to be authentic. I base this judgment of authenticity on the authors' backgrounds, the literary quality, the accuracy

of details, and most importantly, the participant's response that the book captured something unique to their homeland. It was the combination of these factors that helped me understand the authenticity of books used in this study.

Book selection presented many logistical challenges. I was not able to entirely predict all of the countries from which I would need books. Based on the overall population of SWUIEP, I anticipated that I would have students from Vietnam, Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico as study participants. For those countries, I chose books based on my interaction with previous student responses to certain books and recommendations from an expert in children's literature. However, I had countries represented in my study that I did not anticipate such as Iran, Nepal, Burkina Faso, and Germany. For participants from those countries, I had to make quick decision based on timely access to the book. Table 3 describes each of the books used in the study and includes the criteria of book selections.

In an ideal world, without the constraints of time and access, each book would have been more carefully selected based on cultural authenticity and the qualities of authentic with beginning adult or child ESL learners, repetitive language and formulaic expressions can support language learning. In the case of more advanced adult ESL learners, more complicated storylines and less repetitive language is appropriate. The determination of what makes a book culturally authentic is an issue of debate. This study sought to allow the participant/reader to make their own determinations on cultural authenticity by asking how the book supports or deviates from their experiences. Cultural authenticity is a topic of debate among scholars so that defining what cultural authenticity was not as simple as I expected. Short (2013) agrees with Rudine Sims Bishop, who argues that cultural authenticity cannot be defined in a formulated way, although "you know it when you see it"

as an insider reading a book about your own culture” (p. 4). For example, Rochman argues that if the author is good enough, their insider or outsider positionality is irrelevant to the authenticity of the text (Rochman 2013); on the other hand, Seto (2013) feels strongly that authors are not able to write outside of their own cultures and to do so risks a continuation of cultural exploitation by dominant groups.

The following questions adapted from Short (2019) can be used to help assess the authenticity of books. Originally these questions were used to help guide writers on the World of Words Review, A resource to aid educators in finding culturally authentic texts. I have chosen the questions because they are most pertinent to my study and participants responses.

- Is this book quality literature? (Jacobs and Tunnell, 2004)
- Do the pictures trigger an response?
- Will the text solicit an aesthetic response?
- What is the origin of the book?
- What are the author’s and Illustrator's relationships to the culture they write about?
- Does the book get details about the culture right?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How have insiders responded to this book?

To find such books that best lined up with the criteria these questions pertain to, resources such as World of Words (wowlit), International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY), Doors to the World, United States, Board on Books for Young People, lists of award

winners (i.e. Pura Belpre, Hans Christian Andersen) and finally, journals focusing on children's literature such as Book Bird would have been utilized.

Most participants didn't have the option to select their own book (except the Korean participants and the participant from Burkina Faso who were give a couple of choices). Student selection of books is difficult in my teaching context. If I was able to teach a demographically stable population, my instinct would be to collect books that were deemed more culturally authentic to use in the classroom and have students choose from them. I would determine their authenticity over time as I used them with my previous students and gauged their responses to the books accuracy of details, believability, and literary quality (Jabos and Tunnels, 2004) However, books that are not authentic give students the opportunity to compare and contrast texts and develop their own ideas around culturally authentic literature.

Overall the books selected for this study drew a wide range of students' responses. I excluded books that appeared to be of low literary quality, written for very young children, or ones that were too long, thus placing a burden on participants. I included books that were well received based on professional reviews, appeared to have higher literary quality, and were a length that wouldn't be a burden on participants. From these reviews, I was not able to gauge the check-off criteria of cultural authenticity. *Pea Boy and other Stories from Iran*, *I doko* from Nepal, and *Germany ABCs* are three books used in the study that did not fit my criteria as well as others. They were the best I could find in my limited time frame to select books. The participant from Iran was a former student. I was familiar with her history and felt that I needed to be very sensitive in my book selection. Given her age, it is possible she lived through the Iranian Revolution and suffered trauma from it. I purposefully excluded

books about the revolution so that I did not bring up anything emotionally painful for her. Elizabeth Laird, the author of *Pea Boy and Other Stories From Iran*, has written several books set in the Middle East and is also the recipient of many literary awards. The book's illustrator, Shirin Adl, grew up in Iran. This collaboration of author and illustrator made the book a seemingly good selection for the study. However, the book was too long to expect a participant to read the entirety of it, so I asked the participant to choose one of the several stories in the book. Unfortunately, the stories did not offer the same sort of window into contemporary daily life that others books selected in the study did. All of the other books were contemporary realistic fiction that based on daily life within the countries they represented. An interesting turn in the issue of book selection was the response of Mina, from Korea, who had very specific literary cultural expectations because she read folktales from her home country in a recent course. Mina selected *The Invisible Boy* out of the two books I presented her and this book is not a specifically cultural. Instead, it tells the story of a confident Korean-American boy who plays a positive role in mainstream children's literature.

I Doko from Nepal, a story told from the point of view of a basket, may not have been an ideal book either because it seemed to be set in the past. I make this statement based on the participant's remarks on how the use of the *doko* (basket) has changed over time. However, the participant was able to give some insight about the changes in the *doko*'s use which gave me a sense of how the country of Nepal is developing and changing. One of the issues with *I Doko*, was not related to selection, but the potential misreading of the plot by the participant.

In spite of the aforementioned issues, I felt that most books selected through my imperfect methodology were good,--except for the book, *Germany ABCs*, which described different aspects of German life and culture based on the alphabet. If more time had been available to research and acquire a book from this country, I may have chosen *Mr. Squirrel and The Moon* by Sebastian Meschenmoser or *Like a Wolf* by Geraldine Elschner. The benefit of having selected one book of poor literary quality, lacking cultural authenticity, was the opportunity to document the response to such a text. *Germany ABCs* was a book intended for more efferent rather than aesthetic reading. As non-fiction, it did not have a strong narrative element or sense of story like other books in the study did. The participant who read the book noted how the book showed American values and interests. The book oversimplified Germany to a land of lederhosen, Oktoberfest, and bratwurst.

Another consideration in revision would be choosing young adult books that were longer and could explore social issues more in-depth. However, this could create a participant burden if the book was read outside of work students were already doing in an ESL course. Redesigning the study with lengthier books would need to be based in a class where it was permissible to research.

The following tables summarize important information on the books used in the study. The first table illustrate how the books correspond to criteria related to authenticity, The second table provides specific information on the writer's and illustrator's backgrounds, genre, reader, and a brief overview of the book. Insiders referred to in some bullet points are previous students who have responded to the book.

Table 3. *Criteria met for Cultural Authenticity*

Title	Criteria met for cultural authenticity
<p><i>A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Author and illustrator are both from China and cultural insiders ● Originally published in China ● Poignant story ● Realistic and easy to believe the family's reunion as depicted in the story. ● Book accurately depicts details and captures cultural values related to the New Year's celebration ● Insiders expressed it was authentic
<p><i>A Piece of Home</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jerri Watts, author, familiar with immigration experiences through teaching newly arrived students to the United States ● Illustrator, Yum, is a transnational illustrator from South Korea ● Convincing portrayal of two year old little sister and grandmother ● Insider responded positively mostly
<p><i>The Invisible Boy</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Written and illustrated by American, Trudy Ludwig. ● Dialogue is convincing ● Accurate portrayal of American Elementary school ● Korean-American character is not steeped in stereotypes ● Not intended to be representative of Korean culture, but invisible universal value
<p><i>Funny Bones: Posada and his Day of the Dead Calaveras</i> Biography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mexican author and illustrator (Pura Belpre Award Winner) ● Historically accurate ● Pleasing illustrations
<p><i>The Sound of Silence</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Author has complex identity. She was born to a Japanese father and American mother. She said this: <i>"I am not accepted as Japanese in Japan, and though different now, I didn't feel accepted as American growing up. (I was born in 1979). In my heart I feel I'm an insider, though considered an outsider by the society (Goldsaito, Personal Communication, 2018)</i> ● Use Japanese onomatopoeia to represent sounds on a busy street ● Thoughtful illustrations include references to Japanese subculture

Title	Criteria met for cultural authenticity
<i>Roberto's Trip to the Top</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authored by American father and son, John B. Patterson Sr. and John B. Patterson Jr, who traveled in Venezuela ● Illustrated by Brazilian artist, Renato Alarcão. ● Based on insider's responses, this book is mostly authentic
<i>Going to Mecca</i> Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Haj pilgrimage which includes Muslims from the United states and other nations all over the world ● Although an informational text, it was written in a poetic style that feels like reading a story ● The illustrations to the non-fiction text make it feel like a children's story book. ● There small details in both the text and illustrations that insider readers have commented on as being too general or incorrect
<i>I Doko</i> Folktale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Author, Edward Young, based story on folktales from the region the book is set in ● Illustrations invoked memories of the landscape for insiders ● As a the re-telling of a folktale, it lacks representations of modern Nepalese culture
<i>All Aboard for the Bobo Road</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Author worked as a Missionary in Burkina Faso ● Illustrator is from the United Kingdom and based his drawing on stories, videos, and conversations he had with the author ● The book depicted daily life in the participant's home country
<i>Pea Boy and Other Stories from Iran</i> Folktale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Author has lived and visited several countries including Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Pakistan, and Ethiopia. She has written several books set internationally. Insider responded positively to the story because it triggered fond childhood memories* ● As a folktale, does not reflect contemporary daily life
<i>Germany ABCs</i> Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No background information available on writer. Illustrator is American with some German family members ● Choppy sentences that do not elicit aesthetic response ● Oversimplification of German history in WWII contexts ● Insider participant displeased with book's representation*

Title	Criteria met for cultural authenticity
<i>Abuela's Weave</i> Contemporary Realistic Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guatemalan author and the Dominican-American illustrator ● inviting storyline and characters ● shows diversity within Guatemalan society by depicting both city and village life. ● Very positive response from insider participant* ● Some debate exists over the authenticity of bird imagery used in book.

*the responses of more insiders to these particular books should be further considered. This chart represents how the insider participants included in this study responded to books. A larger sample size could yield different results.

Table 4 displays a concise overview of the books used in the study. It includes information on whether the books are international, multicultural or global; the author and illustrators background, the genre, the participants who read the book, and a finally, a brief synopsis.

Table 4: *Books Used in Study*

Title/ Classification	Author Background	Illustrator Background	Genre	Participants	Synopsis
<i>A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story</i> International	Yu Li-Qiong Chinese	Zhu Cheng Liang Chinese (Chengcheng, 2016)	Contemporary Realistic Fiction/	Chinese Participants from Shanghai and Southern China	A father returns home after working far away for the last year. The family reunites, and the father and daughter have quality time together
<i>A Piece of Home</i> Multicultural	Jerri Watts American	Hyewon Yum Korean-American (Danielson, 2011)	Contemporary Realistic Fiction/	Korean	A young boy and his grandmother adjust to living in the United States after moving from Korea
<i>Invisible Boy</i> Multicultural	Tracy Ludwig American	Patrice Parton American	Contemporary Fiction	Korean	Brian is bullied and ignored at school, so he feels invisible. A new student, Justin, who is of Korean descent, comes to school and befriends Brian. Through their friendship, Brian is accepted by his peers and is no longer invisible
<i>Funny Bones: Posada and his Day of the Dead Calaveras</i> Multicultural Global	Duncan Tonatiuh Mexican American Raised in Mexico; spends time in the United States and Mexico		Biography	Mexican Students from Northern, Central, and Southern Mexico.	The story is about the artist José Guadalupe Posada, who drew political cartoons, as well as calaveras (skulls) and skeletons as part of Día De Los Muertos celebrations. The book explains the author's life and art

Title/ Classification	Author Background	Illustrator Background	Genre	Participants	Synopsis
<i>The Sound of Silence</i> Global	Katrina Goldsaito Father is Japanese and she has experience traveling in Japan (Personal Communication, July 13, 2018)	Julia Kou Taiwan/United States traveled in Japan	Contemporary Realistic Fiction/	Japanese participant from Osaka?	A young boy tries to find the meaning of the Japanese word <i>ma</i> . The boy walks through the city and into the country trying to find silence
<i>Roberto's Trip to the Top</i> Global	John B. Patterson Sr. and John B. Patterson Jr. Americans who traveled in Caracas	Renato Alarcão Brazilian	Contemporary realistic Fiction	Two Participants from the Capital of Venezuela and one participant from Rural Areas of Venezuela. The Venezuelan from the Rural area was also the son of Palestinian immigrants	Roberto and his Uncle climb mount Avila in Caracas, Venezuela
<i>Going to Mecca</i> Global/ Multicultural	Na'ima B. Robert Parents are of Scottish and Zulu descent; she grew up in Zimbabwe	Valentina Cavallini Italian studied in England	Informational book	Saudi Arabian participant	The book explains the journey pilgrims make when they go to Mecca
<i>I Doko</i> Global	Ed Young Chinese-American	Ed Young Chinese-American	Folktale	Nepalese participant	This is the story of a basket, <i>Doko</i> . The basket carries grain from the fields, firewood, and even children. The story is about respecting and caring for elders

Title/ Classification	Author Background	Illustrator Background	Genre	Participants	Synopsis
<p><i>All Aboard for the Bobo Road</i></p> <p>Global</p>	<p>Stephen Davies British missionary working in West Africa</p>	<p>Christopher Corr British. Never traveled to Burkina Faso. Used conversations with and pictures shared by the author for inspiration. (Personal communication, June 22, 2018)</p>	<p>Contemporary realistic fiction</p>	<p>Urban area of Burkina Faso</p>	<p>A minibus carries travelers across the Bobo Road in Burkina Faso. The driver's children, Fatima and Galo, accompany their father in the journey</p>
<p><i>Pea Boy and Other Stories from Iran</i></p> <p>Global</p>	<p>Elizabeth Laird Born in New Zealand, lives in the United Kingdom, and has lived/traveled extensively in Africa and the Middle East (Laird, n.d).</p>	<p>Shirin Adl Born in the UK, raised in Iran. (Kids, n.d.).</p>	<p>Folktale</p>	<p>Iranian participant</p>	<p>This is a collection of seven Iranian folktales. The participant chose one story to read, "Miss Cockroach and Mr. Mouse." After rejecting three marriage offers, Ms. Cockroach marries Mr. Mouse. Mr. Mouse is an adoring husband, and Ms. Cockroach is a silly wife. Unfortunately, Mr. Mouse dies and Ms. Cockroach returns to live with her father</p>
<p><i>Germany ABCs</i></p> <p>Global</p>	<p>Sara Heiman No web presence to find out information</p>	<p>Jason Millet American with some German relatives (Personal Communication, June, 23, 2018)</p>	<p>Informational</p>	<p>Urban Germany</p>	<p>This book uses the alphabet to present German geography, history, and culture</p>

Title/ Classification	Author Background	Illustrator Background	Genre	Participants	Synopsis
<i>Abuela's Weave</i> Global	Omar Castañeda Born in Guatemala and lives in the United States	Enrique O. Sanchez Born in the Dominican Republic and lives in the United States	Contemporary realistic fiction	Rural Guatemala	A girl and her grandmother bond while weaving and selling textiles

Step 3. Students read the book on their own and completed a questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Step 4. Students attended focus groups of 2–3 students to share their book (see Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol). Based on prior classroom experience, I have found that students ask each other questions more freely about culture than I do in my role as teacher. Observing and recording peer-to-peer discussions allowed me to better capture critical incidents.

Finally, a key component of reader response theory is negotiating understandings of texts through peer-to-peer discussion (Rosenblatt, 1995). I used an iPad that I had hoped would be situated at an angle to capture the students' gestures to specific images and text. Unfortunately, the iPad video lens was not wide enough, so it did not capture focus groups well and served mostly as an audio recording device. Three participants opted out from video recordings, and I transcribed the focus group as it happened. In two of the focus groups, students met for the first time and showed signs of creating new friendships. In the other focus groups, participants met with current or former coworkers or classmates.

Step 5. Students participated in final interviews (see Appendix E: Interview Protocol). I selected seven students to interview based on the comments they made during focus groups and participant availability. The purpose of these interviews was to inquire more about their experiences and responses to their book. Interview questions were intended to delve deeper into student responses on the questionnaire and the comments participants made during focus groups. These interviews, except for one, were video recorded with an iPad that attempted to capture gestures to images in the book. However, as in the case of the focus groups, the iPad

served more as an audio recording device. One interview participant did not consent to video recording, so I took notes as she spoke.

Table 5: *Timeline of Study*

February	2/28, I: Geoff
March	3/9, FG: Valerie, Mina, Joe 3/26, FG: Bliss and Todd 3/26, I: Edgar 3/26, I: Todd 3/28, I: Bliss
April	4/2, FG: Ellen and Edgar 4/9, FG: Darlene and Yani* 4/15, FG: Cyrus** and Fred 4/25, I: Mina
May	Break in data collection due to illness
June	6/25, FG: Kevin, Walter, Carey 6/25, I: Carey 6/29, I: Walter
July	7/12 I: Jessica***
FG: Focus Group I: Interview *Raina was scheduled to participate in this focus group but was unable to come. Yani had to leave early, and the focus group turned into an Interview with Darlene. ** Cyrus did not complete the questionnaire *** By the time Jessica completed the questionnaire, there were no other participants to meet in a focus group.	

Step 6. True to my background as a literature student, I approached my data similar to the way I would approach a text. Despite the use of coding software, I ultimately made connections between my data and other scholarship I read during my study. I looked at my

data as a part of a larger conversation about teaching and learning. Once I understood how my data fit into the larger conversation, I used the coding to help find examples to support the arguments I was developing. For example, once I realized the significance of insider and outsider writers I began to looking at my data for things I had coded in related categories. From this process, the themes of reviewer responses, readers responses and language-learners responses emerged. These themes will be described after a discussion of the codes used.

Data analysis and synthesis. The following section explains how I approached the different data I collected. Because this was a qualitative study, I carefully studied the data as it emerged, rather than trying to make it fit any hypothesis I prematurely developed. While reader response is the major theoretical framework I used to understand students' interpretations of a text, my own reading of the data emphasized textual authority (data as text).

I looked for patterns, unexpected statements, and content that related to my research questions. For example, Jessica said that she thought all the Mayan people were dead and buried beneath the town plaza. I noted anything I was curious about in the questionnaires, to explore those elements more deeply in the interviews. I analyzed student questionnaires before and after focus groups and interviews to look for consistencies and contradictions.

I observed focus groups and used an iPad to record audio and video footage while participants were sharing their books with each other. Transcriptions of the video recordings were performed by a transcriptionist. I also used an iPad to record audio and video of interviews. A transcriptionist transcribed the videos. The transcripts served as my largest body of data.

Data Analysis

Coding is a way to create a system of understanding the connections and disconnections among data (Basit, 2003; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Strauss, 1987). The design and act of coding provides the framework to form understandings of complex and competing data, creating a vital support system for one's research. By organizing the information, the researcher allows for the comparisons, linkages, or disconnects that shape the final analysis. After reviewing the transcripts of both the focus groups and interviews, I used an inductive approach to code the data by discovering categories and then dividing them into subcategories, themes, patterns, contradictions, and things that struck me as surprising or exceptionally relevant to my teaching practice.

I used Dedoose software to help code and analyze my data. I developed my first round of codes as I initially explored the data. I found it easier to code at the beginning and harder as I finished my first round. I discovered data that, although it felt important, didn't fit an established code but related to other statements I recalled when writing up the data that constructs the body of Chapter Four. Because all transcripts were not ready by the time I started to write up my data, some focus groups and interviews were coded after I had written up other data. I noticed themes, such as the *significance of landscape*, from the process of describing my data, rather than strictly from coding. The second round of coding was performed after I finished describing my data and completed the entire first round of coding.

Table 6: *Round One Codes*

Title	Description
Accurate	Realistic, accurate to culture
Authorial freedom	Statements relating to author's interpretation of impressions or choices.
Children as audience	Codes where participants mention that the books are written for kids, good for kids, etc.
Class	Discussion of class differences
Confusion	Participant indicates confusion caused by book
Cultural variations	Statements that talk about differences within a culture
Culture	Comments referencing culture
Easy to read	Indicating the book was not difficult to read
Family relationships	Mention of family or family relationships, like uncle, aunt, grandmother
Focus Group Questions: Student to Student	Moments where participants ask each other questions.
Food	References to food
Generalizations, stereotypes	Participants indicate generalizations or stereotypes in the text they read
History	Statements related to history of a country
IEP programming Implications	Statements that have implications for intensive English programs
Illustrations	Comments related to illustrations
Inaccuracies	Parts of the book that students find problematic
Individual vs. culture	Statements explaining how the book does not give insight into individuals
Landscape	Statements related to the environment
Memories	Includes statements related to participant's memories
Methodological implications	Statements that have implications or relate to the methodology of the study

Title	Description
Negative affect	Statements that indicate the participant felt negatively while engaging with the book
Nostalgia	Homesickness, missing
Not good to learn about culture	Statements that express the books don't teach about culture
Pedagogical implications	Statements that have implications for teaching
Perceptions	Statements related to how a culture is perceived
Politics	Statements related to politics, political leadership, and/or political systems
Positive affect	Students indicate positive feelings
Presence of L1	Examples of words from student's home language
Questions the book brings up	Statements where the participant shares questions the book brings up for them
Reading about culture in English	Statements related to reading about culture in English
Religion/spiritual	Codes related to religion and religious or spiritual practices
Talking about culture using English	Statements about talking about culture using English
Time constraints	Indications that participants had limited time to engage in interviews/focus groups
Too narrow	Statements relating to representations or books being too narrow to aid in understanding who someone is or a culture
Traditional	Mentions of tradition or traditional things or activities
Translation	Problems of translation
Value of story	Statements about what is good about the story, lessons, morals, etc.
Writer/author	Statements relating to the author—for example, choices the author made to include or not include things, the author's identity, and the author's perspective

During the second round of coding, I looked at each questionnaire and transcript and added additional coding or revised the coding to be more consistent. I also experimented with grouping the codes based on my three research questions, but I found it unhelpful. I combined the codes of authorial freedom and writer/author. I also considered deleting codes that were used less than two times, but ultimately kept them and found that I was able to use the codes more frequently after taking another look at the data. I added the codes “connections with characters,” “visit the place,” and “insider/outsider author/illustrator” to capture related statements I did not notice in my first round of coding. One of the most significant changes I made was to code all the answers to the question “Is this a good book for an ESL teacher to learn about your culture?” to pedagogical implications, because I thought that spoke best to how to represent the book to other teachers in light of how it might inform their knowledge of a particular country and what students feel the books offer in terms of accurate background knowledge about a culture. I also added many more memos to the text noting connections and disconnections among participants. For example, when looking at Bliss’s interview transcript, after coding Fred’s focus group transcript, I noticed they made opposing statements regarding how often people ate strawberries and cream, as well as statements regarding the trip up Mount Avila in Caracas being a typical or an atypical experience. From these contrasts, I was able to see how two people from the same country read a text differently. Some of the differences may be attributed to class and region.

Below are examples of the initial codes being applied to a questionnaire, a focus group, and an interview.

1-1 The book made me warm. It is a great book.	Codes (4-47) Positive affect
1-2 The boy who is a main character in the book struggle to adapt to the US life.	
1-3 What does Korean think of <u>Moogoong-hwa</u> flower? Why is the flower is important to Koreans?	Codes (158-223) Traditional
1-4 It is good of foreign students to understand Korean immigrants.	Codes (226-394) Pedagogical Implications
2-1 This book will be helpful to understand me because readers may not know the meaning of the flower.	
2-2 The author needs to add the reason why the grand mother has got happier since she lived in the US.	Codes (398-497) Family Relationships
2-3 nothing	
3. I would like to suggest that if the book illustrates adult <u>Hee jun</u> who grows up well in the US,	Codes (514-607)

Figure 2. Final coding examples, questionnaire.

R1: <u>Mmhm</u> .	Codes (12014-12212) Presence of L1
R2: You have this, we also have for example, let me check, I'm trying to look for any Spanish words, let me check. This is for-- this is the <u>telefetic</u> , the tramway, this is the actually the base operation we function in Caracas. Let me look for another one, <u>cerrada</u> , which means close. I'm trying to look for any one that is important, <u>empleados</u> , which mean workers, mostly. And, let me continue, and this...	Codes (12212-12221) Presence of L1 Presence of L1
R1: Hm.	Codes (12290-12300) Presence of L1
R2: Now, on the route upwards throughout the tram toward the peak in the mountain, you're going to see a lot of beautiful things, of course.	Codes (12375-12512) Landscape
R1: <u>Mmhm</u> .	
R2: And you're going to see the whole city, you're going to see also the whole trees, how they actually, how tall they really are. Many of the birds that appear in there, like, Venezuela is pretty gifted naturally on that.	Codes (12526-12745) Landscape
R1: Hm.	Codes (12769-12782) Presence of L1
R2: Over here, " <u>todos abordo</u> ," all aboard, all aboard, of course. Let me check, I'm looking for every single Spanish word as possible. Mama, which is mother, I don't remember the name of this bird?	Codes (12819-12913) Presence of L1

Figure 3. Final coding examples, focus group.

I: <u>Mmhm</u> .	
R: And well, other pictures seemed, kind of too stereotypical for me, probably? Like--	Codes (1648-1734) Generalizations, stereotypes,
I: Ok.	
R: If I just go, I just gonna try to find, yeah, two examples, like, most people in Germany don't dress like on the page, on page 11.	Codes (1741-1875) Inaccuracies
I: Ok and that's page 11? Ok.	
R: Page 11, yeah, and it just kind of, for me, the word that came up the most in my head when I was looking at the pictures was a bit romanticized.	Codes (1907-2181) Illustrations
I: Ok.	
R: Yeah, and especially, this picture here, it kind of-- and also, that, like that one seems kind of like, from the 90s?	

Figure 4. Final coding examples, interviews.

Finally three thematic categories were formed. Even though students were invited to read a range of children's books for the purpose of the study, students engaged with books differently from and similarly to each other. Most of all, their responses showed various types of readers' identities. The three major response types are reviewers' responses, readers' responses, and language-learners' responses. Each response has a focused stance for reading and processing their reaction to the books they read. Below are three thematic criteria regarding the participants responses to texts:

1. Reviewer's responses: Participants' stances focus on evaluative responses to the texts. Evaluative voices drew their thoughts on cultural appropriateness, accuracy, and usefulness to teach culture and reviewer's voices tend to convey criticality in their responses. The intended audience of the book, children, appeared to be an important areas students paid attention due to the nature of children's literature. These responses often extended to the question of implied users of the book to tell whether the book was a good tool for English teachers to use to learn about particular cultures.

2. Reader's responses: Participants' responses tend to focus on their aesthetic or emotive responses. For example, readers expressed a longing for homeland and had emotive response to illustrations. In this criteria, participants' aesthetic responses includes their reaction to act of reading such as easiness of texts and other intertextual connections that students share their text-to-text connections.

3. Language-learning readers' response: In this response, participants' being language-learners and participating in their teacher's project influenced their responses. Many of these responses appeared to be a type of teaching evaluations that attempt to provide their course feedback. Their responses limited to a specific space like an ESL classroom and particular texts like children's books that they read. It seemed to invite them to share how they felt to reading stories of their home cultures through English language and talk about their cultures in English.

Table 7. *Thematic Overview of Responses*

Thematic Responses	Examples of Participants' Responses
<p>Reviewer's evaluative critical responses to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cultural appropriateness and accuracy ● usefulness to teach culture ● appropriateness to intended audiences of the children's books. <p>2) Reader's aesthetically strong responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● connections to home and memories ● Evaluation of Illustrations 	<p><i>The parents' leaving is a really normal part in Chinese tradition. Parents have to go out to work to make a living</i> -Kevin</p> <p><i>The currency, exactly, sorry. For some reason, they put pesos, we don't-- that's not our currency. It's called bolivars? There are pesos like, in other country but not in mine so I was like, really, kind of, I don't know, disappointed</i> - Ellen</p> <p><i>I believe that the book is great, and it teaches a lot about the life of indigenous people's life in Guatemala</i> -Jessica.</p> <p><i>I like this book for kids</i> - Mina</p> <p><i>Overall, this book has brought me to tears because it relates to my childhood and all the things that I miss of my country</i> - Fred</p> <p><i>And mostly with this part, the barrio, like, I really like how they illustrated.</i> -Todd</p>

Thematic Responses	Examples of Participants' Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responses that evoke readers negative emotions ● Ease of reading ● Connections to other books or art <p>3) Readers Responses as language-learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rationale for using Children's books in adult ESL classrooms ● Feelings about using English to talk about culture ● Indications of multiple language identities 	<p><i>...but the sad thing is like, seeing those two kids working with their dad like, make me sad...-Cyrus</i></p> <p><i>.... so it's easy for us to read and understand, interpret stuff, see behind the line, right?- Cyrus</i></p> <p><i>I read Korean traditional fairy tales that was fun and interesting experience for me. I already knew that stories, but I read that stories to English. It makes me feel weird and interesting experience for me. This book was good for me unique way.- Mina</i></p> <p><i>Monique: So, my question is, what do you think about using children's books in ESL classrooms?</i> <i>Ellen: I love it, like, (laughs) for me.</i></p> <p><i>Monique:...using English to share a little bit about... Korea, how did that feel?</i> <i>Walter: It's like, it's very comfortable. (laughs)...Uh huh, to introduce, yeah, foreigners, like, Korean culture in English? And then, yeah, it's very impressive to using like, mugunghwa?</i></p> <p><i>So, that's, that's one of the problem, you know? Because in this book, for example, you have like, lot of stuff I want to explain but I just don't have the words, you know? So, I feel like English is good like, at a certain level like sixty percent. If you really want to discover more about the culture, you have to learn the language.</i> <i>-Cyrus</i></p>

Ethical considerations. To protect students from coercion into participation, this study took place in an entirely voluntary context that was open to all students who have enrolled in or completed SWUIEP's advanced level or higher. I selected this level of English proficiency so that participants would possess the linguistic skills to fully engage as participants and provide informed consent without translation. Because I taught the advanced level of students in the spring of 2018, I chose not to recruit from this group to avoid any issue of coercion. Student questionnaires were scanned and stored electronically on a password-protected device. Video footage was also stored on a password-protected device.

Validities. Drawing on the framework for validities developed by Anderson et al. (2007) and the recent work of Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014), I focused on the five validities discussed earlier. The table below shows my intention to address each validity.

Table 8: *Validities*

Outcome The results of the study answer the original research questions	Process Opportunities for continued learning as well as sound research methods including triangulation	Democratic The extent to which the research is performed with stakeholders; relevancy to local setting	Catalytic Transformation in researcher or research context related to the inquiry	Dialogic The extent of research collaboration and use of critical friends throughout the research process
In practitioner action research, outcomes are difficult to predict. However, the intended data collection directly relates to the research questions.	The research design includes three stages. First, the participant has an opportunity to respond individually via the questionnaire, then through focus groups, and finally through one-on-one interviews. There are three data sources that build from and interact with each other.	Students are the greatest stakeholders and are key to the research design. By including final interviews, I was able to member-check findings from student questionnaires and focus groups.	I applied to present research more formally at Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and sharing final findings with fellow IEP teachers through staff meetings and local professional development platforms such as SWUIEP teacher series.	As part of a dissertation, the research was be guided and evaluated by a committee of scholars. Campus resources such as the Graduate Resource Center and methodology group were utilized as sources of critical friends.

Limitations and Delimitations

In the past, students have said things that stopped me cold in my tracks and caused an immediate reevaluation of assumptions I'd held. My identity is first as a teacher and second as a researcher. Some of my understandings were through a teaching lens. In Chapter Four, I

mention this when writing up data that challenged me in the role of teacher-researcher, particularly in two instances when I found participants having difficulty understanding the book they read. This influenced my analysis and highlights some of the dilemmas facing practitioner research as an inquiry process.

The reality of different cultural norms regarding cultural or national criticisms is also a limitation of this study. Some participants may have been uncomfortable noting problematic representations of their culture in the children's books they read. Another cultural norm to consider is that of textual authority. Some participants might have belonged to a belief system that is hesitant to criticize an author or a text. Another limitation of the study was the difficulty of accessing children's literature that is representative of a student's home country in a timely manner. Because participants attending focus groups all read different texts, the process of transaction, in the traditional reader response framework, was limited to each reader's interaction with their assigned text without the opportunity to negotiate other readings of the text against their own as they would have done if they were engaging in a shared discussion of textual meaning. I also did not have the opportunity to teach participants how to use evidence to support their understanding of a text, which is a key part of a reader response approach to literature.

In some instances, multiple participants read the same book, allowing me to observe different readings of the same text. The different participants' reactions helped me understand the ways the books were or were not a resource for me to learn about culture. In the case of individual readings, I lacked enough information to draw a conclusion about the book's cultural authenticity or future classroom value as a way for students to start conversations about their nation or culture. Having more readings of individual texts would

allow for more generalizations about a book. Having only one participant reading many of the books limited any conclusions I was able to draw about a particular book.

Chapter 4: Participant Voices and Teacher Reflection

This chapter summarizes and describes the data I collected. I will start with an overview of each participants' written responses to the text in the form of questionnaires, followed by descriptions their contributions in focus groups and interviews. Finally I will discuss each book in terms of thematic responses from participants.

I faced some challenges to data collection. During the spring of 2018, I taught the advanced-level course at Southwest University Intensive English Program (SWUIEP), so I was unable to collect data from that group of students because of ethical considerations regarding coercion. The enrollment in the academic bridge level was also low. I was able to recruit four out of nine eligible students. During the 2018 SWUIEP summer session, there were only four students in a combined advanced and academic bridge course, two of whom only attended for four of the eight weeks. I was fortunate that all four students participated in the study. The other challenge I faced in data collection was health-related. I was very ill with hyperemesis (extreme morning sickness) during the months of April and May, making it difficult to conduct interviews and focus groups. I had to cancel one interview because I needed to receive IV fluids in the emergency room, and I had to end two interviews sooner than I would have preferred because I had intense nausea and could not continue further.

Mexico: Valerie, Edgar, and Darlene

Three participants from Mexico read the book *Funny Bones: Posada and His day of the Dead Calavera*, written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. The book explains how the popular Calaveras (skeletons) that are associated with Día De Los Muertos (day of the dead) developed by presenting a biography of the artist José Guadalupe Posada.

Participants from Mexico displayed three types of responses, reviewers, readers, and language-learners in different ways. As reviewers, the three participants commented on how the text was culturally appropriate, accurate, and useful to teach about their culture. The participants' readers responses included their aesthetic or emotive responses. Finally, as language-learners, participants' responses showed how they felt about the use of both English and Spanish to describe their culture.

Valerie responded to *Funny Bones* as an accurate portrayal of her culture, a good way for outsiders (English teachers) to learn about her and her culture. On the other hand, as a reviewer, Edgar's response to the text was different regarding accuracy and representation. He saw *Funny Bones* as a way to understand a little bit more about where he comes from, and did not see it as inaccurate, but he evaluated that the book as too narrow to be used to help teachers get to know him as an individual. His response illustrated the value of allowing students to say "no" to a text as a representation of themselves because it reminds the teacher not to essentialize their students by nationality.

Darlene had both a readers and reviewers response with more emotive and aesthetic ones. She paid more careful attention to the story of the book's biographical subject, Don Posada, and made connections to memories of seeing his work displayed in museums. Darlene's response to the text revealed an evolution in her identity. As a young girl, Darlene lived in Columbia and moved to northern Mexico. Then, in her late adolescence she moved to Mexico City. There, *Dia De Los Muertos* became more of a part of her. Her response as language-learner demonstrates how her sensitivity to language is evoked when she explains how incomplete translations from the book's glossary are for the Spanish words used in the book. She wants the wants the readers to "feel" the language, something beyond what a

glossary can provide for the reader. This longing for feeling speaks to the potential power of a text to create a response beyond educating the reader of facts about an artist's life. What follows below is a detailed overview of each participants multiple responses to the test.

Valerie had me as an instructor two times as a SWUIEP student. She often visited me during office hours, and I provided extra support to her as a student. In one of my classes she did a presentation on *Funny Bones*, the book she also read as part of the study. It was her initial liking of the book, as revealed in her earlier class with me, that led to its selection in the study as the book from Mexico. I perhaps knew Valerie the best of all the participants in the study. I have had many other students from the region of Mexico she came from and with my background as a New Mexican we have several cultural overlaps.

Over all Valerie's reviewer response was positive to her book. Her questionnaire demonstrated a happy response to the text as well as a huge improvement in her academic writing since taking my class. Her sentences were complete and thoughtful, and her tone was academic.

According to Valerie, the book *Funny Bones* is about families staying happy in the face of difficulty, and the November first and second celebration of deceased loved ones during *Día De Los Muertos*. She reported feeling happy as she read this book about her culture,

I felt happy reading about my culture in English. Also, it was easier for me to understand because I already know about this tradition and if I didn't understand a word I can figure it out with the context and with the pictures that the author shows in the book.

Besides feeling happy, she reported enthusiasm about how the book shared something she found interesting about her culture.

Valerie also had a language-learner response. She recommended the book for ESL teachers to learn about Mexican culture. However, it is not clear if she felt the book is representative of her; in response to this particular question, she wrote,

If someone wants to understand who I am, this book can help them to understand about the history of Mexico because it talks about the “Mexican Revolution” and some important leaders during that time.

It is not explicit from the questionnaire if she connected an understanding of Mexican history to an understanding of herself.

In her reviewer response, Valerie had small criticisms as well as praise for the book. Valerie had some recommendations for changes despite her otherwise glowing reception of the book. She suggested that the author include a better description of what Mexico City is like, as well as an explanation of the altars families create for their deceased loved ones. Finally, she made a general recommendation to change some pictures and to add pictures of *funny tombs*, which she did not explain. In the focus group, Valerie introduced her book and described it as telling the story of *the most famous artist in Mexico and how he survived along his life*. She then told about *Día De Los Muertos* in more detail and connected it to her own memories:

We used to go to the cemetery and clean the tombs, some people in their houses put the pictures and altars of the persons who’s dead.... put bread called pan de muerto with skulls, also the put flowers and sugar skulls make like this, and the paper cut outs like this, and they when they go to the cemetery some people play music. Some of the tradition is to make favorite food for the dead.

In describing why she liked the book, she included that it gives information about history and important leaders in the Mexican Revolution. She recommended the book to people who want to learn about her culture. Mina and Joe both commented on their own connections to Mexico. Mina saw the Disney film *Coco* that is centered on *Día De Los Muertos*, and Joe talked about his mother who lives in Texas and traveled to Mexico. Joe and Mina looked through *Funny Bones*. Mina asked questions regarding traditional food and clothing. Valerie explained that the pan de muerto and sugar skulls were traditional foods and that people dressed in black for *Día De Los Muertos*. She also said that there was a carnival associated with *Día De Los Muertos* and that marigold flowers were sold:

Some places in the country people like to go out of the ceremony and do a carnival, parade but a lot of shops where they sell. You are going to find everywhere selling this kinds of flowers.

Edgar's response as a reader was highly focused on sharing his aesthetic experience. He described his experience of the book as nice and entertaining. Like Valerie, he enjoyed the book. He reported focusing mostly on the images and having his mind refreshed about *cultural facts*. Unlike Valerie, he did not have language-learner readers' response that he didn't comment how it was interesting to read about his culture in English; rather, he was accustomed to doing so. This speaks to the study's setting in a border state where there are many cultural overlaps with Mexico. Edgar shared that the book was good to show *a little piece* of Mexican culture. Edgar said something that was echoed in other data that is salient to one of the major findings of the study, that is, that a children's book can not capture an individual. He said that it told about a *tradition, but it won't show them about me*. This shows the distinction that Edgar made between himself and *Día De Los Muertos*, the same tradition

to which Valerie showed a deeper connection. Edgar praised the author's telling of Don Lupe, the artist who created many of the images associated with *Día De Los Muertos*, and did not make any recommendations for changes in the book. Finally, he praised the book's illustrations.

I began an interview with Edgar asking him to tell me what his book, *Funny Bones*, was about. He briefly summarized that the book was about an artist who represented some important events in Mexico and drew the *Calaveras* (skeletons).

When reading, Edgar said he paid attention to the dates and how they related to important events and Mexico. He also paid attention to the different cities the artist lived in. He said that when he was in school he remembered learning about Day of the Dead and doing some celebrations in classrooms and also choosing an important person and telling their story. He did not have any questions come to mind while he was reading. He said he knew most of the traditions in Mexico and just saw the story told from a perspective that he appreciated. Like in his questionnaire, he felt the book was too narrow to tell about him because it focused on one tradition. He didn't think one book could ever capture an individual:

Edgar: I don't-- I mean, it's more like, a personal question so if I want someone to get to know me I wouldn't say like, a book will tell a story about me.

Monique : Right.

Edgar: That book is gonna tell a story about where I am coming from as my culture and it's just a little tiny piece of it. It's maybe the piece that many people know in the world about my country which is one tradition. But I wouldn't say one book can describe who I am as a person or where I am coming from. Maybe it's telling a story of a little piece of my

traditions, but it's just one tiny thing and there's like, a whole puzzle to it that you can learn about.

The idea of a book being too narrow will be further discussed in Chapter Five and is part of my major finding that there is too much individual variation to rely on responses to children's literature to gain cultural insight.

I asked if this would be a good book for an ESL teacher who didn't know anything about Mexico to start with, Edgar said yes, if they wanted to know about traditions and the history of the art related to Day of the Dead. Edgar expressed that he liked the book and liked seeing his culture in it:

I thought it was fun. It was a fun reading. It's kind of like, nice to see a piece of you or culture like, in a book actually a story to maybe kids from other countries.

After Ellen talked about her book during the focus group, I asked Edgar if he had any questions for Ellen. He did not, but surprised me with a question about the Ellen's book's author, wondering if it was the same author of the book he read. I explained that all the books were independent. He further asked if his author was from the US. We did not have *Funny Bones*, with us and I couldn't remember where the author was from, so I asked him where he thought the author was from and if it made a difference. Edgar thought that where the author was from mattered:

Edgar: Well, I guess if you're trying to talk about a culture, it's like me trying to describe the American culture, it's gonna be my perspective of it....What I have lived here, what my experiences here, which is completely different from her--

Ellen: Mmhm, of course.

Edgar: For example.

Ellen: Ok.

Edgar: Yeah.

Ellen: So, if you ask me and you ask her, we're gonna have two different opinions about the American experience.

Monique: Right. So, what do you think your book, I don't actually know the answer off the top of my head if the writer is American or not, what do you think?

Edgar: It seems to be from someone not from Mexico, I can tell that. Maybe it's from someone trying to describe a story of Mexican, what's the name...

As it turns out the author and illustrator of *Funny Bones* is from Mexico.

The conversation then turned to my question about using children's books in ESL classrooms. Edgar mentioned it needed to relate to him. In the case of a book about *Dia De Los Muerto* she didn't feel connected, but he said, for example, if he was to talk about a touristic place as he had in another class, he'd enjoy it. Edgar did not feel like he connected to the text to the same extent as Valerie, but yet, he saw value in connecting the student's home culture to work in class.

Darlene is also a current graduate student from Mexico. She took my class as an academic bridge student. In my writing class that was closely equivalent to a composition 101 class, I struggled to feel like I was challenging her or giving her adequate critical feedback because her writing was outstanding. Through her in-class writing, I learned that she moved from Columbia to Mexico as a child. When selecting a book for her, I asked if she had a preference between books from the two countries, and she did not state a preference, so she also read *Funny Bones*. I was not surprised by her thoughtful and thorough response in the questionnaire. Like both Edgar and Valerie, Darlene expressed a positive response to the

book. The book is essentially a biography of Don Guadalupe Posada, an artist made famous for his etchings and political cartoons. Darlene was familiar with the artist and recognized the pictures represented in the book. Her connection to the art and artist in the book echoes Valerie's connection to the tradition of *Día De Los Muertos*. Darlene wrote, *I could also feel the smells and hear the sounds he describes*. Edgar, however, did not reveal a similar level of connection in his reading in his questionnaire.

Using the categories I established in Chapter Three, Darlene's responses tended to be more as a readers, that is, aesthetic and emotive. In specific response to the question "How did it feel to use English to read about your country?" Darlene wrote:

it was both a little strange and interesting at the same time seeing that a book about an artist from my country was depicted in a book in the US, even when his last name called my attention. I was intrigued before I knew that the author is actually from my country, and that his father is from the US. I am almost bilingual, so I read the book in English without translating, but I read the words in Spanish. I think I enjoyed the book because I could do that.

Unlike Edgar, who felt accustomed to reading about his culture, Darlene, like Valerie, found it interesting. She commented on the author's status as an insider to her country, something neither Valerie or Edgar mentioned in their questionnaires. In a focus group, Edgar said he didn't think the author was Mexican. The book has words in both English and Spanish, and again, this was not mentioned in Valerie's or Edgar's questionnaires, while the issue of translation and the presence of L1 (student's first language) came up in other questionnaires and interviews.

Darlene saw *Funny Bones* in a similar light as Edgar regarding it being useful to teach American ESL teachers about Mexican culture. Darlene wrote that the book showed *only one aspect of the huge culture of my country...The book could be a good starting point to keep investigating about my country, but not the only reference*. Similar to Valerie's response, it is not clear if Darlene saw the book as specifically insightful to her. Rather, she focused on the artists and the history of her country:

It can help people notice that my country has very talented and well-known artists, it could help them learn a little bit about one very important moment of my country's history, it could show them aspects of a very important tradition celebrated in some regions of my country, but it would not show them that that tradition is not a wide-nation one, or that many people in my country do not know who the art depicted in the book belongs to.

In this excerpt she did not assert anything about herself as an individual, as Edgar did. Importantly, she shared that *Día De Los Muertos* is not a universal celebration in Mexico, a different impression from what Valerie gave.

In the case of *Funny Bones*, Duncan Tonatiuh is both the author and illustrator. Darlene recommended that the book make it clearer that it is historical and that people in Mexico no longer dress as depicted in the book and reiterate that *Día De Los Muertos* is not celebrated across the entire country. While she commented that she really liked the illustrations, she noted that they felt like

stereotypical depictions of people from my country. That is why it would be important to tell that the illustration show people from the past.

Given the opportunity to write any other thoughts she had on the book, Darlene said, *I really like the idea of seeing my country and my culture depicted in a children's book in a language different from my own, because it can show people from other cultures one aspect of mine. I understand that the author want to show that he knows the culture and that a part of him also belongs to this culture, but it would be very nice to see that he contributes to spread the word about our fantastic culture and traditions, and the great legacy they represent for the human race, but at the same time it would be wonderful to help people avoid cultural stereotypes.*

Notice how indirectly and politely she wrote, with phrases such as *I understand, but it would be very nice, and but at the same time it would be wonderful*. She was happy with the conceptual level of the book depicting a Mexican artist and sharing a culture of which the writer and illustrator is a part, but she seemed somewhat disappointed with the representations depicted in the book, particularly of how people were dressed. She takes pride in Mexican culture and traditions, describing them as *fantastic* and representing a *great legacy ... for the human race*. Her request to the author was to *help people avoid cultural stereotypes*.

During focus groups Darlene demonstrated a curiosity about her peer's experiences. When she met with Yani she was interested in learning more about the *doko* and daily life in Yani's culture:

Yani: Some big. They make themselves so they use the kind of bamboo shoots.

Darlene: So--

Yani: Young bamboo shoots and they--

Darlene: Yeah.

Yani: Make them some.

Darlene: So, your mom did yours?

Yani: No, no, we bought, yeah, kind of people, certain kind of people only make this kind of things and they sell.

Darlene: Ok, ok.

Yani: Yeah.

Darlene: But do they still sell them?

Yani: Yeah, they still--

Darlene: They still do that.

Yani: You know, they still in my home, they use doko to carry the cow dung, right?

Darlene: Oh, ok.

Yani: So, yeah.

Darlene: Mmhm.

Darlene, as in her questionnaire, was the most detailed in her response to *Funny Bones*. She began by explaining that the book was about an artist, which was consistent with Edgar and Valerie's retelling of the book. Darlene, though, pointed out more details. She began by pointing out a specific illustration of a skeleton called *Catrina*. This figure, she explained, was representative of Spanish Colonial women who Darlene described to Yani as follows:

Darlene: Coming from Europe and they would walk through the streets very, you know, poised and looking down to people--

Yani: Oh, yeah.

Darlene: (laughs)

Yani: (laughs)

Darlene: To the indigenous people, obviously, and the Creoles. But this book from Duncan Tonatiuh which, I'll tell you a little bit about the name caught my attention because that's a, that's a Aztec name and it means child so I was surprised that Duncan Tonatiuh would write a book like this but then I figure out white-- why. So, he is basically telling us the story of Posada, when he was born, it's like a biography?

Darlene noticed the author's Aztec name and even knew its English translation. She touched on Mexico's colonial past, similar to how Bliss mentioned it, and indigenous people when talking about Venezuelan culture. Darlene also gave a more detailed retelling of the artist Joan Posada's life:

Darlene: But he does that by using Posada's own work and in here, he's telling us that he was the sixth child of eight children?

Yani: Oh, yeah.

Darlene: He was born in Aguascalientes which is a very small state in Mexico, and that's his brother teaching him how to read and write, and he noticed that he loved to paint--

Yani: Oh.

Darlene: To copy all the drawings around, he was really good, so his brother helping go to school to be an engraver, lithographer and he learned that, you know, how in those times they, they were apprentices for a specific job sometimes so he would go with this person who had this workshop and he learned how to do this, all this stuff. So, he was called Lupe, Guadalupe is, you know, like the name of the virgin. Many kids are called Guadalupe in Mexico so they would call him Lupe and that's the way he was known,

Darlene also noted that the book's author was also its illustrator and then made another observation related to indigenous people regarding the illustrations:

Darlene: Which is very interesting. He does-- it's show-- you can see here the illustrations look, like, very Mexican?

Yani: Mmhm.

Darlene: Like the, more like the Mayan, I think? I'm not sure but it's interesting how he makes, makes the indigenous groups.

Darlene chose another illustration to explain to Yani and me. It was a political cartoon featuring skeletons climbing on top of each other, demonstrating the level of ambition of some of those running for office. Darlene used this picture to explain a significant event in Don Posada's life. When some of the officials he drew in his cartoon were elected, he had to flee to another town where he then met his wife and had a child. Darlene said that Don Posada moved again, later, when his city was devastated by a flood. These were details that Darlene didn't know, despite her previous knowledge of the artist:

Darlene: But then a flood in the city called Leon--

Yani: Oh, yeah.

Darlene: Destroyed most of the city, I didn't know this so, I know this artist because I, he is very well known--

Yani: Mmhm.

Darlene: And I visit his museum in Aguascalientes, but I didn't know that all this, you know, these details about his life. So, he lived in Guanajuato, didn't know that, and then he moved to Mexico City after the big flood, started working there, and started doing some other kind of work.

Darlene explained that in Mexico City, Don Posada started making prints that were available to the masses, continued his political cartoons, and finally started doing more work related to the day of the dead. She also noted how the author used Spanish and Aztec words:

Darlene: Cempasuchil? It is not Spanish. (laughs) This is Meshika, the language of the Aztecs. Cempasuchil, it's the marigold--

Yani: Marigold flower.

Darlene: Flowers, uh huh and pan de muerto, you know? The bread of the death. Alfeniques, which are the little skulls in here--

Yani: Yeah.

Darlene: These are sugar skull. And some other words he's telling us, papel picado? You know these paper dolls.

Darlene talked about the creation of little funny poems, *calaveras literarias*, that were written along with the etchings of skeletons. Some of them were humorous—for example, in one of the *calaveras literarias* there was one lady skeleton telling a gentleman skeleton that he was handsome, but too skinny for her taste. Other poems poked fun at abusive politicians. Darlene explained the different equipment that was used to create the prints and how it worked.

Darlene continued to explain how Don Posada's art evolved with the revolution, becoming less comical and more morbid. She described the revolution as a time in Mexican history when families and factions fought against each other, not just the Spanish colonial powers. She noticed some details, such as a picture of a man with blue eyes who she said must be Spanish or Creole. She also pointed out a picture of man wearing sandals called huaraches and a large hat. She called this image very stereotypical.

The book ends with an imagining of what Posada's artwork might look like today. Darlene commented that it already might be behind the times and that today's calaveras, *maybe they would be holding their iPhones or something. (laughs)*. Darlene's final comment in her retelling of the book is a mention of the book's glossary of Spanish terms.

I asked Darlene how the book was different from her, and she said that the manner of dress are things she would never wear. She did continue to say that she used to dress up like *Catrina* and paint her face when she was a teacher to teach kids about the tradition. She also said that when she moved from northern Mexico to Mexico City she learned about *Día De Los Muertos* and began to adopt it as part of her life:

I have embraced the idea that it is dedication to the death and that we set a path for them to come back and visit, I mean, I know they're not coming or anything, I just like the tradition, you know? It doesn't mean that I'm expecting my ghost, my family ghosts to come and just drink and eat the food, not even the spirit. But I identify myself with many of the drawings because I grew up with them, and I grew up with them because at the time, I was 18, I moved to Mexico City, before that I lived in the North of Mexico but in there, they don't have that tradition there. So, I didn't know a lot about the Day of the Dead but then when we moved to Mexico City, that's in the center of Mexico, basically, part of the southeast where the tradition is really, really strong so, I started just, you know, adopting the tradition myself.

She made a point to show that not all of Mexico shares in the intensity of the celebration. Take, for example, Edgar, who said he didn't connect to it at all, and Valerie who strongly identified with the tradition. This shows how differently one element of culture is understood and practiced among individuals.

I asked Darlene what she thought should be changed and she said the author should give more context to the historical period of the book so that it was clear that fashions have changed and that what people wear today in Mexico is different than what was shown in the majority of the book.

Her response to my final question, *how does it feel to use English to talk about your culture?* elicited a long response that will be carefully examined and further discussed in Chapter Five. She said:

Yeah, it's a, it's a unbalanced feeling? Is that correct? Because I like the idea of sharing the culture, and having other people know about it, and if it's in their language, I think they will understand better, but in the other hand, I, like I said, it would be nice to, for people to understand the words that are in Spanish? So, he explains them but maybe, and there's a glossary, but maybe if he could show, you know, like, I don't know if that's possible, but like, have the words that he's saying in Spanish here maybe, maybe have a little square on top and show exactly what it is because although it, the translation is here, some people might not know what a marigold flower is although there is-- they're the only one but in, you know like, if they take this book to a English speaking country that is not the States, they might not know what this flower is because I know that in, at least in the Southwest, they know what it is because in here we even have a marigold parade so they know what it is. But maybe also, explain, I don't know, I think that would take more space but cempasuchil is not a Spanish word either so, maybe explain that too. But again, I know it's a book and it has its limitation so, because of the space I'm not sure, but I would, I would, that's the way I feel. I feel, one hand, I feel like, really proud that something's been written about Mexico in English and in the other hand, I would like people to understand the words, all the words, not

just say, oh, this is Spanish, ugh, but also, feel, feel the language too (laughs) maybe.
(laughs)

In this, Darlene touched on the use of L1, particularly Spanish, in children's literature—something that also came up in discussions of *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. The use of L1, in this research, was most prominent in books from Latin America, though not exclusive to books from that region.

Darlene was the most expressive participants showing a lot of thought about her responses and a sensitivity to representations of language and culture.

Venezuela: Bliss, Ellen, and Fred

The three participants from Venezuela represented two distinct geographic locations, Caracas, the bustling capital where the book is set, and a rural town where things move slowly and everybody knows each other. Three participants' responses are reviewers' responses that focus on whether the book is authentic or not. In their evaluative response, they noticed and closely evaluated how the Spanish language is or is not authentically placed with a question of children as the implied readers of the texts

The use of Spanish both delighted and frustrated them in their readers' response. Their emotive and aesthetic reactions are mostly clearly seen in Bliss' eagerness to find every Spanish word and Ellen's disappointment about the use of Mexican Spanish in a Venezuelan context. In their reviewers' responses they were able to criticise the language issues and also displayed readers' responses that inauthentic use of Spanish interrupted their reading, more specifically, aesthetic responses. The use of Spanish caused their responses and both reviewers and readers to emerge. Talking about the book motivated and engaged the readers in a discussion reflecting just how complex authenticity is. More importantly, their response

support the conclusion that “you know it when you see it” and the importance of considering insider’s responses.

Three participants from Venezuela read *Roberto’s Trip to the Top*, by John Patterson Jr. and John Patterson Sr. and illustrated by Renato Alarcao. This book tells the story of Roberto, who is rewarded with a trip to the top of Mount Avila because he worked hard in school.

Bliss responded as a reader and a reviewer. As an evaluative reviewer, he comments on both the accuracies and inaccuracies in *Roberto’s Trip to the Top*; children as the intended audience; and finally, its appropriateness to teach about culture. In his reader’s response, Bliss expressed his emotive reaction to pictures and his longing for home. Finally, as a language-learner, Bliss showed enthusiasm about the use of Spanish in this book.

Bliss was a student in my academic bridge writing class. He is academically driven, articulate, and I was pleased that he consented to participate in my study. The book brought up feelings of nostalgia and memories of his uncle. In the story, Roberto’s father has to work, so his uncle takes Roberto to the top of the mountain. Bliss was curious about the author’s’ inspiration to write about Venezuela and commented on the use of the words *pesos* and *tortillas*, which are not commonly used in Venezuela. He did not think the book was good to teach an American ESL teacher about his country, because the book is about Caracas, which he said is *not the real representative of Venezuela’s beauty*. Concerning the book offering insight specific to him, he responded

It is a useful background knowledge regarding the objects and experiences that I had in the past. I cannot say the same regarding the association of the characters with myself, mostly due to the economic and social differences between the main character and me.

The book offered some helpful information, but he recognized the differences between Roberto and himself.

Bliss met with Todd, a Japanese student for the focus group. He personally connected himself and then all Venezuelans with the text when Roberto goes with his uncle to the top of Mount Avila:

... personally my part, because I do have a-- we all do seem to act, we-- all Venezuelans, we all do seem to get along with our uncles, (laughs) we all do. Although, I think that is universal, if I'm not mistaken.

The connection initially appeared to be because there is something particular to himself and Venezuelans getting along with their uncles, but then Bliss considered that it might be something more universal.

He found the depiction of Caracas's barrios and the use of Spanish vocabulary as assets to the book.

Again, you can see the barrios, this is very emblematic image in, kind of like, when you see Rio de Janeiro, Brazil? When you see the favelas. This is very emblematic. And, also, many times they are using Spanish words, for example, here you can see the word papa which is father, papa.

I am not sure if Bliss realized that the illustrator is from Brazil, so it is interesting that he mentioned *favelas*. Bliss seemed impressed by the book's illustrations. He continued to emphasize the use of Spanish by showing Todd the different Spanish words in the text:

You have this, we also have for example, let me check, I'm trying to look for any Spanish words, let me check. This is for-- this is the telefetic, the tramway, this is the actually the base operation we function in Caracas. Let me look for another one, cerrada,

which means close. I'm trying to look for any one that is important, empleados, which mean workers, mostly. And, let me continue, and this.....Over here, "todos abordo," all aboard, all aboard, of course. Let me check, I'm looking for every single Spanish word as possible.

Mamá, which is mother,

He said that the use of Spanish words was interesting:

because, kind of like, introducing a bit of vocab to students who probably, or people who probably don't know much Spanish --

The use of Spanish was not without its problems. As mentioned in his questionnaire, Bliss took issue with the usage of Mexican words *tortilla* and *pesos*. Despite this, he still recommended the book for a few reasons, as explained below. This is different from his questionnaire, where he remarked that the book didn't show the true beauty of Venezuela.

Yes, yes. Now, if I could say that this is a good book to introduce to someone so they can learn about my country?...Yes...I would definitely do it. And for a little bit of context too because right now the situation in my country is a disaster, but it is good that if people are going to read about Venezuela, it's good that they read about it also outside of that context.... Outside of the political crisis, social crisis, and everything...And even more because this is something that every Venezuelan recognizes... In fact, I would dare to say that every Venezuelan goes to the big, Avilia, one point in their life.

I followed up with questions about Venezuelan politics in a follow-up interview with Bliss. The other participants from Venezuela did not mention the political crisis. Other differences between Bliss's response to the book included the mentioning *fresas con crema* (strawberries with cream), which Bliss spoke about as typical fare. Fred talked about them in his focus group as something rare and special.

In the focus group, Todd was surprised by the use of Spanish in Bliss's book. Bliss was very eager to share all the Spanish words with Todd during the focus group. Also, he noted that the author included a glossary at the end of the book:

Bliss: Oh, I forgot to mention, there's also, at the end, a part that actually explains what each Spanish words means. Here it is.

Todd: Oh, it looks like a dictionary. (laughs)

Bliss: Yeah, kind of a dictionary.

Todd: But, ok, yeah. I see, yes.

Bliss: Which was a pretty smart decision by the writer.

There will be further discussion of the use of Spanish and how it's translated within texts in Chapter Five.

Todd asked why everybody climbs up the mountain. Bliss explained that there are two ways up the mountain: to hike, which takes four to five hours, or to take the tram, which takes about 30 minutes. The advantage of hiking is seeing multiple views of the city as the trail zigzags up the mountain. Todd also asked Bliss what he recommends the author add, and it brought up a discussion about food and dialect.

Bliss: Yeah, definitely. I will, I will recommend the writer to maybe put some cuisine, some Venezuelan cuisine--

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Into it because Venezuelan cuisine is not normal. It is actually pretty unique to the place.

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Unlike, for example, Japanese cuisine, which is famous worldwide, for example, sushi, or something.

Todd: Well, only the specific ones yes. (laughs)

Bliss: Ok, only specific ones.

Todd: Yeah, but, yeah.

Bliss: I also know, what it's called? Now I'm talking about Japanese culture, sorry.

(laughs)

Monique: That's ok! You can talk about Japanese culture.

Bliss: What was the question, sorry?

Todd: So, if you were a writer--

Bliss: A writer.

Todd: What do you want to add to this book?

Bliss: Maybe a bit more of culture and cuisine--

Todd: Yes.

Bliss: And, maybe a bit of slang, a slang--

Todd: Ok.

Bliss: Some Venezuelan slang that we use in there.

Todd: Hm.

Bliss: We slap it in there.

Todd: I see.

Bliss: Yes, because Venezuelan's like, important to know that the Spanish and Latin America, they're not the same--

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Exactly, I mean, we can still talk to each other but we-- they each one have their own local varieties.

Todd: Mmhm.

Bliss: Doesn't Japan, for example, have local varieties of Japanese?

Todd: Well, if I go to south part I can't understand the Japanese, yeah.

Bliss: (laughs)

Todd: Because each section, you have different tone and some tone, total different.

Bliss: I see.

The discussion of regional variation of dialect is a reminder to ESL teachers of the diversity of students and serves as a cautionary tale against generalizing Latin American Spanish speakers and against seeing Japan as a monolith. Bliss was surprised by the variation in Japanese:

Bliss: (laughs) I'm actually, I was actually more surprised that each Japanese, like, Japanese parts had like, their different accent or different tongue or different vocabulary.

Todd: We can do complicated because Japanese is Japanese. It's like, a language and each person use the same words but still, they have different accent.

This brings up one of the moments that I interjected, asking Bliss if there was variation within Venezuela, which he confirms:

Monique: Is it similar in Venezuela? Would you say that people who live in Caracas speak differently than people who live in the countryside?

Bliss: Oh, yes, yes, absolutely.

From this focus group, both the participants and I were reminded of regional differences within countries with which we were unfamiliar. After the discussion of dialect,

the conversation moved to the diversity of wildlife in each country, and we all continued learning:

Bliss: Hm, well, for example, in this book, for example, there is kind of like a emphasis on birds, and you can see almost on every page you're gonna see birds--

Todd: Yes.

Bliss: Because Venezuela has a lot of species of birds.

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Is there, for example, an animal in Japan that is very characteristic of you?

Todd: I don't know the words in Jap-- English, but, usually we use, let's see, crane is very--

Bliss: Crane.

Todd: Japanese, in Japan, crane means very good meaning, so.

Monique: Yeah, they're birds with very long necks--

Bliss: Yeah.

Monique: And long legs.

Todd: but it's very good meaning.

Bliss: We call it, ganso.

Todd: Sorry?

Bliss: Ganso.

Todd: What mean ganso?

Bliss: Uh, it's crane in Spanish.

Todd: Ok, but this is very good meaning, yeah. Hm, Japan have specific birds Yeah, so, this one is Japanese bird but if I try to bring English...ok, I can't find a good one but anyways.

Bliss: Doesn't matter.

Todd: We have Japanese, yeah, specific birds. But yeah, as you know, Japanese shape is like this, it's like really long from North to South so each place have different characteristic, birds or foods, so it's kind of like, tons of biology, so.

This focus group proved enlightening to me as a researcher, as well as to the participants who learned about each other's countries using children's books as a starting point.

Displaying a reader's response, Bliss was most impressed with the book's illustrations, saying that they managed *to capture an essence of nature*. I inquired if there was anything specific about the illustrations, and he commented on the color and form:

The color, and the form, and how they actually drew the characters, because the way they drew the character was actually, how do you say it, like, simplistic and curve, in a curvy sense like, not as symmetric and that's actually, I think, a good way to actually capture the Venezuelan.

The story was less impressive to him. He described the story as a bit cliché, saying how typical it was for kids to go up the mountain with family and friends. This is consistent with what I heard from Ellen, but contrasted with what I heard from Fred. Despite thinking of the story as cliché, Bliss said it brought back memories of climbing Mount Avila as well as of his uncle, who he admitted he didn't pay much attention to as a kid. He also mentioned

that he related to Roberto, whose father was unable to spend time with him because he worked.

Roberto goes with an uncle, his uncle because his father could not go with him because his father had to take care of the store. (laughs) I actually relate to that because I don't see my father that much but that's another topic for another day.

Bliss made a deeper personal connection to the text about father–son relationships, but then redirected the conversation by saying it was a *topic another day*.

In the focus group, he had commented about the importance of uncles and said that it was perhaps universal. I followed up on this during his interview, and Bliss gave an example of an Uncle standing in the place of a father. He then talked about his own uncle, who he said he didn't listen to as a kid, but now as an adult realized was important:

Bliss: Call it uncle but it's kind of like a father to you and at least, in my experience, I used to have an uncle that, now that I'm noticing, now that I'm thinking about the things that he used to mention, I did not pay much attention because, of course, I was just a kid and I did not care that much but--

Monique: Mmhm.

Bliss: I noticed that, hey, that it's actually most true in what he's saying.

Monique: What your uncle was saying?

Bliss: Yes.

Similar to when the topic of father–son relationships was brought up, Bliss didn't go into detail, and instead of sharing what his uncle was saying, he responded with a simple *Yes*. This is a moment in researching where I could have pressed but chose not to out of respect for what I sensed of the participant's boundaries.

Bliss was an enthusiastic participant who felt connected with the text he read and was eager to share his responses with me and h Todd, his peer,

Ellen, also from Venezuela, was not in any of my previous classes. In her questionnaire, she wrote that she felt excited when she started reading the book because of the accuracy of the drawings pertaining to the landscape of Caracas. This shows her reader's response. *Roberto's Trip to the Top* brought back memories of trips to the tramway she took as a child and then later with a boyfriend. Her response as an language- learner and reader, is evident when she said reading about her country in English felt nice and that she was *surprised to find a children's book in English about my country*. She did not think the book offered enough information to teach an American ESL teacher about her culture, but she did relate to it because of the importance of family in the book. She wanted to know why the authors used Mexican vocabulary (*pesos* and *tortillas*) and wrote *Bad: The use of Mexican does not help*. The use of Mexican vocabulary comes up again in focus groups and interviews with both Ellen and Bliss.

During the focus group, Ellen commented on how she would change some of the Spanish words, but primarily she focused on one element that she related to in the book:

This book, I will change a few words that I already mentioned. Oh, there's one thing that I forgot I really like, I will say it relate to my culture, the mainly is about family? Family's a really big concept. So, the fact that Roberto was really worried, well, not really worried but like, sad that his father didn't like, wouldn't come because he was working. I think that I can relate with that, I will be like, I really want to share this moment with my family mainly, no friends, no like, other things, family first.

This reinforced the importance of family that she mentioned in her questionnaire.

The conversation then turned to my question about using children's books in ESL classrooms. Mostly they thought it was a good idea, but Edgar mentioned it needed to relate to him. In the case of a book about *Día De Los Muerto* she didn't feel connected, but he said, for example, if he was to talk about a touristic place as he had in another class, he'd enjoy it. Ellen also said that it needed to be more open so that the motivation increased. She gave an example when she was asked to talk about the government structure in her country:

that's really bad, I was like, ok, no I don't want to talk about this and then I use more like, touristic places? And it was really excited to talk about that at that time about my country like, how many natural parks we have...

Ellen mentions the natural landscape of her country was excited to share about it.

Ellen was least impressed with the book and found the inaccuracies disappointing to an extent that it nearly ruined her reading experience. This shows how her reviewer's response helped to build her reader's response. Her reviewer response of inaccuracy contributed to her reader's response of sadness.

Fred demonstrated both reviewer and language-learner responses to *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. My relationship with Fred was more as a mentor than a teacher. He was a SWUIEP graduate who returned to participate in the SWUIEP fellows program. In the SWUIEP Fellows program, he visited my class frequently and assisted me in leading group activities. Fred, displayed a reviewer's response when he felt connected while reading the story, because it reminded him of his own childhood and some of the difficulties he faced. In his mind, Fred pictured:

moments in the kitchen with my mom before going to school when she prepacked my lunchbox while my dad will get the car ready to take me school before work. What also came

to mind was the obstacles that Roberto had to go through to enjoy a moment in his beautiful city. This is something that people who live in “barrios” like Roberto who do not have the chance to visit places due to the time constraint that parents have.

Like Bliss, he indicated differences in class and work constraints within Venezuela. It seems that Fred related to Roberto’s obstacles and just like Bliss and Ellen, noted the use of the word *tortilla* in the text:

I wonder if people in Caracas, Venezuela eat tortillas or if it is something that the author made up in the story. We have one type of bread that we usually eat and it is called “pan Frances,” or French bread.

As revealed in a focus group, Fred is from a town near the Columbian border and coastal area of Venezuela. Because of this regional difference, he was open to the possibility that people in Caracas eat tortillas, but also wondered if the authors made it up. From the responses of Ellen and Bliss, it is fairly clear that tortillas are not the norm in Venezuela.

When prompted with the question “*How did it feel to use English to read about your country?*” Fred did not give a clear answer on his feelings. Rather, he wrote about the use of Spanish words within the text. He did not provide specific examples, but after looking at the texts, I noticed food names, *mamá*, as well as a sprinkling of other words in Spanish. This will be discussed in more detail in the write-up of Bliss and Todd’s focus group and again in Chapter Five.

Fred believed that *Roberto’s Trip to the Top* would be a good book to teach an American ESL teacher about Venezuela, because it describes the traditions of Venezuelans—for example what breakfast is like. It is not clear if Fred thought the book would help someone understand him. He qualifies that the book,

may help them feel how it is to come from Venezuela, and how hard it is to enjoy the beauty of his own country of birth. This might not help them because not all the illustrations depict the reality of Venezuela or the things that people experience in the “barrios” or slums in the outer rims of big cities such as the ones found in Caracas.

This may indicate that he connected to the specialness of Roberto’s trip to the top, something that Bliss and Ellen both recounted as childhood memories. Concerning the illustrations, he showed a difference in opinion from Bliss, who thought they were one of the stronger elements of the book. This may be because Fred is more sensitive to “barrios” or slums in the outer rims of big cities such as the ones found in Caracas because of his current work in public health in low-income portions of the city SWUIEP is in.

Fred met with Cyrus from Burkina Faso to discuss his book in a focus group. He began this focus group with an overview of his book, *Roberto’s Trip to the Top*. Like Bliss, he talked about *barrios* and the social problems like high crime rates and poverty that many face in the *barrios*. Fred did not distance himself from the *barrios* the same way Bliss did:

Fred: And most of them commit a lot of crimes and things like that because they wanna survive, they want food and things like that but most of these people live in really on the, hills?

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: Of Caracas, so. An interesting thing about the book is while I was reading it, I saw that it really-- I felt connected at home because I, I saw how Roberto's mom, which is the kid--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: At the start of the book, he, he's the one who has been working hard, to try to study hard and get his good grades so that his mom and dad can reward him--

His connection to the character started with the maternal relationship and a craving for the food Roberto's mother was preparing in the book's opening scene. Cyrus picked up on Fred's reading experience:

Fred: His mom also gave him-- packed him food that I really feel familiar with and one of the foods that I enjoy hearing about was empanadas which are like, a corn dough that are stuffed with ground beef--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: And-- but that's one of the foods that I remember every morning eating as a kid so.

Cyrus: (laughs)

Fred: (laughs) Yeah.

Cyrus: You were missing the food when you were reading this? (laughs)

Fred: Oh yeah, I miss my food. I was hungry when I was reading it too--

Fred described feeling like he was actually there, even though he's never been to Caracas. The landscape and wildlife impacted him and his reading. He remarked about the national bird, which appears in the book. Bliss had also noted the importance of birds throughout the story. Unlike both Bliss and Ellen, Fred shared this observation:

...it was interesting because it's like, most people who live in this communities and neighborhoods, they don't have the time to really go and explore nature--

From the data from Ellen and Bliss, I had assumed that a trip up Mount Avila was almost a guaranteed experience for Venezuelans. Fred's perspective shaped my own reading

of the book to understanding the trip up the mountain as a very special event for Roberto, rather than something that all kids do. Another difference between Bliss and Fred came up regarding strawberries. Fred said:

... he enjoy strawberries with his uncle which is really rare for people in my country to have really amazing fruits like this, like strawberries-

Bliss talked about *fresas con crema* as a typical food while Fred talked about them being rare. This could be a class or regional difference.

Fred explained the disappointment Roberto felt and how he was still able to capture some memories of his trip to share with his father.

Fred: Which, which wasn't fun for him, he was always-- he was disappointed, probably the whole time because his dad was not with him and after this happened, that was a big thing, so, he just-- at the end of the day, they were gonna leave but then he remembered that one of his souvenirs sells the postal cards with pictures and then he told the camera guy to take a picture of them--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: With the landscape behind them so that he can prove his dad that, that was, that's how beautiful it was to go there. Then when he came back, he, well he, he was actually remembering all the people he met, all the people he saw during his trip with his uncle and he enjoyed it so much. And then after that, he show his dad the picture and his dad was happy and-- but still he wants to come back--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: And be able to do it with his dad one day.

This passage illustrates another example of the significance of the Venezuelan landscape, as well as family relationships, as demonstrated in *Roberto's Trip to the Top*.

Fred said that the use of Spanish made him feel connected to the book, particularly the word *barrios*, which means “neighborhoods.” He said that he thought the word was more typical to Venezuela and perhaps to the Dominican Republic and this enriched his reading experience. I expected him to bring up the use of *tortilla* and *peso*, since he had mentioned it in his questionnaire and because the other Venezuelan participants mentioned it in focus group and interview settings, but he did not.

Fred thought the book was a good resource for teachers to learn about Venezuelan culture:

I think I enjoy the book and it was really educating for me too. And I think, I recommend this book for everybody who wants to learn from my country and professors or teachers who are teaching kids about other countries? I think this is an excellent book to have in the class or--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: And also, would teach the instructor to be able to recognize clues or things that they may not know about--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: The country of interest, so, yeah.

From his overview of the book, I can see that Fred was enthusiastic about its use in sharing his culture. Unlike the other participants in the study from Venezuela, I learned that Fred was not from Caracas. Fred explained that he was from a small town in a coastal area

near the Colombian border. He described his town as a place where *everybody knows each other*. He summarized the differences:

I think the difference is, is that he lived in a really busy environment at the same time, probably in one of the dangerous places in Venezuela because there is a lot of crime and a lot of insecurity.

I asked how it felt to use English to talk about culture. His language-learner response was thoughtful and compelling, and Cyrus showed agreement:

Monique: So, how does it feel, using English, to speak to each other about your country?

Fred: It's, it is interesting because we are from different countries but still we were able to communicate and really feel connected because we both came from hardships? And that make us more understand each other in the sense that, we may have probably had the same childhood and we may have the same situations where we compare our people with the people that we now live in here and so, the system changes for us but we still, we're trying to adapt to a new system and then we kind of compare how we left from our country, to the system that we grew up in here and then we kind of say, oh, wow, there is a lot of changes that have happened in my life now. My diet has changed, my way of dressing has changed, my way of thinking has changed. So, probably now, you change your behaviors, you change how you used to be, and so those kind of things are what makes us to connect in somehow because coming from those probably underrepresented regions make us be alike and even though we're from different probably away from the countries that we grew up with, they are really away and far away, even almost like, the whole-- you have to travel the whole way around--

Cyrus: (laughs) Yeah.

Fred deeply connected with his text and with his peers during the focus group. He is a thoughtful reader and is eager to learn and share around culture.

China: Joe and Kevin

The participants from China responded as reviewers, readers, and language-learners. The participants in this study responded, in a similar way students in other classes did to *A New Years Reunion*. With overwhelming happiness, students seem to say “yes” this is real, this is what it means to be Chinese. Unlike *Funny Bones*, or *Roberto’s Trip to the Top*, there was no debate about the book’s authenticity. In their reviewer responses, participants were unanimous in their determination of this books cultural authenticity and usefulness to teach about Chinese culture. Even though Joe and Kevin practiced different local cultures in China, both students identified with the book and felt it was authentic.

Demonstrating their reader’s response, participants connected deeply to the story and the love of family revealed in the relationship between the young girl and her father. Furthermore, the book caused Kevin to miss home, showing the degree that the book caused and emotional response. This book even caused an “aww” from a member in the focus group that proved to be a very critical reader. Not only did this book elicit a response from cultural insiders, it moved the hearts of those hearing the story second hand.

Joe sent an email in response to the writing prompt. His responses were puzzling, and as a teacher, my initial assessment was that he did not understand what he was being asked to do. As a researcher, I felt conflicted: the teacher part of me wanted to sit with him and help him answer the questions, while the researcher part wanted to work with the data as it was

presented so that it was more authentically representative of the student's reading response without my interference. Here is Joe's email:

hello:

check please

JOE 's homework

1, I read the story to know about the China new year's reunion.

2, I find the girl lose the new year's reunion.

3, what do girl want to give to her father?

I think it is a good book to learn China culture.

1, the book used "who you are" to express the subject.

2, I think the write need add the closing paragraph.

3, I don't think so.

3, the author through this story share China family's love and China culture.

Joe saw his participation as homework and requested politely that I *check please*. This indicated that he held me in the role of teacher instead of researcher. From the questionnaire, I was able to discern that the book is about the Chinese New Year, that he thought the book was good to learn about Chinese culture, that he thought the writer should add a closing paragraph, and that the story shared information about the love of families in China. When he wrote, *I find the girl lose the new year's reunion*, I inferred he was talking about the part of the story when the daughter loses the fortune coin she found in her rice ball. In the focus group, he used the term *reunion* when I think he meant *coin*. Joe asked: *What do girl want to give to her father?* I think he was referring to the part of the story where the girl finds the fortune coin and gives it to her father. While I can point to sections of the story he

referenced, his thoughts or opinions of the book were not clear. As a researcher and a teacher, Joe's response left me perplexed.

Like in his questionnaire, Joe was difficult to understand during the focus group, and I continued to wonder if he understood his book. Joe told the other participants that *A New Year's Reunion* is a good book to learn about Chinese culture. He emphasized the idea of love in the book:

family's love that is the young girl, need the family give the girl more love than the child need back some love I don't know. Get the family some thing love back. China family love. China culture.

He said *love* five times, indicating that he associated family love with Chinese culture and that he saw that idea conveyed through the book. This demonstrated an evaluative response, a sub theme of a reviewer's response, as well as a reader's response, because it speaks to the book's accuracy as well as emotive qualities.

His food-related answers demonstrated a confusion of story details that was also evident in his questionnaire. When asked by Mina if the book mentioned traditional food, he said that the food in his city was different. The way he responded caused me to wonder if he understood the question and if he understood the role of food in the book. He shared with Valerie and Mina that if someone finds the fortune coin (which he called *the reunion*) in the dumpling that *you are this year very happy*. The book does not mention dumplings; rather, the fortune coin is hidden in sticky rice balls. Joe differentiated his city in the south and the book's city in the north:

But my city doesn't have this culture. Shanghai city have more city. North city maybe I don't know. We eat dumplings, but never put the reunion in, maybe my grandfather did I don't know ... I never did this.

Joe had some of the details confused, but he clearly differentiated his experience living in Shanghai from the experiences in the book, so I am unsure how much of the book he did and did not understand.

Joe presented many challenges in analyzing and interpreting data because I could not discern his level of comprehension of *The New Year's Reunion*.

Kevin demonstrated all of the responses discussed in Chapter Three: A reviewer's, reader's, and language-learner's. Like Joe, he responded in the body of an email. He wrote that the book told the *truth of Chinese tradition*. He referred to the New Year as the spring festival, and after reading the book, he reported missing his home and having memories of the spring festival. Kevin showed both a reviewer and reader response because it connects to the book's accuracy as well as a longing for his home. He connected to the subject of the book, a family reuniting when the father comes home from working in a faraway place, *the parents' leaving is a really normal part in Chinese tradition. Parents have to go out to work to make a living*. Kevin noted that the book is easy for children to understand and can help people learn more about Chinese traditions. He did not have any recommendations for changes by the writer or illustrator, saying:

The author already did perfectly because it is a book for children. And the illustrator is interesting and it can help people understand it clearly.

In the focus group Kevin described his book, *A New Year's Reunion*. I was initially confused because he started to talk about the spring festival. I eventually figured out the lunar new year and spring festival celebration are the same thing. Kevin said:

In China is really traditional festival and it's really important and necessary for every Chinese.

This sentiment was similar to Valerie's about *Día De Los Muertos* in Mexico, but different from Carey's feelings about *Oktoberfest* in Germany.

Kevin commented on the realistic nature of the book and displayed a reviewer's response. The father in the story works building houses far away and only returns home once a year. When the father returns, he gets a haircut and a clean shave in order to have a fresh start in the new year. Kevin then explained the tradition, which he mentioned is not popular now, to put a coin into a rice ball. The person who gets the coin will have good luck for the rest of the year. In the book, the child gets the coin. Kevin thought the father intentionally gave the child the rice ball with the coin. Kevin explained the other traditional activities depicted in the book, beginning with family visiting. The children have red envelopes, which Kevin called *pockets*, and they receive money from relatives. The next tradition is cleaning and repairing the house to welcome the new year. Finally, Kevin told us that people *play activity to wave the dragon*. He was not sure if the dragon was made of cloth or paper.

Kevin, like Joe, is not from the northern part of China where the story is set, and he explained this to the focus group:

Kevin: ... And they make a snowman--

Carey: Mhm.

Kevin: That's interesting because--

Carey: So, it snows in China?

Kevin: No, because--

Carey: (laughs)

Kevin: I come from in the south of China.

Carey: Uh huh.

Kevin: So, I didn't see snow.

Carey: You never saw snow.

Walter: Ah.

Kevin: I think the story happens in--

Walter: In Beijing, maybe. (laughs)

Kevin: The north of China.

All three participants were engaged in this part of the discussion. It seemed that Walter and Carey were curious about Kevin having never seen snow at home. Although he did not come from a region with snow, he had a reviewer's response to the book that it was accurate.

In the book, when the child plays in the snow she loses the fortune coin, which makes her very sad. Luckily, she finds the coin and gives it to her father upon his return back to work:

Kevin: And he-- she was really missing his father and don't want, don't want let her father to leave and he (she) give the coin to his father--

Carey: Aw.

Kevin: To her father and she said that, I want you to miss me every day and I give this good luck coin to you and when you miss me, you can take a look at this coin. You will receive my missing to you.

Notice Carey's response of *aw* to this moment of the story. Though strongly critical of her own book, she was sensitive and moved by the narrative of Kevin's book. Kevin shared that the book made him miss his home. He explained how the spring festival is the time when everyone is off work and can go home to be with family.

From other Chinese students reading this book and Kevin's questionnaire, I learned that it is common for families to be separated, often leaving children to be cared for by grandparents. I followed up with Kevin to see how he thought it affected Chinese society and if it was something that English teachers needed to know. Indicative to his response as an language-learner, He said:

Kevin: Because there are too many people in China and the competition between people is really hard and it's hard, it's really hard to find good work now so many people need to go far from their home to do some really hard work like, moving-- building the house. So, because go far from their home, they can find job. In their hometown, it's really hard because this story happens in countryside, yeah, so. And it's really normal in China, now.

Monique: Ok. What do you think English teachers need to know about that? Do you think American English teachers need to know about the competition? Or that kids stay with grandparents? Do you think any of that is important for English teachers to know?

Kevin: I think so, because although grandparents can treat their grandson or granddaughter very well, but I think parent's love is really important in child, in a child's childhood so, I think the English teachers need to know that.

The other participants asked Kevin if his parents worked away from home. Kevin explained that he was lucky because his parents had their own restaurant, and he grew up in it.

Having recently read the entirety of Fox and Short's *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*, I was curious about how students responded to insider and outsider perspectives. I came to the focus group knowing the backgrounds of the writers and illustrators and shared them with the participants. I asked them if they thought it made a difference who wrote the books.

Kevin responded:

Kevin: Yeah, because if a foreigner write this book I think he won't understand the true meaning of the Spring Festival because he didn't have the experience in China so, although he will-- he maybe stayed in China in, during the Spring Festival but he can't feel the--

Carey: Tradition?

Kevin: The love between the family members when they stay together.

Finally, in the focus group when I asked "How does it feel to use English to talk about your home culture?" Kevin echoed what Cyrus said in another focus group about the trouble of translation:

I think it's a little bit strange because some special names of the symbol and if the name translate into English, I looked, it's really weird, yeah, but I can't understand it but

some other foreigners can understand it. Yeah, because the translation makes some difference.

Kevin was a thoughtful young man who connected the text and provided insight into issues of translation.

Korea: Walter and Mina

There were two participants from South Korea, and I had two books readily available. Participants self-selected different books. Mina chose to read *The Invisible Boy*, which is about a boy named Brian who is bullied in school until a new kid, Justin, who is Korean-American, makes friends with him. Walter chose to read *A Piece of Home*. It is about a Korean family who moves to West Virginia and struggles to adjust to their new life in the United States. I met both Mina and Walter when I recruited for the study. Unlike several of the other participants, I did not have them in previous classes.

The Invisible Boy provided less room for reviewer's evaluative responses, because of nature of multicultural children's book. More specifically, *The Invisible Boy* conveys a universal theme of kindness. It allowed for language-learner and reader responses. Thus, *The Invisible Boy*, to Mina, was a success at helping children develop relationships with peers. Mina made intertextual connection when she compared it to folktales and was free to articulate what she thought would be better at teaching her culture. While I am unsure if I agree with her sentiment around the usefulness of folktales teaching about culture, it was important for me to hear in Mina's own words what was representative of her culture. Finally as a language-learner, her response showed that this book provided an enjoyable reading experience as indicated by her saying "it was nice for me" and her comments on the book's more simple syntax.

Mina shows reader, reviewer, and language-learner responses when finding *The Invisible Boy* both interesting and disappointing because the book didn't focus on Korean culture or food as she expected certain portrayal of Korean culture. Instead, the book had a Korean character. She contrasted this reading experience to a class when she read Korean fairy tales.

I read Korean traditional fairy tales that was fun and interesting experience for me. I already knew that stories, but I read that stories to English. It makes me feel weird and interesting experience for me. This book was good for me unique way. I didn't expect this story, so it makes me more fun better than I already knew the story. It was not too difficult to read, and this book has a lot of basic phrase.

Mina did not think *The Invisible Boy* was good to learn about Korean culture. She commented that the book is too narrow, noting that:

Koreans have a lot of kind of food, culture, history, manners and language. There are so many things to know about Korea. I think this book need to more information about Korea, if ESL teachers want to learn about our culture.

While she did not think the book is good for learning about Korean culture, Mina thought the book was good for children because of the lessons it teaches about being kind to friends and the quality of the illustrations. The book, she said *is good for children or who want to learn English, but it is not good for people who want to learn Korean culture.*

During the focus group Mina gave an overview of her book. She followed up by saying that it was too narrow to learn about Korean culture, compared to Joe's book and learning about China. *I'm not sure good to learn about our culture only mention bulgogi.* She explained that bulgogi is popular with foreigners. Mina summarized the book and

commented that it had valuable lessons to teach children: *be kind, hangout with other kids Justin is from Korea so he has discrimination...be nice, don't be judge others.* While listing the lessons the book teaches, she also mentioned how Justin experienced discrimination. She did not expand on this statement, and neither Joe nor Valerie had questions. I followed up on this during an interview. As in her questionnaire, Mina mentioned the work she did with Korean traditional fairy tales in a previous class, and she compared them to *The Invisible Boy* and *A New Year's Reunion*:

I have experienced reading a book about Korean traditional fairy tale. I read the book last semester for home work on fairy tales. It was a good experience because we could learnt our traditional way. Moral, how we can treat other people. This book doesn't mention about the traditional things or our culture or food or how people live. They have a lot of pics of china or new year event (referring to Joe's book). They just write about an American guy even his name is not Korean. Justin is maybe a Korean name. If they even use English names, if it used Korean names it would give more info about our country.

Mina's response to her book was consistent with her questionnaire. She thought the fairy tales shared more about culture because they demonstrated more traditional cultural things like food and daily life. She valued the lessons in *The Invisible Boy*, but did not think the book offered insight into Korean culture.

I was able to interview Mina. My interview with Mina was brief for a few reasons. As a novice researcher, I am still learning how to solicit more in-depth responses. I did not have a prior relationship with Mina and did not know what types of questions she would answer with greater detail, and I was not sure how to get her to elaborate more in her responses. Finally, at the time of this interview, I was very nauseous and distracted by the pain of a

Zofran Pump, which was delivering anti-nausea medication subcutaneously through a small catheter in my abdomen. I was still adjusting to the pump at the time of the interview and had yet to manage my morning sickness.

My first follow-up question asked her to explain what she meant in the focus group when she said *Justin is from Korea so he has discrimination. The lesson for kids be nice, don't be judge others*. Mina referred to the scene in the book where Justin's grandmother packed him bulgogi for lunch and responded:

They discriminate against Justin's lunch box. Because he looks different and he just come and maybe they didn't know Justin because he was calm and didn't talk.

This reminded Mina of how she sometimes felt weird eating her food in the student union building because it smells different; she said, *some people look at me when I am eating it's uncomfortable*. She followed this with a statement contrasting Justin's experience:

In UNM people mixed together. I think they are just curious about my food. But the kids didn't know so tease or bully. But people here know the Korean food or rice it makes me a little more comfortable.

Mina also described her experience growing up as contrasting with Justin's when I asked if she felt any connection to Justin's character: *I live in Korea when I was young. There was not discrimination. Not a lot of foreign students in Korea*. She mentioned briefly how the child she tutored in a U.S. elementary school talked about students from other countries facing racism in the United States.

The other point I followed up with Mina was the fairy tale assignment that she mentioned in both the focus group and her questionnaire. She said that she knew the story from when she was young and that it was easy to read and understand. She added that the

drawings were exactly the same as in the book she read when she was a kid. She summarized the fairy tale:

You should be kind to others and you get a good thing. Story about a man who helped a bird. The man received a seed, the seed grew into a big plant that had treasure in it. The greedy man got bad things. Teaches that you should be kind to animals.

The lesson of *The Invisible Boy* also relates to kindness, but neither Mina or I made this observation during the interview.

Mina was insightful when she pointed out the differences between her more homogenous schooling in Korea and the diversity kids in America have in the classroom. Her response and connections around food were helpful in developing arguments around what parts of culture student's respond to.

Walter responded as a reviewer, reader and language-learner to *A Piece of Home*. His reviewer's response was demonstrated when he expressed that the book was more culturally appropriate for people who immigrate and also useful to others who are homesick. To him, if someone wants to understand Korean culture, the best way is to just go there. As part of his reader's response, discussing the book created a comfortable space for Walter to speak. Furthermore, to demonstrate reader's response, Walter had an emotional response to the text as well as to the illustrations, noticing how sad and gloomy the protagonist looked as he navigated his way as a new arrival in an American classroom. Finally, showing his language-learner response, Walter thought children's book were a good way for beginning and intermediate students to learn English and he felt pride in talking about his culture.

Walter said *A Piece of Home* made him feel warm and that it was a great book. This shows a reviewer and reader response. He wondered about the importance of the *mugunghwa*

flower to Koreans, and at the same time thought the book would be helpful for readers to understand him as an individual because they may not already know the meaning of the flower. This is puzzling, because even in interviews, I learned that the flower was an important symbol, but not what its deeper meaning was. He said the book was good to understand Korean immigrants; his suggestions for the author were to *add the reason why the grandmother has got happier since she lived in the US*, and for the illustrator he suggested to *show an adult Hee Jun who grows up well in the US, readers can feel that he adapts to the US well with happy ending.*

During the focus group, Walter gave a very brief overview of his book. He said it was about a boy and a grandmother who quickly immigrate to the United States because the boy's father decides to come to law school. They initially struggle to adapt to living in the United States, but this is resolved by a flower. His explanation of the story is as follows:

Walter: Yeah. But like, by-- but--by this flower, this is Korean national flower?

Carey: Mhm.

Walter: Uh huh. Like, one of his American friend like, raised this flower--

Carey: Mhm.

Walter: At his home so like, she-- he kind of like, got along with American friends? And then he can adapt to living in the U.S. more and also like, grandmother take care of his younger sister and then, yeah, they get better to live in the U.S. Yeah, that's the whole story.

I tried to follow up with Walter to understand the importance of the flower as well as what he felt it meant to *adapt* to American culture, something that he brought up in his questionnaire. Walter didn't know why the flower was important in Korea, except that it was a national symbol that was shown respect:

It's like, we just identify this flower is important because this is a national flower and like, when I was in youth, in my youth, like, we must not cut the flower, oh, yeah, so like, why? I don't know. It's like (laughs) teachers like, or like, parents make us remember not doing it. (laughs)

Walter was more specific about what it meant to adapt well to the United States and included speaking English very well, eating American food, and watching American football. I was able to follow up in an interview with Walter to find out why American football is significant.

Walter was available on his very last day of classes for an interview. I am happy that I was able to catch him before he left SWUIEP. He was curious about why I wanted to meet with him, and his questioning caught me off guard. I was worried that he did not want to participate in the interview. When I explained that I had some more questions and that I was meeting with other participants, he seemed satisfied, and the interview proceeded smoothly.

His language-learner response was shown when asked what English teachers needed to know “about you and your country so that they can help you learn more?” His quick answer was to *just visit Korea...easiest way*. This was similar to Todd, who said the best way to understand *ma* was to visit Japan. Walter then made a statement that generalized Asian communication:

Yeah, so, Asian people usually do indirect meaning, yeah, use indirect? meaning so, so like, you need to catch the imply? Yeah, so like, they sometimes like, for like, a serious problem or issue? They tend to like, express indirectly so, I think a lot of is hard for western people to catch the like, the-- what they want, want to express, what they, what they, oh, want to, oh, show the like, the meaning of-- the issue...

During the interview, I did not think much of the generalization he made about Asian people. I assumed he meant Korean people. When reviewing the transcripts, I began to question what he meant by Asian people, and I started to disagree with his statement based on my experience with my husband's Korean family, who I have found disarmingly direct. I then processed more and wondered what the implications of living in America were on my in-laws and their communication style. Finally, I thought about the entire family, particularly the older men, and what Walter said began to make sense to me.

The implication of cultural knowledge, such as indirect communication, according to Walter, is that teaching and helping students who were having trouble would be easier:

I think, sure, like, as I like, told you, like, it is easier to teach them, yeah, because like, you understand what they're thinking... Why, why-- what they have, oh, on a different level. Yeah, so like, if the Korean student are in trouble? Yeah, you can, you know, console them and then help them to focus on studying, yeah, rather than, you know, having party? (laughs) You know?

Walter's readers response is demonstrated in his description of how it felt when reading the book, empathy was the overriding message.

Yeah, like, yeah, I understand, I empathize with him, named Hee Jun....

Yeah, yeah, like, you just like, have, have lived in Korea, you never go to the any foreign country but because of your, by your father, yeah, you emigrated to, you know, American culture, American culture, it's a American country. (laughs)...Yeah, and then, like, a very-- he has lived in very unfamiliar, yeah, circumstance and atmosphere...So, yeah, I empathize with him who has felt like, weird, strange, or people, classmates and you know,

culture, so at first, like, he's, you know, he didn't adapt to, you know, class and, you know, American life--

When I asked how it felt to share about his culture using the book, he indicated that other students may relate to the book on a personal level, as well:

they, you know, they can, you know, undergo the different situation, different culture but they can overcome, yeah, any problems in, you know, foreign country. So, this book can, yeah, help them, yes, overcome the, you know, any problems for like homesick, about homesick. (laughs)

Other participants, such as Bliss, mentioned feeling nostalgia and sentimentality toward home as a result of reading their book, but Walter was the first to point out how one particular book might be helpful to other students studying abroad. I asked Walter what he thought about using the book as a way to teach English to adults. Like other participants, he echoed that children's books were best for more beginner students.

At the time of my interview with Walter, Korea was in the news spotlight for two different reasons: the meeting of the leaders of North Korea and the United States, and the defeat of Germany by South Korea in the World Cup Soccer Tournament. These events, plus the rising popularity of K-pop music, made Walter feel like people were more interested in talking about Korean culture than they were ten years ago. He had a sense of national pride and connection with others:

Yeah, so like, oh, I'm proud, I'm so like, I'm feeling so like, proud of, yeah, Korea.

...Yeah, oh, they're like, understand and they empathize with what I'm saying, yeah, compared to, yeah, the past ten years.

In the focus group, Walter mentioned loving football as a way to adapt to American culture, and this was something I really wanted to follow up on in his interview. It seemed more important to Walter than other participants to adapt to American life. Our discussion of football, as well as his hopes for a job in the United States, clarified why. Walter studied as an exchange student ten years ago at a state school in the Southeastern part of the United States. He said that talking about football was how he made friends in an environment that was not initially welcoming:

You know? They're like, in the south, you know, like, they discriminate, you know, Asian guys, yeah, like, strongly. So, when I-- after I know about, you know, football? I tried to talk then about like, football, oh, they open their mind--.... To me and then, yeah, they just like, continue to talk with me...Yeah, before that, you know, they just close their mind to talking to me so it was hard to--

Walter specifically mentioned that he did not have a car and could not drive in a small town that lacked public transportation. He said,*so like, you know, so I need my, you know, American friend to go to Walmart (laughs)--... To shop.*

After discussing football with Walter, I asked him about something written in Hangul, the Korean alphabet:

Monique: what is he saying on this page?

Walter: Oh, (laughs) he says, I don't want to stay anymore.

Monique: Aw.

Walter: Yeah. You understand what he's saying, right?

When I recruited Walter into the study, the teacher told him that my husband was Korean. I think from that, Walter may have assumed I had more Korean knowledge than I

actually did. Walter and I had a brief conversation about how I've tried to learn Hangul but have yet to be successful and that my husband, who was born and raised in the United States, is not fluent in Korean. I told him that I could take a picture of the page in the book and send it to my mother-in-law for translation, but I, like other American readers, didn't know what it said. Walter shared his observations of the illustration of the boy:

*Yeah, so like, look at his face. (laughs) He looks really gloomy...Depressed
... Mmhm, so like, yeah, I understand why he want to, yeah, leave America.*

The illustration addressed the issue of translation by showing the feelings of the boy. I did not understand this when I first read the book or the interview transcript. In the interview, I was really curious as to what Walter thought about the use of Hangul and the fact that there would be readers who couldn't understand it. His thoughts were toward a pragmatic solution:

Walter: So like, you know, how do you call like this? This, this, this?

Monique: Parentheses?

Walter: Yeah, parentheses. Parentheses need, need, need to be added--

Monique: Ok.

Walter: Here, in English--

Monique: Ok.

Walter: What he's saying in Korean.

Monique: Yeah.

Walter: Yeah, yeah, to, you know, have readers, American readers--

Monique: Mmhm.

Walter: Understand, yeah, what he's saying.



Figure 5. Excerpt from *A Piece of Home*. From Watts, J., & Yum, H. (2016). *A Piece of Home*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. n.p.

We concluded the interview much like we began, with Walter encouraging travel as a means to understand different cultures. Walter asked me why I was studying different cultures in children's books, so I explained:

Monique: I think that if the students tell me what they think about the book? It's better than if I just read the book.

Walter: Oh. You have a kid... Yeah, you don't have time to leave U.S. (laughs)

Monique: Right.

Walter: Sorry, I think about the best way to understand what different, yeah, cultural people think? Just visit their like-- just visit some countries to understand and what they, what they think--

We continued to discuss this further. I pointed out to Walter the many countries that I have had students from, and which countries I have been able to travel to. There were too many countries to visit, and as I was pregnant with a second child, due in a few months, it wasn't realistic to travel so extensively. Walter challenged me to travel in order to experience culture beyond books and classrooms.

Japan, Nepal, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Germany, and Guatemala

Individual participants from each of the above countries responded to different books as reviewers, readers, and language-learners. The books included contemporary realistic fiction, informational books, and folktales.

Japan: Todd. Todd responded as a reviewer, reader, and language-learner when he talked about *The Sound of Silence* written by Katrina Goldsaito and illustrated by Julia Kuo. Todd, like Walter, noted that if someone wanted to learn about culture, a book was not useful. His argument is not necessarily about the book, but the number of book representing Japan. A book alone, he felt, was not enough to teach about Japanese culture. However, he showed aesthetic reader's responses to illustrations were helpful in creating an accurate visual picture of Japan.

Demonstrating his reader's response, Todd was frank in stating that he disliked the book, yet it also made him happy. His mixed emotional response between happiness and dislike indicates that a reader's aesthetic response to a book is rarely one dimensional. In his response as a language-learner, Todd noted the helpfulness of having background knowledge related to the text. He noted the difficulty of translation and how things, like *ma*, can't be described in English, and perhaps even any language, rather it needs to be experienced. This is a reminder that there are things beyond language that aren't teachable.

The Sound of Silence is about a boy who wants to find silence or *ma*. Todd found it interesting to think about *Japanese knowledge about "ma"*, but I am not agree about this book. From his questionnaire, I learned that he doesn't agree with how *ma* is described, but he did not indicate until his focus group and interview what he thinks it should be. He wondered from reading the book how to explain *ma* to foreigners. He said the book showed Japanese history but that it didn't match today's Japan. In his reviewer response, Todd found things he liked and disliked. In fact, he had a list of things he thought should be changed:

People don't talk during the taking meal, use chopstick is not loud, In Tokyo, see country side is easier than see bamboo. People should not use left hand during meal time.

He did not have specific recommendations regarding the illustrations. He concluded his questionnaire with the following thoughts, reiterating his disagreement with the book's explanation of *ma*:

There are a lot of interesting point to see the Japanese culture from foreign country's view, but If writer think 'ma' means just the silent, it is wrong.

When Todd shared his book with Bliss, it enhanced his reviewer response more than his reader one. Todd began and explained the premise of *Sound of Silence*. A boy is looking

for a silent place and walks through the city and into countryside to find it. Todd referenced the book's afterword and how the writer drew inspiration from the film director Akira Kurosawa. When looking at the afterword myself, I noticed that the author talks about a composer, Toru Takemitsu, who created music for Kurosawa films, as the larger inspiration for this book. Todd noted the representations of different sounds in Japanese:

They also have many sound, it's the Japanese sound, for example, zah-zah? It's kind of like, when you are raining? We say zah-zah for the sound.... In Japanese and also, poo-poo it's kind of like a well the car action, honk honk honk? It's, I think, it's not Japanese but boo-hoo is like a, exhale we said. So, they put-- they mix the Japanese sound with U.S. sound.

Todd also shared that he was pleased with the representations of chain stores and popular cartoon characters in the illustrations. Todd paid attention to the details of the book. When he noticed a traditional instrument called a *koto*, he was glad that it was included; however, he brought up a technicality about its setting:

She's old lady and she have a typical, very traditional instrument. This is a koto? And she play for him and very good sounds. Technically, this koto dislikes humidity so I think they never play during the rainy time as this place but still, this is good for having knowledge about this new instrument.

There are other details that Todd noticed, as well.

So, it's kind of-- he says, he's like, "Oh, I can hear some bamboo noise." Technically, if you live in Tokyo, that is a little bit far from city side. If you walk a little bit far, you can see many farmers but still, this is, I think this writer mixed with Kyoto or something for this because-- this place but still he-- she tried to introduce the Japanese,

Just like in the example of the *koto*, Todd recognized that the author shared and introduced elements of Japanese culture, history and, landscape. Another technicality he noticed was the use of the left hand, and he explained why it is problematic:

But when I see this picture, this person use left hand, yeah? So, I think in Japanese, we usually try to fix your hand as right because when you write a character, if you write this way, you have this side of your hand black, so, I think this writer don't know about that.

The last detail he focused on was the sound of chopsticks and his difference of opinion about them: *the sound of the chopsticks, he-- she said, sound of chopstick is noisy but I don't think so? The sound?* Todd concluded his retelling of the story and reinforced that the book had some problems but also had its merits in teaching about Japanese culture:

I think this book is very fun to read especially if you try to understand Japanese culture but few stuff I disagree about this book but if you-- if I ask, is this recommend for the foreign person? Well, yes? But, I don't agree about everything.

The meaning of *ma* was his primary concern. Bliss tried to clarify what *ma* is by asking if it was something that was inside the boy the whole time. Todd tried to explain *ma*:

Bliss: So, basically Ma, his silence, was inside of him all the time.

Todd: Ma means between the silence, like a distance between the silence. If I say something, and you started to say something, those silent time would be Ma, but that actually meaning but it's difficult, you know?

Bliss: So, basically, you need to look in-- so, if I interpreted, like, the kid was actually trying to look it outside when all the time it was actually inside? Introspection?

Todd: So ma, is not only the time face but also, it also means distance.

Bliss: Distance.

Todd: For example, I give you some water or something? I need to keep some distance, yeah, from you. This is also Ma, means distance.

Bliss: Hm, I see.

Todd: And also, if you speak and if I speak during your speaking, it's not good Ma, not timing. It's kind of like, a timing but the difficult point is, it's not only time but also, between the distance. For example, Kabuki? Is a Japanese cultural stuff and they have kuroko? It's a black mask faced and they try to act as a shadow. So, they not became main person but they try to support the, those cultural stuff. This is also a typical ma in Japanese but it is difficult to say

Bliss: I see.

Bliss tried to understand and Todd tried to explain what *ma* was, but it was difficult to negotiate.

What follows is a picture of both Todd and Bliss' discussion of different dialects and use of Spanish in *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. Because Todd, initiated the discussion, I have chosen to keep this exchange in this section about Todd. This problem in presenting the data shows the conscious decisions a researcher must make in reporting data, and how each of those choices is debatable. This section could have also fit with the section devoted to Bliss. Finally, this excerpt shows how both Todd and Bliss respond as language-learners. Todd was surprised by the use of Spanish in Bliss's book. Bliss noted that the author included a glossary at the end of the book:

Bliss: Oh, I forgot to mention, there's also, at the end, a part that actually explains what each Spanish words means. Here it is.

Todd: Oh, it looks like a dictionary. (laughs)

Bliss: Yeah, kind of a dictionary.

Todd: But, ok, yeah. I see, yes.

Bliss: Which was a pretty smart decision by the writer.

There will be further discussion of the use of Spanish and how it's translated within texts in Chapter Five.

Todd asked why everybody climbs up the mountain. Bliss explained that there are two ways up the mountain: to hike, which takes four to five hours, or to take the tram, which takes about 30 minutes. The advantage of hiking is seeing multiple views of the city as the trail zigzags up the mountain. Todd also asked Bliss what he recommends the author add, and it brought up a discussion about food and dialect, further showing their reviewer and language-learner responses.

Bliss: Yeah, definitely. I will, I will recommend the writer to maybe put some cuisine, some Venezuelan cuisine--

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Into it because Venezuelan cuisine is not normal. It is actually pretty unique to the place.

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Unlike, for example, Japanese cuisine, which is famous worldwide, for example, sushi, or something.

Todd: Well, only the specific ones yes. (laughs)

Bliss: Ok, only specific ones.

Todd: Yeah, but, yeah.

Bliss: I also know, what it's called? Now I'm talking about Japanese culture, sorry.

(laughs)

Monique: That's ok! You can talk about Japanese culture.

Bliss: What was the question, sorry?

Todd: So, if you were a writer--

Bliss: A writer.

Todd: What do you want to add to this book?

Bliss: Maybe a bit more of culture and cuisine--

Todd: Yes.

Bliss: And, maybe a bit of slang, a slang--

Todd: Ok.

Bliss: Some Venezuelan slang that we use in there.

Todd: Hm.

Bliss: We slap it in there.

Todd: I see.

Bliss: Yes, because Venezuelan's like, important to know that the Spanish and Latin America, they're not the same--

Todd: Mmhm.

Bliss: Exactly, I mean, we can still talk to each other but we-- they each one have their own local varieties.

Todd: Mmhm.

Bliss: Doesn't Japan, for example, have local varieties of Japanese?

Todd: Well, if I go to south part I can't understand the Japanese, yeah.

Bliss: (laughs)

Todd: Because each section, you have different tone and some tone, total different.

Bliss: I see.

The discussion of regional variation of dialect is a reminder to ESL teachers of the diversity of students and serves as a cautionary tale against generalizing Latin American Spanish speakers and against seeing Japan as a monolith. Bliss was surprised by the variation in Japanese:

Bliss: (laughs) I'm actually, I was actually more surprised that each Japanese, like, Japanese parts had like, their different accent or different tongue or different vocabulary.

Todd: We can do complicated because Japanese is Japanese. It's like, a language and each person use the same words but still, they have different accent.

This brings up one of the moments that I interjected, asking Bliss if there was variation within Venezuela, which he confirms:

Monique: Is it similar in Venezuela? Would you say that people who live in Caracas speak differently than people who live in the countryside?

Bliss: Oh, yes, yes, absolutely.

From this focus group, both the participants and I were reminded of regional differences within countries with which we were unfamiliar. After the discussion of dialect, the conversation moved to the diversity of wildlife in each country, and we all continued learning:

Bliss: Hm, well, for example, in this book, for example, there is kind of like a emphasis on birds, and you can see almost on every page you're gonna see birds--

Todd: Yes.

Bliss: Because Venezuela has a lot of species of birds.

Todd: Mhm.

Bliss: Is there, for example, an animal in Japan that is very characteristic of you?

Todd: I don't know the words in Jap-- English, but, usually we use, let's see, crane is very--

Bliss: Crane.

Todd: Japanese, in Japan, crane means very good meaning, so.

Monique: Yeah, they're birds with very long necks--

Bliss: Yeah.

Monique: And long legs.

Todd: but it's very good meaning.

Bliss: We call it, ganso.

Todd: Sorry?

Bliss: Ganso.

Todd: What mean ganso?

Bliss: Uh, it's crane in Spanish.

Todd: Ok, but this is very good meaning, yeah. Hm, Japan have specific birds Yeah, so, this one is Japanese bird but if I try to bring English...ok, I can't find a good one but anyways.

Bliss: Doesn't matter.

Todd: We have Japanese, yeah, specific birds. But yeah, as you know, Japanese shape is like this, it's like really long from North to South so each place have different characteristic, birds or foods, so it's kind of like, tons of biology, so.

This focus group proved enlightening to me as a researcher, as well as to the participants who learned about each other's countries using children's books as a starting point.

I followed up with Todd immediately after the focus group, because it was the only time he had available. I began by trying to understand his aesthetic response to the book, so I asked how reading the book made him feel. He initially responded by inquiring if I needed a positive or negative opinion. I was disarmed by him asking me directly what I needed his answer to be. I asked what kind of feelings he had, giving happy, bad, good, and sad as examples. In his response, he expressed his surprise with the book:

... I'm surprised that they tried to explain that, ma, because in Japan we-- it's like a natural cultural stuff. Well, so each person have a different ma and it's kind of difficult to explain but that writer tried to explain.

Todd said the best way to understand *ma* was to go and live in Japan. *What is a better way to explain what's that, well, I think what was the best way is go to Japan, live with them.* He continued to explain more:

is kind of like, when you have a culture shock, for example, you were living Japan several years and you come back to here or go other place, I think you feel like, oh, that was Japanese ma or something. I think you can see that, but if you try to understand without that knowledge, it's difficult, I think so.

I then asked him if there were any memories or images that came to mind when he was reading. He said that he thought the book was talking about Tokyo and that the author tried to show typical Japanese culture. He continued with a desire for clarification about the

book, *but I don't understand that why he tried to subtly walking along to find the silent so, I'm not clear about the reason why he tried to walk around.*

Next, I wanted to know what he thought about reading about Japan in English. He said that because he had background knowledge about the text, it was easier for him to understand. He brought up the difficulty of understanding *ma* again, *but if I just read this book, it sounds like, ok, maybe this is ma, that's it, so...it's kind of difficult to see, I think.* Todd did not think this book would be helpful for ESL teachers to understand Japanese culture, because it was so specific to *ma*. I asked if understanding *ma* would be helpful for teachers, for example knowing how long to wait for a student to answer a question or how to interact in class. Todd responded that it was *totally different* and brought up individual differences among Japanese people and the problematic elements of having general knowledge about a culture:

each Japanese has different characteristics that still, you want to have a normal, I mean, the standard knowledge about Japan. Hm, it is difficult.

He gave an example of talking to someone ten years younger and saying that they have a different era and different common sense. He concluded, *So, I haven't know that what means Japanese knowledge, so....* To an ESL teacher trying to gain insight into culture, his answer was a reminder of the complexities and problems regarding seeking cultural knowledge.

I shared my observation that he smiled when he shared the pages that had Japanese sounds written on them. I asked about why he smiled, and he told me a story about an American friend who was learning Japanese. When his friend learned these onomatopoeias,

she was happy because she had gained Japanese knowledge. He said this was similar to what happened to him:

So, so, generally when Japanese see the Japanese words they became smiling because they are happy about that, ok, you know, or that this book have it try to explain about Japanese stuff so it's happy. So, that's the reason I became smiling.

Todd generalized how other Japanese people might also feel happy when seeing these familiar words. This happiness in seeing familiar words show his reviewer response to the accuracy how the sounds were represented to the book as well as a readers response in his report of happiness.

I asked if he connected to the main character in the book, and he said that when he was young, he would also travel around looking for interesting stuff, but not silence. I also asked if this book would help me understand him as a Japanese man, and he again said that the focus on *ma* was too specific and didn't connect to him. Finally, I asked him if he would have enjoyed sharing the book with classmates when he was taking an intermediate class, and his answer surprised me. He said he would, because the pictures were good and they *tried to put tons of Japanese culture*. But he also said, *I can't connect about this person. I don't like this story, honestly*. Todd shared that he liked the pictures and described them as *very very true*. He shared his dislike of the story because it did not make sense to him. He mentioned that the book doesn't talk about things that foreigners usually like about Japan:

Yeah, because we have three typical stuff like, which foreign person like the Japanese culture, sushi, tempura, sukiyaki. Those three stuff is very famous for foreign person but this doesn't include anything about those stuff. It's an interesting point.

Todd also brought up famous Japanese landmarks and how the book doesn't group them all together in one image:

Todd: While the, Mount Fuji?

Monique: Mmhm.

Todd: Or the Tokyo Tower?

Monique: Ok.

Todd: Those stuff is very, if you Google Japan, they would own the picture, typically, but, this book, nothing.

Monique: Yeah, it doesn't have those.

Todd: So, it's very surprised about that.

Monique: Did you like that?

Todd: I like that point, yeah, because many people try to mix everything together with different place and it makes me crazy but this book try to pull it towards a Japanese picture.

Monique: Explain when you said, it makes me crazy?

Todd: Because some cases like, Mount Fuji and Tokyo Tower is a totally different place--

Monique: Mmhm.

Todd: But some book, since they try to explain within one picture, they put together with Mount Fuji with Tokyo Tower or something and so, it's very, ok, well you can guess that stuff but it's never happened, so.

There were more attempts to clarify what the broader meaning of *ma* is, but ultimately it was too difficult to explain and Todd repeated what he had said initially: that it is best to go to Japan to understand what *ma* is.

Todd: So, for example, like if you go to bar to drink something?

Monique: Mmhm.

Todd: The owner try to become, not to become main person. They try to become shadow and if you do some eye contact, they try to help you but they never try to become main person or ask you, maybe, different places different but-- so, the point is, they try a little bit behind from you and try to support you. That is a distance Ma.

Monique: Ok.

Todd: This ma is kind of like, between the sound. So, so, for example, if you try to say, to "Oh, you good at, you are good job" to your child, you had better to do immediately your child do a good job, ya? That is kind of what Ma. If you do, for example, one month past said, "Oh, you do a good job" like, last year or something, it's not good timing. But ma is like a really bored stuff. I think this person try to explain about ma within the silent.

He continued,

So, I said that you had better to go to Japan, try to have to some experiment because it is very difficult to explain words, so...I'm still can't explaining words. Maybe if I use a dictionary and say it would explain some technical words or explain about that word but usually ma means, naturally. So, nobody fail-- I mean that, nobody say, "Oh, this is Ma!" No. All of Japanese do as naturally to do explain or use the Ma, so, that's the reason it is very difficult to explain it.

I then tried to find out if there are regional variations of what *ma* means. I learned, not surprisingly, that the speed of *ma* is slower in the countryside than in the city and that Kyoto is one of the best places to visit to learn about *ma*.

R: So, ok, everybody different point but ma, ma or is it time speed would be, city side is rapid, more rapid than countryside...Because they lived there first.

But, if you're talking about Ma, well, I think one of the best place is Kyoto? You can have an extreme intimate ma. So, because it's kind of like, a intimate way to do a conversation without saying anything. So, for example, if you go to Kyoto and give...it's kind of like a special meal. It's mean, please go home. It's funny, yeah... You get some meal and it means, ok, please go home. But it's kind of like, ma.

Nepal: Yani. Yani responded to *I Doko* as a reviewer and reader. His responses were focused on the book as a poor representation of life in Nepal and the limits it faced as it's intended audience was children. His response as a reader highlighted the feelings the book elicited as he reader.

Yani did not find the book to be a good avenue to teach about culture, though he recognized that it was a book for children and that it had limits in what it could achieve in order to tell a longer and perhaps more complete story. As a folktale, rather than contemporary realistic fiction, it was not an accurate portrait of daily life, yet it still was successful in starting a discussion with me and a peer about life in Nepal and his own experiences with the *Doko*. Yani exercised his agency as a critical reader by suggesting the author talk more about "common life" and allow the reader to better get to know the story's characters.

Yani described the sadness reading this book created because it was a reminder of how difficult life was in Nepal. This showed his reader's response. Yani and I did not have an explicit discussion about his feelings using English or about reading children's books in an ESL class, but Yani did indicate that this book was not an appropriate way for a teacher to

learn about culture. Yet, in his discussion with naturally curious Darlene, he engaged in a deeper conversation about how the Doko was a part of daily life in his country. This is the type of conversation that, as a teacher, I consider a success because it is a genuine exchange of ideas in the the target language.

Yani said he felt sad while reading the book *because of all the hardship everybody constantly had to endure*, illustrating his response as reader. In his mind, he pictured *big dusty plains, forested hills, mountain grasslands*, showing his reviewer response. His explanation to the text puzzled me and led me to believe he did not understand the plot of the book he read, *I Doko*, written and illustrated by Ed Young. The book is told from the point of view of the *Doko* (basket). In the story, the *Doko* shares its experiences with a family: going to the fields to carry the harvest and carrying the young son. At the end of the book, the father is ready to abandon the grandfather at the steps of the temple until the young boy, Wangal, says that he will do the same to the father when the father is old. This changes the father's mind. The final page reads: "Wangal's love for his grandfather inspired and transformed the whole village in how to treat elders, and from that time on young and old lived out their lives in tolerance and harmony" (Young, 2004, n.p.).

The book brought to mind two questions for Yani that led me to believe that he may have skipped the last page or misunderstood it: *What happens to the old people that are brought to the temple* and *I wonder what I am missing about my country*. I think that the last page explains that old people are not brought to the temple; however, I am not sure if Yani understood that and consequently think he is missing something about his country.

Further demonstrating his reviewer response, Yani suggested that the author talk more about daily life and commented that it was impossible to get to know the characters in

the book. He found the illustrations to be *very pretty*. He said he understood it was a children's book but that a longer story would have had more impact. Finally, he said the book would not be good to learn about him or his culture because *people are very bad about treating their elders right and leave them on the temple steps all the time*. I had many clarifying questions to ask Yani about his questionnaire, but unfortunately, he was only available briefly for a focus group and could not participate in an interview.

The focus group began with an introduction of his book, *I Doko*. Yani explained that a *doko* is a basket that is made from bamboo and is used to carry many different things, including babies, while parents work in fields. *Dokos* are also used in remote areas to carry people as a means of transportation. *Dokos* are also used like a crib. Yani described a child sleeping in a *doko*: *If he is doing like, something moving then dokos will move like this then he enjoyed sleeping inside the doko too*. He described this as an old tradition that he thinks doesn't exist nowadays except in more remote areas. Yani shared that he slept in a *doko* as a baby and that his mother would carry him in a *doko*. He said that grass cuttings were used to fill the *doko* and the babies would be carried above the grass.

Yani pointed to the pictures in the book that showed a baby in the *doko*, and also to some *dokos* that were large enough to transport old and sick people, too. Darlene was interested in learning more about the *doko* and daily life in Yani's culture:

Yani: Some big. They make themselves so they use the kind of bamboo shoots.

Darlene: So--

Yani: Young bamboo shoots and they--

Darlene: Yeah.

Yani: Make them some.

Darlene: So, your mom did yours?

Yani: No, no, we bought, yeah, kind of people, certain kind of people only make this kind of things and they sell.

Darlene: Ok, ok.

Yani: Yeah.

Darlene: But do they still sell them?

Yani: Yeah, they still--

Darlene: They still do that.

Yani: You know, they still in my home, they use doko to carry the cow dung, right?

Darlene: Oh, ok.

Yani: So, yeah.

Darlene: Mhm.

Darlene and I both learned a little bit more about Yani's life in Nepal through this brief dialogue. I often assume that students in IEPs come from upper middle-income backgrounds and affluent families. This focus group, as well as interactions with other participants, tempered that assumption with the realization that some students come from developing and rural backgrounds where perhaps cow dung is transported by basket to fertilize fields.

When I asked Yani to tell me more about the book, he pointed out that the basket is the narrator of the story. The story begins with Master choosing the *doko*. Yani commented on the name Master:

Yani: Oh, yeah, the one, or the-- here is the one name, you know, the guy? Master he picked me up from among many baskets the one-- I don't know, the name is different here--

Darlene: Oh.

Yani: Not exactly the Nepalese name, Monique.

Like in his questionnaire, his retelling of the story showed he understood that older people are left at the temple, when in fact the story is about why older people are not left at the temple. Yani did not say anything about the confusion he indicated in his questionnaire about the treatment of elders in the book. His retelling also emphasized his reviewer's response.

Darlene asked more questions about the *doko*, wondering if it was passed from generation to generation. Yani said that when the basket gets old, it is replaced because the bamboo slowly decays. Darlene also wanted to know at what age babies are no longer carried in the *doko*. Yani explained that babies are carried until about the age they can walk. Finally, Darlene wanted to know if only women carried the *doko*. Yani said that any parent can carry the *doko*.

Yani then mentioned that *dokos* used to be used to carry the bride to her wedding ceremony, but that this has changed. Darlene asked more questions:

Darlene: Wow. And why do you think the doko is not used anymore because people has-- have moved a lot to the city or?

Yani: No, nowadays, you know, the-- for a marriage ceremony, they use the car, you know, the--

Darlene: Oh, ok, yeah.

Yani: They have more facilities then (laughs)--

Darlene: Modern life.

Yani: Yeah, modern life.

Darlene: Ok.

Yani: Modern

Darlene: Only in the country they use these doko.

Yani: No, no, even in India, some part of India--

Darlene: Ok.

Yani: And I think China, too? Right?

From this exchange, I learned two important things. The first thing is how life in Nepal has changed during Yani's lifetime. He referenced that he slept and was carried in a *doko* as a baby and child; however, other traditional uses of the *doko* have changed because of modern transportation. The second thing is that we are reminded that political boundaries are not cultural boundaries. Yani shared that it is not only the country of Nepal that uses *dokos*, but also parts of Nepal's neighbors, India and China.

As with Joe, I very much wanted to clarify the book with Yani; unfortunately, he was unable to participate in a follow-up interview. I wanted to know how he would react to going over the last page of the book that explains that the grandfather was not left at the temple steps.

My analysis of Yani's data made me question my own biases around academic backgrounds and readers. Did I have legitimate concerns about his comprehension, did I assume he misread the book because he had a background in the hard sciences rather than the humanities?

Iran: Raina. Raina's responses were as a reviewer, reader, language-learner. She did not find *Pea Boy and Other Stories from Iran* as an accurate way to teach culture. She responded to it emotionally as it brought up vivid memories of reading with her mother

which she described in some detail. This shows the possible overlap in responses as reader and reviewer. Raina also commented on the book as an English language-learner because she had to guess words, as compared to reading in Farsi where she felt she understood the book much more.

Because the book was long, I asked her to choose just one story to focus on. She chose to read the story of Mrs. Cockroach and Mr. Mouse. Mr. Mouse is an adoring husband, and Mrs. Cockroach is a silly wife. Unfortunately, Mr. Mouse dies and Mrs. Cockroach stops being so silly and being concerned with her clothes and appearance. The book made Raina feel good while reading, because she was already familiar with the story. She said that she *was encouraged to read it and compare it with her last time reading it*. This may be similar to what Mina relayed in her questionnaire when she mentioned reading Korean folktales in another class. Raina recalled a childhood memory coming to mind when she read the book:

I saw my childhood in the book. Specifically, I saw my mother sitting beside me and she was reading to me. I felt her leg which [sic] I put my head on while she read. I read this several times by myself after my mother read it to me.

This story is one that Raina had a deep connection to and is very familiar with, yet she was still figuring out some of the story. She said that she wondered why *Mrs. Cockroach was lazy and silly didn't take care of her father*. She said that she felt *differently* about reading about Iran in English. She said *When I was reading in English sometime I guessed the meaning of a word. In Farsi, I had a much better feeling and I understood the book much more.*

Because Mrs. Cockroach did not take care of her father and was so silly, thinking only of herself and her appearance, Raina did not think the book was good to learn about her

culture. She said the book would help someone understand her *because it helps children learn and it shows both a good and bad side of life*. I think this may be because she agrees that life has good sides and bad sides. She said the author should make Mrs. Cockroach more understanding of life's realities but did not think the illustrator should make any changes because good images were chosen *that a child could understand, and fit the story*. Her final thoughts on the story were:

Even Miss Cockroach lost her husband and became sad, but she learned how to handle this and learned to take care of her father and the importance of family.

Raina's response, though sprinkled with moments as a reader and a language-learner, was primarily as a reviewer,

Saudi Arabia: Geoff. Geoff's responses to *Going to Mecca* were as a reviewer, a reader, and a language-learner. From his response as a reviewer, it is tricky to say if this book was good for learning about his culture. He said that it was too limited because it only discussed one pillar of Islam, yet in his discussion of the book I learned about different sects who feel differently about the use of telescopes, and a very Saudi perspective on the wearing of the Hajib, this was good learning for me, but for him the book was not adequate.

His response as a reader was invoked by the subject of the book, the Hajj, which elicited an emotional response. Geoff explains a feeling of redemption and salvation from looking at the book. As a language-learner his response was evident in his concern for his teachers to have more semantic linguistic than cultural knowledge. The book did nothing to teach about the differences and similarities between English and Arabic. Geoff didn't think I needed to know about his cultural background as much as his linguistic background. His response as reader, reviewer and language-learner illustrate how much knowledge a

successful ESL teacher needs: knowledge of individuals; knowledge of culture; and, knowledge of the many languages represented in their classrooms.

I never had Geoff in a class, so I did not know him before the study. Geoff read *Going to Mecca*, written by Na'ima B. Robert and illustrated by Valentina Cavallini. The book follows a family coming from the west to complete the Hajj pilgrimage. The Hajj is a mandatory duty for all Muslims to take a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The book reminded Geoff of memories, and he said a lot of pictures came into his mind. He did not describe those memories or pictures in his questionnaire. He wondered why some of the events in the book were out of sequence. Concerning reading about his culture in English, he noted that there were *some new words for sure, but it was easier when you know about the subject*. Geoff did not think this book would help an ESL teacher know about his culture, because it only talks about one pillar of Islam. He suggested that the author give more details for those who are not Muslim. He also said that the illustrator should not show women without head coverings. Geoff did not participate in a focus group; however, I did have the opportunity to interview him and ask clarifying questions based on his questionnaire.

Geoff was the first interview I conducted. I have had many Saudi students, and while I was initially nervous to teach Saudi men because of what I understood about gender roles in Saudi culture, I have rarely run into any problems in my interactions with male Saudi students.

I began the interview and asked, "What do English teachers need to know about you and your country so they can help you learn more?" Geoff said knowledge of the similarities and differences between Arabic and English. He surprised me by saying that teachers didn't

need to know about him, but about his background. This conversation shows Geoff offering a language-learner response *Going to Mecca* :

Ok, first of all, about my country, about us as Arabic speaker-- actually our language is like, vice versa, like, reverse. Like, one hundred degrees out of English, you know? Everything we write from right to left, English from left to right and, as you know, the alphabet is different than English so we have to learn new alphabet. So, and sometimes, you know, in our language we have some differentiation of what like-- there's a base word and then we have derivatives of that word. Like, sometime in English, you know, base word then past, past participle and then make it adjective or something. So, we have the same thing so sometime we can use that. So, that about our language, but about myself, they don't, they don't need to know about myself. They need to know about my background so they can adjust their teaching to what I am.

I asked what his background included, and he only mentioned his *original language*. To get more information, I asked if it would make a difference if a teacher knew more about Saudi culture, and again I was surprised when he answered, *a little bit, not too much*. I followed up by asking what he would want an American teacher to know about Saudi culture. He said that most teachers don't realize that genders don't mix, and sometimes female teachers will want to shake hands, which is forbidden to them. He also talked about being assigned to work with girls. *We don't want to be only with girls because that's forbidden to us*. He explained that when it was a larger group in class that included both men and women it was ok, but that there was a problem when one man and one woman were assigned to work together alone. He also commented that other students don't always understand this about his culture:

And even sometimes the students themselves they don't know about our culture. So, sometimes when I assign with another girl, she want to touch me or she want to high-five or handshake or something and then I just apologize that we cannot...And then sometimes, you know, they feel it like, I don't how to say it, they feel like they-- I'm rude... So, sometimes they feel that. They feel uncomfortable with me.

I got the impression that Geoff did not want to be rude to classmates or make them uncomfortable, but that he wanted to follow the rules of his culture.

I then asked him about what he thought or imagined when he was reading the book *Going to Mecca*. He recalled the many times he had taken part in the pilgrimage, and his sentiment was of happiness and redemption:

Happiness and you know, spiritual feeling, it's not about our self because when we go there, we go to worship Allah, and when we go to worship that, we have spiritual feeling that our sins were deleted, our mistakes were forgiven.

It appears that reading the book elicited a positive response, and Geoff said that he felt comfortable (just like Walter) when talking about his culture. He explained:

when I talk about my culture, when I talk about something I know then I will feel comfortable to deliver, to convey the message because I know what I'm talking about. Not like when I talk about something that I know for the first time. You know what I mean?

His statement encouraged me to continue the practice of using children's books as a way to motivate students to engage in class activities. When I asked him his opinion on using children's book to learn English, he said that *Going to Mecca* was easy to understand, but that it was best for Muslim students *because they have some background about it.*

I wanted to better understand the relationship between Saudi students and Islam, so I shared with Geoff the trouble I had finding picture books that related to Saudi Arabia. (I found a handful of nonfiction texts that would result in efferent readings, but my study focused on books that could elicit an aesthetic response.) When I asked about Saudi Arabia outside of Islam, his answer confirmed that choosing a book that focused on Islam was appropriate for Saudi students:

Geoff: Actually, I think that 100% of Saudi's, not 100%, let's say 99% of Saudi's are Muslim but there are some just go out of Islam. We have some workers from outside Saudi who came to Saudi Arabia just to work there. They are not Muslim...Like, yeah, like, most of us are Muslim. I have never meet someone is not Muslim in Saudi Arabia.

Monique: So, this book covers like, you would say like, 99% of Saudi Arabia?

Geoff: Yeah.

Monique: So, do you think, you think this is a book American teachers should read?

Geoff: If they are interested in Islam, and interested in what Muslim people do, what activities they have, then they can read it.

It seems here that Muslim and Saudi are interchangeable, but I know that is not correct, because there are Muslim people from all over the world. Consider Fred, whose parents are Palestinian, yet he grew up in Venezuela, and Cyrus from Burkina Faso. I am also very curious about Geoff's statement *I have never meet someone is not Muslim in Saudi Arabia* and whether I can assume that my Saudi students are all followers of Islam.

We then discussed problems with the book that included the placement of praying pilgrims in relationship to the Ibrahim station, the fact that the writers didn't name two of the

hills that are part of the pilgrimage, and the tracking of time, which is based on a lunar system. The lunar system brought up a point about differing groups in Saudi Arabia.

Geoff: Because we have different calendar so our calendar is, it depends on the moon. So, sometimes the ninth day in some group of people who rely on, I don't know, I don't know how to say it but sometimes they rely on their eyes and they see the moon or sometimes they use some instrument like, I don't know to say it, to see the--

Monique: Oh, like, a telescope?

Geoff: Telescope, telescope.... Because, you know, some groups that allow telescope to help see the moon--And sometimes some other group, they do not rely on a telescope because they say that it was not invented in the Prophet age.

This segued immediately to another mistake in the book. A woman appeared without hair covering in one scene, which Geoff had noted in his questionnaire. Because the book included pilgrims from all over the world in Mecca, I asked for clarification on the range of hair covering I noticed among Muslim students as a teacher:

Monique: So, in this particular place but my question is, and this is just a clarification about hair covering? That in different countries there are different rules? Is that correct? Or is it--

Geoff: There are different rules but Islamic rules is one, there is one Islamic rule.

I wanted to understand more about differences in Islam. Geoff seemed resolute that women should be covered and that it is part of Islamic duty to do so. It, according to Geoff, was also a duty to say something to other people who were not doing the correct thing. I asked if this caused conflict or if people got mad about it. Geoff said: *Hm, not actually mad but, you know, sometimes you feel bad for something that's gone wrong.* Even though he

never stated that context matters regarding the degree of covering for women, he said that he would say something to the women in his own life about covering, but he would not say something about the degree of covering to everyone:

Geoff: Yeah but sometimes, you know, from their background like, if they are from Asia and sometimes, you know, the whole community not wear Hijab.

Monique: Yeah, yeah, and ... I think that's kind of my question like, the whole--

Geoff: I don't have to talk to her husband because, you know-- and they know but they believe that Hijab is Wajib. Wajib was mean it's their duty to do.... But they don't do it.

In the transcripts, Geoff may sound rigid, but in his interview, his tone was light and friendly. It seemed like he saw room for variation, even if there was *one rule*. Although he shared more conservative values regarding the separation of men and women, he was still a voluntary participant in my study. He seemed open to my questions and forthright in his answers. His responses as a language-learner impressed upon me the importance of taking the time to learn more about similarities and differences between English and the languages my students speak.

Burkina Faso: Cyrus. Cyrus responded as a reviewer, a reader, and a language-learner to *All Aboard to the Bobo Road*. As a reviewer, Cyrus had mixed feelings about this book as a tool to teach about his culture. In some ways the book painted an accurate picture with its vivid use of color and descriptions of some places. On the other hand he found it problematic and expressed his resistance to stereotypes of Africa as a land of large wild game like elephants and lions. This resistance was emotional showing his reader response to parts of the book, particularly around the children working instead of being in school.

As an English language-learner the book provided a springboard to share his culture with a new found friend in the focus groups and he seemed enthusiastic about using the book in an ESL classroom setting. Although this enthusiasm was tempered with a sense of English being an incomplete vehicle for describing his cultural background.

Cyrus only participated in a focus group and read *All Aboard for the Bobo Road*. This book is about the journey Ali makes with his two children from the city of Bobo to Banfora in Burkina Faso. They drive a minibus and pick up and drop off passengers along the way. Cyrus, like Darlene, referenced the author and illustrator in beginning his explanation of his book, *So, this book like, is like, was written by Steven Davis and Christopher Corr. So, they travel to my country, my country is Burkina Faso.*

Cyrus is correct that the author, Steven Davies, traveled in Burkina Faso, but the illustrator, Christopher Corr, based his illustrations on Davies' pictures, films, and conversations; Corr never traveled to Burkina Faso (Corr, personal communication, June 22, 2018).

Cyrus continued sharing background information before telling us about what happened in the book. He gave Fred and me a geography lesson. He told us that Burkina Faso is a landlocked country with three distinct regions. The northern part is the Sahara, the middle part is the Savanna, and southern part is called Sahel, which he described as *really green*. The landscape and the colors are important. This conversation demonstrates his response as a reviewer.

Cyrus: You-- do you know in Africa we have lot of colors like, colors are part of our culture like, it's hot, you know?

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: So, the colors are beautiful.

Cyrus and Fred both responded to representations of the scenery of their home countries in the books they read.

To give more context to the story, Cyrus, explained that there is poor transportation infrastructure, *Because we are like, underdeveloped country, we are still growing up so--*He told us that people buy second hand vehicles from Europe and use them to transport people throughout the country. He also mentioned the different tribes in Burkina Faso, reminding us that it is not a monolithic culture:

So, first of all, you see, if you see the book, you see different cultures. Like, you see different colors, all the stuff. Those colors like that from the Gurunsi. Gurunsi is a tribe in Burkina Faso, they are really artistic--

Later in the focus group, Cyrus told us more about colors, as well as about his own tribe. Fred showed agreement about the significance of colors;

Cyrus: And you see, what's beautiful here again, are the colors because, you know, in Africa we have lot of colors, yeah.

Fred: Colors. That's what defines the country is the colors.

Cyrus: Exactly.

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: For example, like, my traditional dress and the tradition of dress of someone from a different tribe. They look alike but the difference are the colors, you know? Mostly, my tribe, like, we have black and white or dark blue and white but other tribes, they might have the same model but it's yellow and white or something like that, you know?

He gave us more details about the history of his tribe:

My tribe is more organized because we have a team, we have ministers, we have like, you know? Because my tribe originally come from Ghana and they were a tribe of warriors and they stay in Burkina Faso, you know?

Cyrus gave more information about the places that the Bobo bus stops. One of the stops on the Bobo bus in Cyrus's book was at a mosque. Fred was interested if Cyrus had been to the mosque. Fred's parents came to Venezuela from Palestine, and while he grew up speaking Spanish as a first language he said that his parents spoke Arabic at home. This shared Islamic context was discussed between the two participants later when it was revealed that both speak some Arabic and talked about the upcoming Ramadan holiday.

Cyrus, in telling of other places the Bobo bus stops, commented on the beautiful scenery while acknowledging a sadness the book brought up for him:

Cyrus: Yeah. So, it's really beautiful but it describe also, like, our condition because like, those kids? They should be at school, not doing that. But, because like, the father doesn't have lot of money, they have like, to work--

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: You know? So, this is the sad part

The kids he referred to are Ali's, the bus driver's, children who work as ticket takers and other general support for the bus. The issue of kids working also appeared later in the focus group, when Cyrus spoke about gender differences and colonialism. Cyrus explained that the culture was originally matriarchal but that that was changed by outside influences. He pointed to a picture in the book and said,

Cyrus: You see the woman with the watermelons, again, you know? Carrying the babies, you know?

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: So.

Fred: Wow.

Cyrus: And this one, like, describe my country really well, actually, because, you know, African society in the past they were matriarchal. They were not patriarchal.

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: Like, women were like, the responsible of the society. We always had a king but women--

Fred: Women are the one's.

Cyrus: Yeah. But after a lot of influence from like, Middle East, like Europe, you know? We stopped this culture but you can still see that in Africa like, women they're willing to go sell watermelons and take the kids to school.

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: Meanwhile, for example, in this case you see the father is (laughs) using his kid like, to make his business, you know?

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: At the end of the day, everybody like, is living, the kids are helping him, again, yeah you see the beautiful colors and at the end, you will see, he will give them food, they will eat, they will be happy and next day, they will do the same thing.

He seemed to initially be upset with the father exploiting his children to work, but in the end, he noted that this is how the family makes its livelihood. Cyrus and Fred further

discussed the issues around children's schooling and working. Cyrus compared the kids in his book to Roberto in Fred's book.

Like, the country, what's happening there, they tried to describe like, the culture, you know? So, it's really good but the sad thing is like, seeing those two kids working with their dad like, make me sad because for a little bit in your book, the kid, he was going to school.

This sadness demonstrates a reader's response to *All Aboard to the Bobo Road*.

Fred and Cyrus discussed the implications of not having free education available for children:

Fred: In each country, which is interesting because sometimes it's like, you mentioned, sometime we may have fathers who are using their kids to sell in the streets--

Cyrus: Yeah, exactly.

Fred: And make money that way.

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: Then some fathers will not have the money to pay for their kids' education so they have to--

Cyrus: To work.

Fred: Make them work.

Cyrus: Exactly.

Fred: So, this something that we have is similar to what you are describing.

Fred let Cyrus know that there is a similar situation in his own country. I then asked if the children's father, Ali, was like other fathers in his country, and Cyrus responded:

He's unique because like, if you see Bobo-Dioulasso is like, the capital of Bobo. Dyula it's a tribe, like, in West Africa and most of them, like they said, you know? They use like, to go like, in getting like, salt and gold and selling so they have a tradition of business.

Monique: Mmhm.

Cyrus: And many of them, they're illiterate. So, you have some fathers like, Ali, they prefer to use their kids to make a business and after the kid will go to business then sending them to school and like, we have been fighting a lot against this kind of stuff but it's pretty unique because most of the time today, fathers, they want their kids to go to school.

From both his reviewer and reader response I gathered a sense of wanting children to be in school, but illiteracy and economics interfering in contemporary Burkina Faso.

Germany: Carey. Like Geoff, I did not have Carey for a student; in fact, her time at SWUIEP was a brief four weeks. I had little time to acquire a book for her and selected a book called *Germany ABCs* written by Sara Heiman and illustrated by Jason Millet. The book was available for overnight delivery at a reasonable cost, allowing me to get it to her with time to spare for participation in interviews and focus groups.

Carey responded primarily as a reviewer to *Germany ABCs*. As a critical reviewer of the text, Carey was unhappy and found the book to be totally inappropriate to teach about culture. Her book did not foster an aesthetic response because it was an informational text. At first this pairing of reader and book felt like a problem of the study, but upon further thinking and examination it reveals complications of genre. *Going to Mecca* was also an informational text, yet was able to yield somewhat of an aesthetic response.

Carey seemed frustrated with the text, indicating more of a reader's response because it was emotional. Her explanation of reading in English revealed more of an academic

identity in her reading than other study participants. She said reading in English didn't feel any different to her because it was something she was used to doing in her school work. Instead of her response being as a language learner, it was almost as if, she was no longer a language-learner.

I can't help but wonder what types of responses a book of higher literary quality would invoke from Carey.

Carey had a more negative reaction to her book, as revealed in her questionnaire, compared to what other participants experienced, the negativity being part of a reader's response. Carey brought up several examples of where the book went wrong in its accurate portrayal of Germany, thus showing a reviewer's response. This shows how the reader's response can build from the reviewer's response, just as it did with Ellen's response to the misuse of Spanish in *Roberto's Trip to the Top*.

She said that the book made her *sigh over things that, in my opinion, are presented without context or too stereotypical*. In her mind, she pictured the American authors who didn't know about the country they were writing about: *I see them trying to put together a children's book without giving any background information, and in a hurry, probably just to publish something*. She wanted to know,

Why did they pick the topics they picked? Why are they mostly using examples like Wurst, Cars or the Oktoberfest, most Americans already know about? What picture of Germany do the authors want to produce?

She said that reading in English about her country was *nothing extraordinary* and further explained that:

It is not about in which language a book is written, since many authors, also in Germany, publish their books in English in order to have a broader audience. I mostly didn't like though, how the language was used. That, for example, German politics were compared to US-American politics. Or that the authors talked about the Berlin Wall without giving any context. In sum, it is not about the language it is written in, but about the author's point of view.

Carey reacted very strongly to the text and felt that it should not be used by an ESL teacher to learn about Germany because it was so inaccurate. While she said “no” to the book for language learners, she remarked that reading in English was the norm, seemingly putting her in a place of bilingualism, instead of language learner as other participants in the study. It did not seem that she identified herself as a language learner, so it makes sense that she would not respond as one.

She felt the book would not help anyone understand her. She suggested that the author change *almost everything*. She elaborated:

Making connections, giving examples, having a structure (places, politics, habits, history etc. just structuring the facts, and not throwing them on the reader), avoiding stereotypes (most people do not wear Lederhosen or Dirndl to special occasions), referring to the chancellor as “he.”

She suggested that the illustrator add more detail and update the illustrations, which she said were *very old school and would have preferred them being more modern*. Her final thoughts on the book were that she could tell it was written by *US-Americans that did not really know Germany well*. Issues of authors writing outside of their own culture will be further discussed In Chapter Five.

During the focus group with Carey I asked if the writer's background mattered Kevin said that it did matter, and Carey then followed up and said:

Mmhm, I can agree with that cause I also think, especially about matters regarding history, or culture, or tradition, someone from the outside just cannot, cannot write as like, someone who owns the story or owns the history. Like, the example with the part about German unity and just kind of-- they wrapped it up in two sentences like, there was World War II, then Germany was separated, and then it was together again and like--... Someone who is German or who lived the time, like, who knows Germany better than an outsider would not wrap-- that big period of time up in such a short paragraph.

My final question for the group was, "How does it feel to use English to talk about your home culture?"

Carey's answer surprised me and was different than what I'd heard from other participants. She found the content and context to be more important than the language:

For me, it's more about the content and the language. My background is, I'm a-- I study social and cultural anthropology and all the writings we have, no matter like, what country they are about or no matter where the researcher that conducted the field work, for example, is from, it's mostly, 90% of it is written in English just because it's kind of like the universal language of academics? ...So, for me, it's not really weird as long as the context-- content is like, put in place and arranged in a-- and probably like, discussed with someone with insiders, you know?... So, it's not about the language but about the content for me.

Carey's academic background shaped her feelings about using English in a way that I hadn't considered. I always thought that using a language that was not your first, unless you

were truly bilingual, which Carey may be, made a difference in how you might feel when communicating with others.

I ended the focus group Carey attended by asking participants if they had questions for me. Carey had questions regarding my methodology that took me by surprise. In other focus groups, participants had asked me about the purpose of my research and how books were selected, but Carey was the first to inquire about the specifics of my methodology.

Guatemala: Jessica. Jessica responded as a reviewer, a reader, and a language-learner. As a reviewer, she found the *Abuela's Weave* to be very helpful to explain her culture, particularly as a Mayan in Guatemala. Her response as a reader to the book seemed joyful and almost as if to say, “finally, here I am in a book!” The illustrations and the story both connected Jessica to her homeland. As a an English language-learner this book, stirred a discussion of her identity as a trilingual. She speaks a Mayan language, Spanish, and now English. Talking about her culture, regardless of the language was significant to Jessica because she so rarely has had the opportunity to do so. Her responses as a reviewer, reader and language learner in a 40 minute conversation taught me more about Jessica than the time we spent together in class during a 16-week-semester

Demonstrating a reader's response, she had a positive reaction to *Abuela's Weave*, by Omar Castañeda and illustrated by Enrique O Sanchez. Jessica said she felt *very happy because it reminds me of home, and my family. I felt very excited as I was reading this book because it covers a lot of information I am familiar with.* In her mind, she saw pictures of people she knew who were weavers and an image of a *quiet place because weaving it takes a long time, and is better to do it in a quiet place.* She wondered what inspired the writer to focus on the grandma and granddaughter, explaining:

The process of weaving it usually takes a long time, and is a very important skill that women learned in the past. A long time ago the costum (sic) was that a mother will teach her daughter how to weave. And just like that they passed on that knowledge, however nowadays thing have changed because just some mothers still know how to weave. And grandmas who know how to weave still teach their granddaughters.

Showing her response as a language-learner, Jessica explained how reading about Guatemala in English felt good:

never thought that I would be reading about my culture in English. Reading about part of my culture in another language it even helps me to have a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of people's life in my culture.

As revealed in her interview, Jessica identifies as Mayan, an indigenous group in Guatemala, and she is pleased that the book focused on this part of Guatemalan culture. What follows shows a reviewer's response.

it talks about weaving and that's something that indigenous people have been doing for so long. I feel that this book it talks more about the Maya people of Guatemala. In my culture we have people with different ethnicities, but this is a great book about indigenous people's activities in a daily life. Even the things around the weaving part, are realistic and so that will help the readers to understand how people live, and how some events are held in my culture.

Jessica did not suggest any changes for the author or illustrator to make; rather she praised them and said that the writer's descriptions of *the process of weaving (some not all of it), the places, and the way people live. I think that all these things make the book very interesting.* She said that the images were nice and were an accurate description of her home

that felt realistic; she specifically mentioned the bright colors that are meaningful to textiles. Her final thoughts on the book were, *I believe that the book is great, and it teaches a lot about the life of indigenous people's life in Guatemala.*

By the time I had the opportunity to interview Jessica, all other participants had attended a focus group, and there was no one for her to meet with. We began the interview with a walk-through of the book. Jessica described the book's opening picture as an introduction to the text. It features a granddaughter and grandmother at a loom admiring a textile. She described it as a realistic depiction because of the colorful style and the pictures of people working in the fields and chickens roaming around. Her response to the accuracy of the pictures blends her reviewer and reader response.

The work of weaving that is the foreground of the picture is a time-consuming meditative process that Jessica said requires quiet and focus:

So, they're working for very long hours to finish this, they start in the morning and sometimes just sit there all day.

When the grandmother and granddaughter finish their weaving, the textile is packed up in a basket, and the granddaughter walks to the bus, carrying the basket on her head. Jessica explained that this is traditional in her culture: women carry things on their heads and men carry things on their backs. The scene where the granddaughter gets on the bus reminded me of an image from *All Aboard for The Bobo Road* where the bus driver's children help organize things on top of the bus. Jessica described the scene:

And, the-- she, she's getting on the bus and so, when you have big things to take in the bus with you in Guatemala, you put it on top of the bus. So, these two guys are helpers of the driver and so they're the ones who organize things above the bus.

In both books, transportation was described in rural areas of developing countries. The bus takes the granddaughter to the city for the market where she will sell the textiles she made with her grandmother. In the market scene, Jessica pointed out a tourist:

Jessica: Yeah, Guatemala is a very touristy place so you see like, this guy doesn't have like, black hair? ...It's more like, red or something like that so-- and he's like, photographing things?... And that's what people-- tourists mostly do when they come. (laughs)... They see something that's very interesting, oh, let's take a picture...

And yeah, and then they want to touch everything... If they can? (laughs)

Monique: (laughs) What do you think about that?

Jessica: It's fine, people in Guatemala are very like, they're very like, touch it, like, smell it if you want, like--

I thought that the tourists might be annoying or invasive in their desire to touch things and was surprised by Jessica's response and description of a culture so open to sensory exploration. I was also struck by the observation of his status as a tourist based on his hair color. This led me to believe Jessica assumed that most Guatemalans have black hair, and it was difficult not to assume so, as well.

The fair-haired tourist buys the textile. Jessica remarked on its beauty and significance:

Jessica: Yeah and yeah, that the beautiful thing that they made and this is how Mayan, Mayan people dress like, in the past? Or like, how they look like and this is then a national bird, I think? And, yeah so there's many things that are so symbolic in the culture within this piece of weaving.

Monique: So, like, the bird, what else is symbolic?

Jessica: This guy.

Monique: Who's that guy?

Jessica: I don't know who he-- there's just people that, that's how Mayan people used to look like--

The tourist is able to afford the weaving, while Jessica said many of local people cannot. Jessica concluded her telling of the story by saying the granddaughter returns home by bus, happy, because she was successful in selling everything she brought to market.

I then followed up with Jessica on what she wrote in her questionnaire. I began by asking about a statement she made regarding it being an old tradition to teach weaving intergenerationally. She explained that there was an influx of machine weaving and factories:

Jessica: Right now, there is less and less people interested in doing the hand by hand weaving because people have created machines that do it so much faster than they will do it with-- yeah.

Monique: So, who learns how to use the machines now?

Jessica: Well, we have like, companies from the outside who will come or people-

Monique: Oh, ok.

Jessica: Who aren't necessarily indigenous who make them.

Later in the interview, Jessica explained the implications and reasons for the factories. She began with explaining the impact on the Mayan weavers:

Hm, well, we have a lot of issues with that because sometimes people actually do this job, like, sit in there like, for twelve hours or ten hours a day and then they make something really beautiful, and then they sell it to somebody who will give them just like, a little bit of money but that somebody will sell it to like, a tourist, for example? For so much more money

so then, the people who are actually suffering doing it, well, not suffering doing it, but because they enjoy weaving, they know how to do it, it makes them happy, but they spend so much more time in it and they get a little bit of money. And so, I think that having this companies or like other people like, trying to do it faster is not necessarily good because it takes away the opportunity for, for the Mayan people to, to, to sell their things or to make even more and--

Jessica also explained other dimensions of factory weaving. One, which she mentioned earlier, is that local people cannot afford to buy handwoven textiles when there are thrift stores selling things at a fraction of the cost. Another issue is the popularity and desirability of the goods:

we have a lot of issues because sometimes like, the younger generation is like, I want something beautiful and I don't think this is beautiful enough for me to wear so, something that the machine made is like, it's more beautiful, you know?... So, so, there's a lot of issues everywhere and we have so much more clothes like, like, that just-- other clothes like this ones? What are these called, you have thrift stores that sell clothes like for five, five quetzales, ten quetzales so why would you buy something that costs four hundred quetzales, you know?... And so, people don't really want to buy like, (laughs) expensive things so they choose to buy something cheaper and so, it's hard because there's no interest in wearing them?... But they just don't like it or it's just too expensive and so, less and less people are wearing it.

Jessica explained how the issue was not just on the supply end, but also partially on the demand end when it came to who purchases the traditional textiles. Jessica said that there are still people who buy the traditional Mayan weavings and clothing.

Jessica painted a description of Guatemala that is divided. The first divide is between rural and urban. This contrast was represented in the book.

We can see that the picture has changed? And there's so many people, there's more cars, more busses, and it's really, really busy, and it's because now, they're in the city and before they weren't in the city. And so, here, she's, she's, she's like, walking and see where she will go. It's pretty busy all over.

The country, which is where she is from, is different. She described the book's illustrations as depicting a different pace of life:

I think it really shows how people live like, in a like, in a little space, like, having animals, chickens, and like, other people working over there and, and showing that people spend so much time like, weaving and that's not like, always just, just something that you do when you're bored because there's people who actually do that for a living

The other divide she described was ethnic:

So, we have the Latino people which is like, the white people and we have the indigenous people which are the Mayan people, you know?

When I asked her how it felt to talk about Mayan culture, I saw the impact that this divide had on her:

Monique: Ok. How do you feel about answering questions about your book and your culture? Like, how do you feel talking about the book and how do you feel talking about Mayan culture?

Jessica: I feel, I feel happy talking about it? Because I think that it's important to talk about this so that we can all learn about how some people live in one part of the world and what they do for a living or, or something like them.

Monique: How often do you get to talk about being Mayan?

Jessica: Not a lot. In Guatemala, we have a racism problem--

Monique: Ok.

Jessica: Against indigenous people. So, it's actually not like a happy thing like, to just be like, walking around there like, "Oh, I'm Mayan, I'm Mayan, (laughs) and I speak two languages." Like, you can't do that because people are like, ugh, like, you know? So, I don't really talk about like, who I am.

Racism kept her silent on her identity. In fact, her Mayan identity appeared to develop while in the United States. She explained that she didn't even realize that she was Mayan until she lived here. She didn't realize that Mayans still existed. Her response to the question about being in a southwestern state with a significant indigenous population demonstrates the effects of racism on the awareness she had of her own ancestral heritage:

I actually never thought that I was Mayan...I never knew that I-- that the Mayan still exist, (laughs) and I never like, think about why some people had lighter eye color, lighter hair color, like, lighter skin or darker skin, like, I never thought about those things? So, it didn't affect me at all, but later, when people were like, like in this culture, "so, what's your ethnicity?" And I'm like, "what is that?" (laughs) Like, who you are or who are you? And I'm like, "who am I? I don't know." (laughs) Like, so then I started realizing and started learning, oh, there's indigenous people and there's people who aren't indigenous and there's so many other things that I didn't even know about. So, I grew up learning that the indigenous people or the Mayan people in Guatemala were just huge guys or huge women who were very strong, very very strong and they all die and they were buried under the Catholic Church and in the, and in a market but under the market and like, they all disappeared, like, completely

all of them disappeared. So, I grew up not knowing that my ancestors were Mayan and there's something called ethnicity and that's-- and so, my ethnicity was Mayan and there's the Achi people, and other people in Guatemala. So, I am Maya Achi and we have other people but that was really interesting to me. So, being in Albuquerque it was like, it's fine because then I started learning, oh, we have the Native Americans of New Mexico and then let's just go here and let's just, let's just see these people and let's see this other group of people over there, and over there, and over there and then, oh, indigenous people are all over the places, you know? But I didn't know that.

The ethnic divide is related to both the rural/urban divide as well as a linguistic divide between Spanish and indigenous languages. When I asked what teachers needed to know about her culture, her response showed the overlapping relations between place, language, and ethnicity:

And so, I'm like, yeah, I am. So, do you speak Spanish? Yes, I do. But actually, the things, the thing go more than that because I am not just a Guatemalan but also a Mayan and so, usually Mayan people from Guatemala are bilinguals. So, if a student comes here and is like, oh yeah, I'm Guatemalan and what's your ethnicity? And so then, he or she will say and then based on that you can, oh, do you speak Spanish and another Mayan language? Or, or you're from the city and you just speak one language, yeah. So, indigenous people are, are mostly bilinguals.

From her statement about being from the city and speaking one language, I infer that Latino Spanish speakers mostly live in the city, and the Mayan and other indigenous groups live in rural areas. As an English, teacher knowing that a student is learning their third language is important, because bilingual students already have the experience of acquiring a

second language; however, a teacher cannot assume what this language acquisition experience was like for the student.

The final divide explicated in her interview was gender within the Mayan culture. As mentioned earlier, there was a specific gender difference in how things were carried: women carried goods on their heads and men carried things on their backs. The other differences struck me as more significant to Jessica, such as a Mayan woman seeking higher education in the United States:

Yeah, in, in the Mayan culture, for example, education is not really a thing for women...So, Mayan girls tend to get married so much earlier--...

Than girls from the city or like, Latinos because I think most of them have the opportunity to go and study but not indigenous people. Because they can't afford education so if, so if a couple is willing to give education to their kids? That's gonna be usually to their son and not necessarily to their girls.

This excerpt also shows the other divides discussed earlier: Jessica said Latino women (presumably urban) have more opportunities for education than Mayan women. According to Jessica, when Mayan girls are in school they are expected to be quiet. This has implications for ESL classrooms in the United States that encourage students to talk and participate in group activities.

Jessica: Oh, for example, for example, back home, women aren't really like, encouraged like, talk, and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk, and just talk and just say what they wanna say but, but here it's just like, you are more like, free to say what you wanna say. And if you're working for somebody like, for your boss, I think you can tell him if you have like, a disagreement about something or you seen an issue or something like that but back

home, you, you kind of like, if your boss says, (laughs) you are gonna do it? So then, just do it and you're not gonna argue with them so--

Monique: Do you feel the same-- did you feel that way about teachers when you came? That if the teacher said something, you were just going to do it and not wanna talk and be quiet or?

Jessica: Yeah, yeah, exactly--...Like, just that behavior or just not like, saying anything but then like, everyone like started saying, oh, she's so shy, she's so shy but-- and that was kind of confusing because back home like, if you don't talk, nobody tells you that you're so shy.

Monique: Right, and I know--

Jessica: Because that's a good characteristic of you.

Monique: Yeah, and here, we call on students and want them to talk.

Jessica: Yes.

Monique: So, how was that for you?

Jessica: For me, it was like, kind of, weird? (laughs) Because like, because I thought that, oh, these people just like to talk a lot.

Monique: (laughs) Yeah.

Jessica: And, and like, yeah, why can't they just sit there and just, just not talk (laughs) like that, just not talk. But then I realize, ok, that's what we do in my culture, that's not necessarily what we do in this culture.

Monique: Now, you were saying for women, is it the same with men?

Jessica: No, men can talk. (laughs)

From a researcher and a teacher perspective, I can see the impact that race and gender have on Jessica's classroom experience. The intersectionality of ethnicity and gender (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013) silenced her in previous classrooms, making it strange when she was in a classroom where she was expected to speak up. When she didn't speak up, her teachers and classmates thought she was shy, when really, she was acting the way she'd learned to act in school: quietly. If I could be her teacher again, I might experiment with different group settings to see where she was most comfortable. The divides in Jessica's Guatemala, I think, represented some of the most revealing data in this study regarding culture and considerations for classroom practices.

Reading *Abuela's Weave* was empowering for Jessica. Her response as a reviewer, commenting on the accuracy of the text served as a springboard to speak freely about who she is and where she comes from.

Summary

Each reader's transaction with a text revealed a unique experience. Through their interactions with children's books, I am able to begin to articulate answers to my three research questions:

How do adult English language learners respond to multicultural, international, or global picture books related to their home countries?

Different things happened when ESL students in an IEP responded to literature that was representative of their national identity. Some participants expressed sentiments of missing their home. Others found connections between themselves and the texts, but some found their particular book to be a poor representation of their country or confusing. Through my analysis of the data, which included two rounds of coding and the process of writing it

into a narrative form, themes emerged. Participants talked about food, landscape, and the things that typically happen at home either as part of special occasions or on a daily basis. Many of these things are more on the surface level of culture, rather than beneath the surface.

How does using English when talking about books related to their home country engage participants in reading and discussions?

The overall reaction to both reading and sharing about the children's literature was positive. Even when one participant, Carey, did not like the book she read, her experience in the interview and focus group did not appear bad. There were some indications of higher motivation, such as Bliss wanting to communicate effectively with Todd. The largest sentiment I noticed among participants was that they felt like they had contextual or background knowledge to support using English. The familiarity of the topic gave participants a springboard to launch conversations and engaged the participants in both reading and discussion.

How can students' responses to children's picture books portraying their home country help me as teacher to improve teaching by developing more specific cultural knowledge in an adult English language program?

The responses often challenged the notion of developing specific cultural knowledge through the use of children's literature. I coded several statements as "too narrow," meaning that the participants felt the book was too narrow to explain them as individuals or to teach about their culture. By the numbers, it also looked like using children's books to learn about culture was more "bad" than "good." In 14 instances, I coded statements as "bad to learn about culture" as opposed to five statements that I coded as "good to learn about culture." But looking at the entire data set after two rounds of coding, there were more statements

coded as “culture” than anything else. The data coded as “culture” serves as threads in my fabric of knowing about cultures outside of my own. In Nepal, baskets are used to carry dung to fertilize fields. Kyoto is the best place to learn the meaning of *ma*. Not everyone in Mexico connects to *Día De Los Muertos*, but it is still a significant tradition that has deep meaning to many people. The landscape in Venezuela is beautiful, and the ramifications of colonialism shifted elements of African culture from a matriarchy to a patriarchy. I qualify these statements as “my knowing,” because I do not think I had broad enough representations from different countries to make assertive arguments about any particular cultural knowledge as being true; however, these statements are now part of what I know about how others see their worlds and, through them, how I create my understanding of what I do not know firsthand. As Todd remarked, having knowledge about a culture is not easy, considering the diversity of individuals within a culture:

Each Japanese has different characteristics that still, you want to have a normal, I mean, the standard knowledge about Japan. Hm, it is difficult.

The idea of a standard knowledge about a culture is challenged by my data. It is, as Todd said, “indeed difficult.” However, the reading of children's’ books and conceptualizing responses in three ways, reviewers, readers, and language-learners is helpful to English as a second language teachers. Seeing students as reviewers engages them in a process that both demonstrates and solicits agency allowing students to have a space to have a dialogue with the teachers about their home cultures and landscapes. Exploring a range of reading responses aides teachers in understanding how students articulate their experiences reading in English. Often students expressed their longings for home, or explained various types of aesthetic responses that are sometimes simply happy or sad. Other times they explained more

complex emotions. Their language-learner responses that speak to the imperfections of translations, offers a way for teachers to counter the often over reliance on direct translation that some students fall into. Adopting authentic texts like children's literature in a space like adults' language learning centers will invite students to find their voices and perspectives when English language is not the ultimate goal of their learning but a tool to share their thoughts aloud.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Conclusions

In this chapter, I use the data I explicated in Chapter Four to answer my research questions. In order to answer the first research question and explain how participants responded to literature portraying their home country, I draw on two frameworks. I choose to use two different frameworks because a variety of different and significant things happened beyond what one conceptual lens can capture. To answer my second question, “How does using English when talking about books related to their home country engage participants in reading and discussions?” I look at my data directly related to that question. My final question, “How can students’ responses to children’s picture books portraying their home country help me as teacher to improve teaching by developing more specific cultural knowledge in an adult English language program?”, is perhaps the most difficult to answer. I use three specific writers to corroborate data and discuss the challenges of supporting culture through literature.

Research Question 1

How do adult English language learners respond to multicultural, international, or global picture books related to their home countries?

A lot of things happened when participants responded to children’s picture books related to their home country. This depended on the individual as a reader; the text itself; and, in some cases, the positioning of the author and illustrator. In this section, I will use two different conceptual frameworks to explain the answer to my first research question. First, I will use an iceberg model of culture to examine how participants responded to visible cultural elements. Then, I will discuss the implications of the authors’ and illustrators’ status as insiders and outsiders.

Some participants loved their books, others had mixed feelings, and one participant hated what they read. Some participants may have missed plot-level details, causing confusion and a different response than if they had read with a clear understanding of what happened in the text.

Within reader response theory there are efferent and aesthetic responses to texts. Some texts lend themselves more to one response than another. For example, a biology textbook is more of an efferent reading experience, whereas poetry is oriented to an aesthetic response. As a student of poetry, I was trained, and now teach my students, to unravel the more efferent layers of literature as a segue into developing an aesthetic response. When I read a poem with students, I first ask: What's really going on here? Who is speaking, and what happens? Is there a story or some other thing that we can all agree on in the poem? From a common understanding, students can then engage in a debate about the other layers at work in a text. In this study, I did not have the opportunity to discuss this first level of understanding with participants or allow for participants to interact around a shared text. In most cases, this did not interfere with a reader developing an aesthetic response. However, in one case, I am not confident that the entire efferent reading was sound and am concerned that it influenced the aesthetic experience of the reader.

Iceberg model of culture. Through my analysis of the data collected in the study, I noticed some similarities in what participants noticed and responded to in the texts they read. The iceberg model of culture, which is based on the work of Hall (1973), looks at visible and invisible elements of culture. Using the iceberg model of culture, participants noticed the occurrence or lack of occurrence of visible culture such as food, festivals, fashion, and language. When these elements were lacking, some participants suggested that they be

included so that the book would become a better teacher about the culture. In the case of one participant and their book, the surface-level representations were found to be grossly inaccurate and problematic. One of the underlying goals of my research was to get below the surface of the iceberg. I found fewer themes relating to underlying cultural elements than those on the surface. The iceberg analogy has its limitations and will only serve as a starting point to interpret the surface layer of my data. Later, in response to research Question Three, a different model that looks at culture as something that is dynamic will be used to help understand how individuals situate themselves uniquely within their cultures. Limiting the use of the iceberg model in understanding my data allows me to consider the important individual variations in respect to a transactional approach to reading.

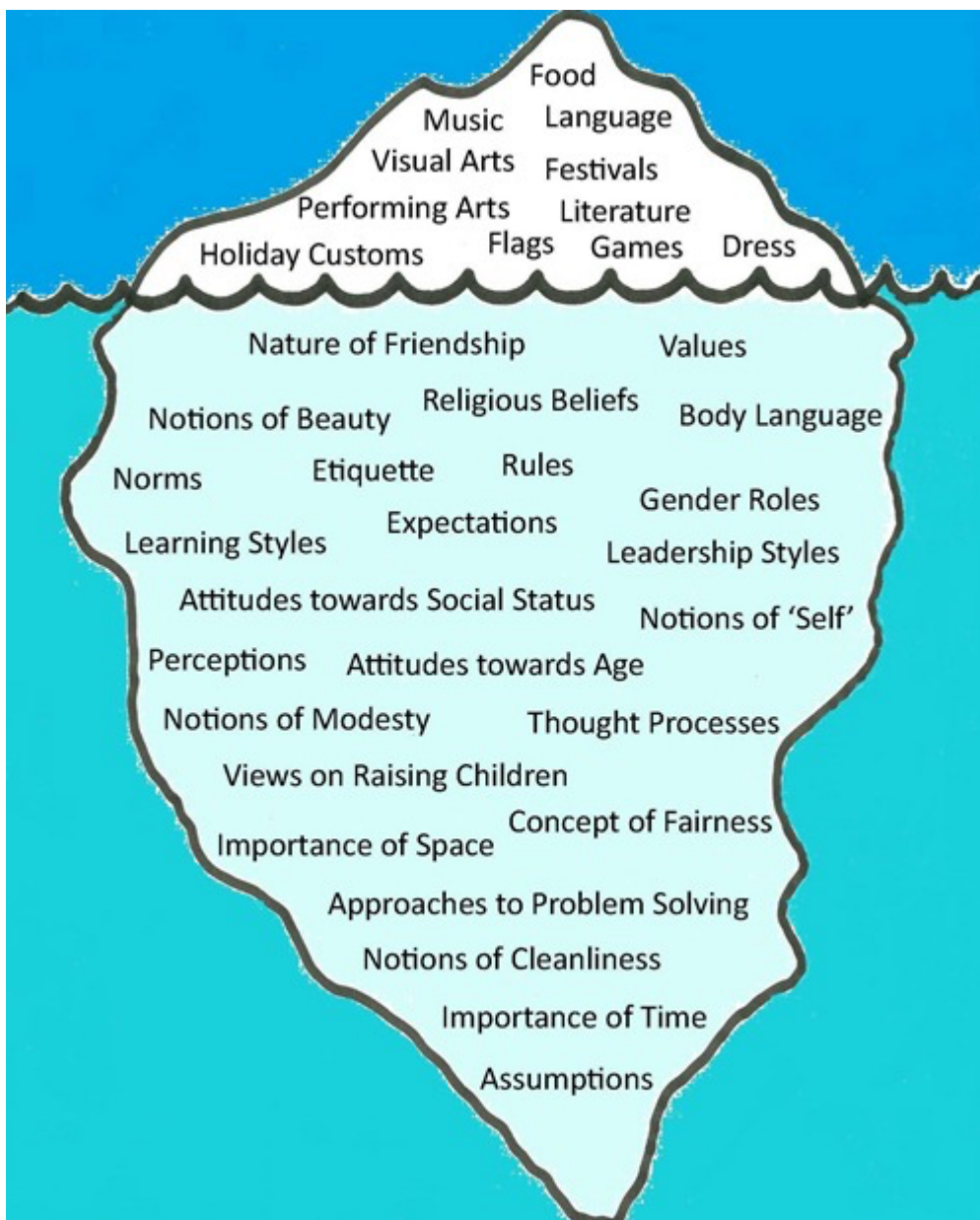


Figure 6. Drawing of the cultural iceberg illustrating visible and invisible culture.
<http://interculturalism.blogspot.com/2011/03/iceberg-model-of-culture.html>

Food came up frequently in my data, but in different ways. Its prominence indicated that food was an element of sharing culture that was important to the participants. In the texts used in the study, food could be the sole connection to a culture, misrepresented, absent, or interpreted differently by participants from the same country.

In *The Invisible Boy*, food was the biggest connection to culture that the participant noted. However, it was not enough to help the book explain Korean culture:

This book has only information about Korea is Koreans eat bulgogi. I think this is kind of culture thing, but it is too narrow for understanding our culture Koreans have a lot of kind of food, culture, history, manners and language. There are so many things to know about Korea. I think this book need to more information about Korea, if ESL teachers want to learn about our culture.

The book featured a lunch scene at school when one character, Justin, brought bulgogi for his meal. The other kids laughed at him, but Brian, the protagonist of the story, did not. Brian left a picture and note for Justin saying that the food looked good, and this helped start a friendship. In this instance, food served as a vehicle for moving the plot forward, culturally situating a character, and connecting the reader to the text. Mina explained her connection to the text by relating how she feels eating Korean food in the student union building. She said:

Sometimes feel weird when I eat my food in the sub because it smells different and some people look at me when I am eating it's uncomfortable. In SWU people mixed together. I think they are just curious about my food. But the kids didn't know so tease or bully. But people here know the Korean food or rice it makes me a little more comfortable.

In *Germany ABCs*, Carey connected representations of food to stereotypes about German culture and daily life.

Carey: ...I think somewhere it said that Germans eat wurst? So, sausage? And it didn't really have like, it was just, like there was not really stated what kind of sausage or,

you know? It was just like, oh, yeah, they eat, they eat sausage and that it's-- it was-- it's so, so popular and delicious that it was important, important to the U.S. and that's it.

Yet Carey also commented that it would be an improvement to include ordinary food in the book: *I could imagine it being interesting to see like, what do Germans students eat for breakfast? How does their lunch look like?* Bliss, in his focus group with Todd, thought that adding more typical Venezuelan food would be beneficial to the book he read, and he contrasted it with Japanese food.

Bliss: Yeah, definitely. I will, I will recommend the writer to maybe put some cuisine, some Venezuelan cuisine--

Todd: Mmhm.

Bliss: Into it because Venezuelan cuisine is not normal. It is actually pretty unique to the place.

Todd: Mmhm.

Bliss: Unlike, for example, Japanese cuisine, which is famous worldwide, for example, sushi, or something

Todd also noticed that typical Japanese food was not included in his book:

Japanese culture, sushi, tempura, sukiyaki. Those three stuff is very famous for foreign person but this doesn't include anything about those stuff. It's an interesting point.

Todd didn't make a value statement or indicate that this was good or bad; he merely noted that it was interesting.

In *Roberto's Trip to the Top*, food showed up in three different ways: as a source of connection and nostalgia, a source of disagreement, and a source of misrepresentation and frustration. Reading about Roberto's mom preparing food brought back memories for Fred:

Fred: ... His mom also gave him-- packed him food that I really feel familiar with and one of the foods that I enjoy hearing about was empanadas which are like, a corn dough that are stuffed with ground beef--

Cyrus: Mmhm.

Fred: And-- but that's one of the foods that I remember every morning eating as a kid so.

Cyrus: (laughs)

Fred: (laughs) Yeah.

Cyrus: You were missing the food when you were reading this? (laughs)

Fred: Oh yeah, I miss my food. I was hungry when I was reading it too--

Bliss fondly remembered eating *fresas con crema* (strawberries and cream):

Bliss: maybe like, some junk food from time to time, candies, and here, of course, they're selling, souvenirs and this is actually very common for us, fresas con crema.

Fred did not think *Fresas Con Crema* were typical.

...and he enjoy strawberries with his uncle which is really rare for people in my country to have really amazing fruits like this, like strawberries--.

Ellen did not mention strawberries in her questionnaire or interview, but food did come up in her focus group with Edgar. She wanted to see more accurate representations, including of food, in the book:

... I would really like-- see, if I want to teach about my culture, I want, I'd really want you to know that like, my money currency is bolivars, it's not pesos and then, we don't eat tortillas, we eat arepas or like, other things. What else? I don't know those kind of, those are ideas that just go through my mind--

As discussed in Chapter Four, the terms *pesos* and *tortillas*, which are primarily Mexican, were used in *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. This was noted by all three participants from Venezuela, causing various reactions. For Ellen, it turned reading the book from exciting to disappointing, because the use of the terms was so inaccurate to Venezuela, where the common food is bread and the currency is bolivars. In his questionnaire, Bliss included it as something that the authors should change:

Just some words and objects that are not common in Venezuela, such as "pesos" and "tortillas" as this really would be Mexican culture.

Bliss and Ellen are both from Caracas, where the book takes place. Fred, from the state of Falcon, noticed the use of the word *tortilla* but wondered if it was something that people ate in Caracas. Barrera and Quiroa (2003) point out the misuse of Spanish in reference to foods in the book *Hurray for Three Kings' Day* (Carlson, 1999). The example they give in *Hurray for Three Kings Day* involves mixing different varieties of Spanish in naming the food, causing some confusion. Regarding the food appearing in the book, they say, "...at best, the food scene leaves young readers guessing about Latino families and this holiday. At worst it exacerbates the simplistic notion that Latinos are all alike because they share common language heritage" (Barrera & Quiroa, 2003, p. 256).

Fred was left guessing about the use of *tortillas* in his native Venezuela. Bliss noticed the generalization but was somewhat forgiving, in light of the book's intended audience:

Monique: And I want to talk about two details that you mentioned both, here, on your questionnaire, and in the focus group which is they use the word tortilla and peso.

Bliss: (laughs)

Monique: Tell me how that made you feel.

Bliss: (laughs) It was funny, it was kind of funny because I'm aware that maybe it is considered that every Latin American country has pesos as their currency, we don't. The currency in Venezuela is Bolivar and we don't eat tortillas, that is something extremely Mexican. I think only the Mexican, maybe the Central Americans do it. We eat bread...

Monique: What do you think that means in the book that they got this wrong?

Bliss: I think, if he did it accidentally, it's not bad and if he did it on purpose, it's not bad neither, to be honest, because it makes sense because at the end of the day, who's the audience? The audience most likely is American children's, right? And if their American childrens then explain them, for example, what is bread for us or exactly the currency that Venezuelans use, it could be a bit complicated. Well, pesos, although not the currency in every Latin American country, it is still quite common in most countries...Also, the fact that down south they do have Mexico in America.

Pedagogically, Bliss's comments are a reminder that discussing audience is part of forming an interpretation of or transaction with the text. Bliss used his understanding of the relationship between author and text to make sense of what may be a purposeful or accidental misrepresentation of his country's particular dialect of Spanish. When he said, "*And if their American childrens then explain them, for example, what is bread for us or exactly the currency that Venezuelans use, it could be a bit complicated,*" he was putting children in the role of reader, rather than personalizing it to him.

Language, like food, is something on the top of the iceberg conceptualization of culture. I find this problematic, because I believe language also operates below the surface. The grammar and vocabulary may be above water, but meaning may exist below. The presence of participants' first language in books occurred primarily in books from Mexico

and Venezuela, i.e., *Funny Bones* and *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. In the case of *Roberto's Trip to the Top*, it is an easy leap to apply Barrea and Quiroa's (2003) analysis of the use of Spanish in English children's books. They offer the insight that the use of "Spanish terms requires a certain level of cultural and linguistic knowledge on the part of the author. Not to possess that sophistication is to risk using Spanish terms superficially or in token like ways rather than as powerful devices for literary effect" (p.262).

The use of *pesos* and *tortillas* are an example of superficial and token use. Not all the use of Spanish in *Roberto's Trip to the Top* caused problems for the readers. Bliss praised the author's choice to use Spanish in the book: *Which was a pretty smart decision by the writer, for example, the word for, in Spanish, for the smile is sonrisa*. Bliss was so enthusiastic about the use of Spanish in the focus group, he wanted to share as many examples as he could with Todd.

I'm trying to look for any Spanish words, let me check. This is for-- this is the telefetic, the tramway, this is the actually the base operation we function in Caracas. Let me look for another one, cerrada, which means close. I'm trying to look for any one that is important, empleados, which mean workers, mostly. And, let me continue, and this...

He then found more examples,

... Over here, "todos abordo," all aboard, all aboard, of course. Let me check, I'm looking for every single Spanish word as possible. Mamá, which is mother.

Another example was the use of *barrios*, which means "neighborhoods": -- *barrios, here is the word, they actually made it correct thing*. He was so excited about it, he pointed out several examples, hoping to find them all to share with Todd.

Todd, from Japan, also encountered his first language in his book, through the use of onomatopoeia. This, as discussed in Chapter Four, made Todd happy, and he smiled. *The Sound of Silence* also used Japanese names for popular businesses and cartoon characters. These appeared anglicized. In *A Piece of Home*, the names of the main character and the flower were in Korean, but with anglicized spelling, allowing the English-speaking audience to say and sound out the Korean words. There was one instance where Korean was used in the traditional Hangul form. This moment in the text was discussed in Chapter Four. It was a poignant moment in the text when the main character, in his own language, says he does not want to be here, in America, to his teacher. Neither the non-Hangul-reading reader nor the teacher in the book know what he is saying. In the narrative of the text, the character describes what is happening to the monolingual reader:

I try to say I don't want to be here. She nods a lot and smiles but she knows that I do not understand and I know she does not understand.

When the monolingual reader sees the Hangul writing, they do not understand, placing them in precisely the same position as the story's narrator as he begins going to school in the United States and is just beginning to learn English. Perceptively, Walter, pointed out that anyone could read the expression of sadness and longing for home on the character's face. The illustrations provided context to convey meaning.

Spanish appears frequently in *Funny Bones* and *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. Barrera and Quiroa (2003) systematically analyzed the use of Spanish words relating to family, food, and physical environment in Latino picture books. It is interesting that Bliss pointed out Spanish words from all these categories (*mamá*, *tortilla*, and *barríos*) in his focus group with Todd. The data in my study both corroborate and challenge the arguments presented in

Barrera and Quiroa (2003). These researchers argue that the use of Spanish can either add to or subtract from the cultural authenticity and the overall literary quality of a text depending on their thoughtful and careful integration into the text. They also argue that translation matters. They draw on Rudin (1996) to explain the different ways Spanish terms can be translated: *literal*, *non-literal*, *contextual*, or through a glossary. *Literal* translations, which are when the English word appears next to or near the Spanish word, can cause redundancy for the bilingual reader and be disruptive to the flow of the text. It also can contribute to the rendering of Latino characters as “unconvincing and unrealistic” (p.263).

One example of the paradox of corroboration and challenge is illustrated with the use of *tortillas* and *pesos* in *Roberto’s Trip to the Top*. We saw examples of subtraction with the use of *tortillas*, *pesos*, and *andalé*, which participants noticed belong to a more Mexican dialect of Spanish, yet we saw Bliss’s excitement and enthusiasm about the use of other Spanish words.

The presence of L1 in books used in this study raises the question: What is a bilingual book? And in the case of *Funny Bones*, with its use of English, Spanish, and sprinklings of Aztec language, what is a trilingual book? How should authors approach translation, what does it mean to the participant as a reader, and what does it mean for the often-intended audience of English-speaking children? Darlene gave some insight into these questions:

...I like the idea of sharing the culture, and having other people know about it, and if it's in their language, I think they will understand better, but in the other hand, I, like I said, it would be nice to, for people to understand the words that are in Spanish? So, he explains them but maybe, and there's a glossary, but maybe if he could show, you know, like, I don't know if that's possible, but like, have the words that he's saying in Spanish here maybe,

maybe have a little square on top and show exactly what it is because although it, the translation is here, some people might not know what a marigold flower is although there is-- they're the only one but in, you know like, if they take this book to a English speaking country that is not the States, they might not know what this flower is because I know that in, at least in the Southwest, they know what it is because in here we even have a marigold parade so they know what it is. But maybe also, explain, I don't know, I think that would take more space but cempasuchil is not a Spanish word either so, maybe explain that too. But again, I know it's a book and it has its limitation so, ...I feel, one hand, I feel like, really proud that something's been written about Mexico in English and in the other hand, I would like people to understand the words, all the words, not just say, oh, this is Spanish, ugh, but also, feel, feel the language too (laughs) maybe. (laughs)

At first, this participant was asking for the kind of translation that Barrera and Quiroa (2003) are resisting, by recommending literal translation. When Darlene said, *Feel, feel the language too*, it suggested a desire for the book to address the needs of English-speaking readers in order to help them learn more about the culture through the book. It also suggested that there is something to feel about the language that contributes to understanding the story. Darlene focused on the monolingual reader, as well as herself as a multilingual reader. Bliss also considered readership when he forgave the misuse of Spanish in *Roberto's Trip to the Top*. Walter, who pointed out that the meaning of the Korean written in Hangul could be inferred by the text and illustration, also accommodated the monolingual reader. When I questioned him about how this reader might not know what the book said:

Walter: So, like, you know, how do you call like this? This, this, this?

Monique: Parentheses?

Walter: Yeah, parentheses. Parentheses need, need, need to be added--

Monique: Ok.

Walter: Here, in English--

Monique: Ok.

Walter: What he's saying in Korean.

Monique: Yeah.

Walter: Yeah, yeah, to, you know, have readers, American readers--

Monique: Mmhm.

Walter: Understand, yeah, what he's saying.

Adding parenthesis with a translation may solve the problem of the monolingual reader not understanding the text, but it would disrupt the aesthetics of the illustration as well as the flow of the story. It also would take away the chance for the reader to have a similar linguistic experience as Hee Jun, who does not understand his teacher in the story.

Another tip of the iceberg element that the data revealed was festivals or celebrations.

Funny Bones focused on *Día de los Muertos* in Mexico, and a *New Year's Reunion* was about the lunar new year, or as Kevin, taught me, the spring festival. There was more consensus in the two respondents from China about the spring festival than there was from the three Mexican participants about *Día de los Muertos*. Even though both Chinese participants were not from the north, where the book took place, they connected to the idea of family love and time together. They may have celebrated with different foods or different traditions, but the theme of family togetherness and family love connected both readers to the text. As revealed in Chapter Four, Valerie connected deeply with *Día de los Muertos*, Edgar

did not, and Darlene explained how when she moved from one part of Mexico to another, the holiday became more of a part of her.

The final surface-level element of culture that was reflected in the data was fashion. In the focus group with Mina, Valerie, and Joe, the word “traditional” came up several times, and in one case this was related to fashion.

Mina: Do you wear traditional clothes?

Valerie: Wear black clothes with white bones and paint face

Fred and Cyrus also discussed clothing in the context of the messages that women send to their husbands through the clothing they wear. This somewhat comical exchange connected clothing to communication. The potential for delivering messages through clothing is something I had never thought about before this focus group.

With Jessica, the conversation about fashion highlighted tradition, changing consumer preferences, and economics. Jessica spoke of how the younger generation of clothes buyers prefer something machine made and more perfect than clothing made by hand on a loom. Another factor is price. Handmade clothes are much more costly than clothing that can be bought at thrift stores for a fraction of the cost.

And so, people don't really want to buy like, (laughs) expensive things so they choose to buy something cheaper and so, it's hard because there's no interest in wearing them?... But they just don't like it or it's just too expensive and so, less and less people are wearing it.

Wearing traditional clothes in Guatemala is changing because of price and preference. The practice is still alive, *but we also have people in Guatemala that still buy. We have a great population that still uses the huipiles or cortes, which is-- are the skirt.*

It is of note that Jessica commented that one of the ways the book tells about her is through depictions of how characters dress and how that is connected to village life:

Monique: Ok. Do you think this book tells about you, Jessica, and would it help teachers to know anything about you?

Jessica: About me?

Monique: Yeah.

Jessica: Yeah, I think it describes for, for the most part, how Guatemalan families live in the villages.

Monique: Now, are you from the village or city?

Jessica: Yes, I have from the village and so that's one thing that we should know about reading this book because this is specifically about grandma and a daughter who look how they're dressed and how, how they look--

Monique: Mmhm.

Jessica: But when you go in the city, people don't dress like that?

Monique: Mmhm.

Jessica: And people don't live that way.

Monique: Would you say that you dress similar to how they show in the village when you are at home?

Jessica: Yeah, yeah--

Monique: Yeah? Ok.

Jessica: Yeah, I do have my dress like that.

On the other hand, Darlene and Carey both found examples of fashion causing problematic or inaccurate representations. The fashion was either outdated or steeped in stereotypes. Darlene said:

it caught my attention that he's showing people like, this person in here with, I don't know if you can see it, he's probably a Spanish person or Creole because he's got blue eyes... And he's also, he's dressed in a way that is very different from the Mexicans, you know? They're brown and they're using huaraches, which is the type of, of shoe. And he's still wearing a big hat and he looks very much like a stereotypical Mexican.

She also suggested that the book make clear that the fashions shown were outdated:

But still, I think he-- it would be nice for him to be very specific about that, that it's not the way Mexicans dress nowadays or something like that.

Carey's comments were similar:

Carey: And well, other pictures seemed, kind of too stereotypical for me, probably? Like--If I just go, I just gonna try to find, yeah, two examples, like, most people in Germany don't dress like on the page, on page 11....Page 11, yeah, and it just kind of, for me, the word that came up the most in my head when I was looking at the pictures was a bit romanticized....Yeah, and especially, this picture here, it kind of-- and also, that, like that one seems kind of like, from the 90s

Geoff had some criticisms of fashion in *Going to Mecca*, as well, but the foundation was based on religious beliefs—in this case, it was an issue of a grandmother not wearing the traditional head covering. According to the iceberg model, religious beliefs and sense of modesty belong below the surface. These were two of the themes that surfaced in my interview with my Saudi participant, Geoff. According to Geoff, 99% of Saudi Arabia is

Muslim, so it seems like religious beliefs may be less below the surface and more a part of the visible culture. Also, the *Hajj* Pilgrimage (the focus of *Going to Mecca*), while not as celebratory as *Día De Los Muertos* or the spring festival, has some important similarities with them. All three occur annually and involve people coming together for a common reason.

The iceberg analogy reaches its limit at this point. We have discussed how participants responded to food, the presence of their L1, festivals, and fashion. This does not give a complete picture of the data.

Authors and illustrators as insiders and outsiders. In order to go deeper, I must turn to another conceptualization. This brings us to using different frameworks to analyze the data, such as the concept of “insider and outsider,” as developed through multiple authors in the edited volume *Stories Matter: The Complexities of Cultural Authenticity in Children’s Literature*. There are differing views on who can write about cultures, and if one can authentically write outside of his or her own. Kathryn Lasky (2003) argues that the quality of the story, or the “aesthetic heat,” is more important than who is writing it.

The first criterion for publication should always be that the book is good literature.

While authenticity and accuracy are important, just because an author is from a particular group does not mean that the book is automatically good or that it is necessarily authentic. (Lasky, 2003, p. 91)

Hazel Rochman (2003) says that “every time an artist does something it doesn’t have to be about his or her race” (p.106). Rochman presents arguments for writing outside of one’s background and the limitation of only writing about an author’s own culture, but she also tempers it with this reminder: “And yet.... Gifted writers can do it, write beyond their own

cultures. Fiction and nonfiction are full of people who don't get beyond stereotypes because the writer cannot imagine them as individuals" (2003, p.108).

Rochman also talks about people who visit countries and then write about them like tourists. In this type of writing, stereotypes still remain. In this study, *Roberto's Trip to the Top* was written by authors who had traveled in Venezuela, and we have found that the book both succeeds and fails regarding readers' perceptions of its authenticity.

Yes, authenticity matters, but there is no formula for how you acquire it. Anybody can write about anything --if they're good enough... the only way to combat inaccuracy is with accuracy--not pedigrees" (Rochman, 2003, p.108).

Part of being "good enough" in Rochman's terms, is to consider what Cai (2003) advises:

Before authors try to write about another culture, they should ask themselves whether they have acquired the specific perspective of that culture, in other words whether they have developed a culturally specific sense of its reality. To bridge cultural gaps for their readers, authors should first cross these gaps themselves. (p.178)

On the other side, Thelma Seto (2003) makes a compelling argument about cultural appropriation and misrepresentations.

You cannot separate politics from literature, as most of us from the third world are well aware. For centuries Euro-Americans have defined us, rewritten our religions, even our languages-- and profited handsomely from these efforts. For centuries we have found caricatures of ourselves in Euro-American books. These caricatures have translated, in real life, into lynchings, race riots against our communities; gross anti-immigrant movements, military aggression in our homelands, such as the Gulf War

against Iraq and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and racially motivated individual beatings, rapes, cross burnings and murders. (p.96)

What Seto articulates are the consequences of outsiders exploiting cultures, something that has been done repeatedly throughout history in multiple ways, not just through literature, and particularly in developing countries. Consider Jessica's comments that she thought all the Mayans were buried under the city square.

What the data from my study provides is a small window into how insiders, who are not necessary literature scholars, respond as readers to multicultural texts. We also hear their judgements on the authenticity of the text in how they answered the question, "If an ESL teacher in America wanted to learn about you and your culture, would this be a good book to use?" in questionnaires they completed, and also how they responded to discussions of author status in interviews and focus groups. Going into this project, I didn't consider the insider or outsider status of an author in selecting books, as I was most concerned with the logistics of getting books to participants. After reading the collection of essays in *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature* and then noticing places in my data that connected to the essays, I became interested in how the different authors in my study were positioned as insiders and outsiders and how that status impacted the reader's transaction with the text. This was not something I had planned to look at, but I found it a necessary exploration to consider in light of what I heard from participants.

I used each book's author and illustrator biographies (provided on the book jackets), web searches, and email communication with one author and two illustrators to find out where they were positioned on the insider/outsider spectrum. What I discovered was a wide variety of positioning and that readers didn't always place the writer correctly. In the case of

Edgar and *Funny Bones*, he was sure that the author was not Mexican, when he was indeed. Cyrus thought the illustrator of *All Aboard for the Bobo Road* had been to Burkina Faso, but in reality, the artist had only seen pictures, watched videos, and had conversations with the author. *The New Year's Reunion* was originally written for a Chinese audience by Chinese writers and then translated into English. It is perhaps one of my favorite books in the study and has been well-received by other students when used in class. Kevin knew his book was written by an insider and explained:

Kevin: Yeah, because if a foreigner write this book I think he won't understand the true meaning of the Spring Festival because he didn't have the experience in China so, although he will-- he maybe stayed in China in, during the Spring Festival but he can't feel the--

Carey: Tradition?

Kevin: The love between the family members when they stay together.

I did not discuss the author's position with Joe, who also read *The New Year's Reunion*.

However, he made a similar observation about family love in the story:

family's love that is the young girl, need the family give the girl more love than the child need back some love I don't know. Get the family some thing love back. China family love. China culture.

Abuela's Weave was written by a Guatemalan author. Jessica praised the book for its realistic depiction of village life. The book is available in both Spanish and English. When I asked why the book wasn't in Mayan, her answer brought up another layer of complexity of cultural authenticity: what happens to writing a story when the language is primarily an oral instead of written language? Jessica said that the languages she speaks are mostly oral, and

that people don't write things in the Mayan languages. She says that information is passed through oral tradition, rather than through reading books. I inquired if she thought the writer of *Abuela's Weave* was Spanish or Mayan:

Jessica: I don't think the writer is Mayan but he was born in the city the book says, so.

Monique: Yeah.

Jessica: Well, in the back of the book it says.

Monique: And the illustrator?

Jessica: Yeah, I don't think he--

Monique: Do you think the illustrator could be Mayan?

Jessica: I don't know. I don't know, probably, but probably not. Yeah, if you go back home like, in the villages looking for books, you'll have the books that we use in school but you don't have, you will not find a big shelf with (laughs) books like we do have here cause we don't really read books.

In this instance, the writer, although Guatemalan, may still be writing outside of his culture by focusing on Mayan characters. A similar scenario is discussed in Moreillon (2003). Moreillon is a white librarian in southern Arizona who wrote a poem that evolved into a children's book about the Tohono O'odham saguaro fruit harvest and rainmaking ceremony. She faced criticism for writing outside of her culture, but did provide a place for Tohono O'odham children to see themselves represented in literature: "These students saw themselves--their culture-- reflected in their book written by an outsider and were pleased that other readers will learn about their traditions. They were no longer invisible" (Moreillon, 2003, p.74).

Moreillon did the work of closing her own cultural gaps by researching and consulting with insiders and was “good enough,” in Rochman’s terms, to write outside of her own culture. However, it could still be argued that both *Abuela’s Weave* and *Singing Down the Rain* are examples of how outsiders have exploited cultures through writing: “For centuries Euro-Americans have defined us, rewritten our religions, even our languages-- and profited handsomely from these effort” (Moreillon, 2003, p. 96).

Euro-Americans writing about indigenous people such as the Mayan or the Tohono O’odham does not seem equivalent to an American writing about Germany. Yet, Carey, who read *Germany ABCs*, was the most resistant to how her culture was defined by an author of all the participants in the study. In this case, I could not find information on this author. I did contact the illustrator, who was forthright about never meeting the author, so there is no way to be certain about the author’s background. Carey seemed quite sure that the author was American and had depicted stereotypes outsiders held about Germany instead of a more real sense of the country. The same kind of insensitivity to culture that Seto describes was sensed by Carey:

So, the perspective, sometimes like, you could really feel it's written by Americans? In many aspects, and one of these aspects was how short they wrapped up the whole, after World War II era and they just like said, ok, Germany was divided and then it was, like, then it was one again and the wall fell and it's like, you don't know the whole context. You don't know like, about like, which country kind of had control over Germany at that time and I mean, that's two, three sentences where you can, kind of, give more context cause it gives a very incomplete picture.

The idea of “insider and outsider” as a framework to judge the authenticity of a text is challenged by writers such Rochman (2003) and Lasky (2003), who contend that literary quality is the most important. My data shows that readers have a sense of the positioning of the writers (although they are sometimes incorrect). One question remains from both my readings about authors’ status as insider/outsider, as well as my data: What constitutes an insider or an outsider?

My first research question, “How do adult English language learners respond to multicultural, international, or global picture books related to their home countries?” revealed complex and diverse responses from participants that illustrate the unique transaction each participant had with his or her text. I was able to organize data using the iceberg model and issues around cultural authenticity and the insider/outsider status of authors and illustrators. Asking such a broad question (“What happens?”) has given this study an equally broad range of data and substantiates the core of transaction theory: each reader has his or her own relationship with a text in which they create meaning.

Research Question 2

How does using English when talking about books related to their home country engage participants in reading and discussions?

This question, as well as related questions in the written questionnaire and interviews, proved problematic in this study. Asking how someone felt while using English may have unintentionally caused participants to feel self-conscious about their use of English. The true intention was to find out if talking about the children’s book was something that motivated and excited participants and helped foster confidence in the use of English in conversation with teachers as well as peers. Participants, indicated that they were happy about the use of

English when talking about it, but the data might look different if they were to have this discussion with a peer in their own native language rather than with me. Despite my best efforts to be open and safe, I was in a position of power around English as a native speaker. I may have also been in a position of power in my roles teacher and researcher. As a teacher of English, I may have been seen as someone who is accustomed to foreign speakers and willing to help and support them or I could have been seen as someone they needed to please. As a researcher posing this question participants may have tried to negotiate a “best” or pleasing answer to fit my academic agenda.

This research question was intended to uncover if using picture books with adults was a worthwhile practice in Adult ESL classrooms. Because of the study design, it was not possible to assess if reading the books helped develop English skills. The study focused on advanced students that had already developed the English competencies necessary to complete the questionnaire and discussions. If students had been at a lower level of English proficiency, the books would have demanded the development of vocabulary and the necessary oral fluency to discuss the books with peers. The books may have then served as a sort of cultural artifact that supported learning, and became a tool of cultural scaffolding. A nagging question I have had as an educator is: How do I implement cultural scaffolding? I had hoped the study may have revealed more about this, but the design did not fully support inquiry into what cultural scaffolding looks like in practice because it was outside of the classroom context. The responses from participants did support the use of children’s literature connected to students’ home countries in beginning level English language courses.

My second research question also elicited a variety of responses. Overall, it seemed to be a positive experience, given descriptions that included comfort, safety, motivation,

excitement, happiness, and connection-building when talking about the picture books with peers. Participants also remarked on the difficulty of translation and the limits of what English can describe. Overall, participants were engaged in both reading and discussing the picture books.

Walter and Geoff both indicated comfort and contextual knowledge when using English to engage in reading and conversing about their books and culture. Geoff said,

Yeah, when I talk about my culture, when I talk about something I know then I will feel comfortable to deliver, to convey the message because I know what I'm talking about. Not like when I talk about something that I know for the first time. You know what I mean?

Fred elaborated on how he would feel if he were to write about his culture, using safety as a key descriptor:

I think I will feel really safe to write about this stuff on my paper and I will be able to come up with more thoughts afterwards because I can really expand this book more and say more about this pictures that I have seen, all the amazing stuff that the kid had to go through, all of those things I can relate and I can expand this more and make it more personal too? And also try to describe my hometown and really give a good illustration of the things that I have experienced in my childhood back in my hometown and I can be able to show, even though I'm not gonna be showing pictures, I will be able to give a clear description of the things that I have done or describe places that I have loved to go every, that I have used to go every day when I was a kid and I can really relate really well and really safely write some-- a really decent paper about this life, yeah.

Bliss was engaged and enthusiastic in talking about his picture book. The excitement Bliss showed when trying to share Spanish words with Todd during the focus group was also evident in how he described his sense of using English to talk about his culture and the book:

Bliss: Yes, my best English and also, my best train of thought, and also giving the best cultural background as possible.

Monique: How would you describe your motivation to use English in that moment?

Bliss: To make contact with somebody who doesn't know English, certainly, but also just to improve, yes.

Monique: How, I guess I should ask this, how motivated did you feel to use English and use English correctly in the situation?

Bliss: Very motivated. I really just wanted to tell him the story as-- in the best way possible.

For Jessica, engaging in conversation about her culture made her happy, because it offered an opportunity for learning about other cultures and making connections. However, it was not something she could happily do in her home context:

Jessica: I feel, I feel happy talking about it? Because I think that it's important to talk about this so that we can all learn about how some people live in one part of the world and what they do for a living or, or something like them.

Monique: How often do you get to talk about being Mayan?

Jessica: Not a lot. In Guatemala, we have a racism problem--

Monique: Ok.

Jessica: Against indigenous people. So, it's actually not like a happy thing like, to just be like, walking around there like, "Oh, I'm Mayan, I'm Mayan, (laughs) and I speak two

languages." Like, you can't do that because people are like, ugh, like, you know? So, I don't really talk about like, who I am.

For Jessica, talking about her culture, regardless of what language she used to communicate, was significant, because she has rarely had the opportunity to do so.

In Fred and Cyrus's focus group, the idea of learning *about how some people live* went in two directions. Using English to talk about culture allowed Fred to feel connected to Cyrus:

It's, it is interesting because we are from different countries but still we were able to communicate and really feel connected because we both came from hardships?

However, they (and other participants) also commented on the limitations of conveying meaning and the trouble with translation. Here we see a dialogue between Cyrus, Fred, and me about how it feels to use English.

Cyrus: Yeah, for me, like, I have two feelings. It's beautiful because, as you said, we can communicate through English--

Fred: Yeah.

Cyrus: You know? But at the same point, I cannot express everything. For example, like, there are some jokes in my native language when I say it, it's funny in the language but if I translate it, it doesn't make any sense.

Fred: If you translate it, it's not very funny, yeah. I see your point.

Cyrus: So, that's, that's one of the problem, you know? Because in this book, for example, you have like, lot of stuff I want to explain but I just don't have the words, you know? So, I feel like English is good like, at a certain level like maybe 60 percent. If you really want to discover more about the culture, you have to learn the language.

Kevin also noted the trouble with translation and using English to talk about culture:

I think it's a little bit strange because some special names of the symbol and if the name translate into English, I looked, it's really weird, yeah, but I can't understand it but some other foreigner's can understand it. Yeah, because the translation makes some difference.

The sense from the data was that using English to engage in conversation and read about culture, despite its limitations, was positive.

Research Question 3

How can students' responses to children's picture books portraying their home country help me improve my teaching by developing more specific cultural knowledge in an adult English language program?

My data challenged the notion that I could develop specific cultural knowledge, because developing such knowledge requires understanding culture in terms of a static model that applies to all members. Because of individual differences and variations of culture, the iceberg model that I used to help describe what happens when participants encounter literature cannot extend to frame specific knowledge about culture that I can use as a teacher to support student learning. In order to make sense of the data pertaining to Question Three, I will use research, theories and models from Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003), Dudley-Marling (2003), and Jones and Clarke (2007).

Rogoff and Gutiérrez: Repertoires of practice. Models such as the iceberg can create generalizations that are not good for students:

Unfortunately, categorization of individuals in groups has been treated casually, yielding explanations and expectations of individual skills and behaviors on the basis

of category membership, assuming that all group members share the same set of experiences, skills, and interests. This has led to a kind of tracking in which instruction is adjusted merely on the basis of a group categorization. (Rogoff & Gutiérrez, 2003, p.21)

This statement is a warning not to apply my data to all members of a national group, because not all group members share the same experience. The unique transactions each participant demonstrated with their texts, particularly in the cases where multiple participants from the same country responded to the same texts, confirmed that group members do not always “share the same set of experiences, skills, and interests.” The data cautions me on thinking I can adjust instruction “merely on the basis of group categorization.”

My data supports the ideas presented in Rogoff and Gutiérrez’s (2003) work on cultural ways of learning and repertoires of practice using a cultural historical approach. According to Rogoff and Gutiérrez, using a cultural historical approach “leads us to expect regularities in the ways cultural communities organize their lives as well as variations in the ways individual members of groups participate and conceptualize the means and ends of their communities’ activities” (2003, p. 22). This helps explain both the similarities and variations in responses by participants from the same country reading the same books. It also makes sense of how the individual respondents set themselves apart from their culture. Coal and Englerstom (1993) and Lave (1996) further explain how a socio-historical approach works:

The emphasis is on the importance and benefit of knowing about the histories and valued practices of cultural groups rather than trying to teach prescriptively according to broad, under-examined generalities about groups. In cultural- historical approaches, learning is conceived of as a process occurring within ongoing activity,

and not divided into separate characteristics of individuals and contexts. (Rogoff and Gutiérrez's, 2003, p. 20)

Rogoff and Gutiérrez (2003) point out the same dilemma I face in how to gain the knowledge to support what I call culture and what they call repertoires of practice in their classroom. "We need to consider the implications for research and educational practice when only a little cultural information is available." (p. 22) They point to the same example of signifying in Carol Lee's work that I referenced in Chapter Two as an example of cultural scaffolding.

For example, a new teacher in an African-American low-income neighborhood, inspired by Carol Lee's (1993, 2001) research, may wonder if he or she can extend the students' out-of-school skills in analysis of metaphor and figurative language to the analysis of literature, making use of familiarity with the practice of "signifying" (ritualized language play involving clever insults). To do so, the teacher would need some understanding of this practice and would need to check his or her assumption that these students are familiar with it, to confirm or disconfirm his or her hypothesis that these students have similar background experience with Lee's students. (Rogoff and Gutiérrez, 200, p. 23)

What I have gained through my research are the beginnings of understandings that I can only hypothesize about and check against the individual experiences of future students.

Dudley-Marling and Jones and Clark. In a study that most closely parallels my own, Dudley-Marling (2003) attempted to create a reading unit connecting his young students to texts from their own country. Dudley-Marling taught in a third-grade classroom in Toronto, Canada. His student population was representative of many different nationalities

and cultures. This population diversity, which is also reflected in my classroom as a teacher in an intensive English program, guided him to seek multicultural literature to create a curriculum that he hoped would affirm “the range of social and cultural influences on my student lives” (2003, p. 304). He assumed his students would connect with the books, whereas I was trying to find out if the literature had such potential. He writes, “it was unreasonable of me to have assumed that a piece of literature could speak to the culture and experience of *all* people from a particular continent, region or country” (Dudley-Marling, 2003, p. 309). Instead of trying to affirm the social and cultural influences on my students lives, I hoped to learn about what those influences might be. While this is a big difference, we both saw the potential of children’s literature to support student learning. Both my participants and the children in Dudley-Marling’s study found problems in the books they encountered. “The problem was I that I tried to *match* texts to the social and cultural identities that I imagined for the children” (Dudley-Marling, 2003, p. 314). He continues, “I chose to use particular texts to represent the ethnic and religious identities of students without regard to how they themselves might have chosen to represent those identities had they been given the opportunity” (pp. 314–315). Part of my research design was to inquire how participants felt about representations by asking questions like, Is this a good book to learn about your culture? What do you think the author should change?

Participants in my study expressed similar sentiments to Dudley-Marling’s subjects regarding representations of culture in children’s books. In his questionnaire, Edgar wrote, *I personally don’t think by reading this book, a person would know who I am. That is more complex.* In his interview he elaborated:

That book is gonna tell a story about where I am coming from as my culture and it's just a little tiny piece of it. It's maybe the piece that many people know in the world about my country which is one tradition. But I wouldn't say one book can describe who I am as a person or where I am coming from. Maybe it's telling a story of a little piece of my traditions, but it's just one tiny thing and there's like, a whole puzzle to it that you can learn about.

Dudley-Marling found that “using literature to *represent* students’ cultural and religious heritage assumed an essential homogeneity in peoples’ cultural heritage that clearly does not exist” (2003, p. 309). This echoes what Darlene said about *Funny Bones*:

it could show them aspects of a very important tradition celebrated in some regions of my country, but it would not show them that that tradition is not a wide-nation one

and what Todd said about learning about Japanese culture:

each Japanese has different characteristics that still, you want to have a normal, I mean, the standard knowledge about Japan. Hm, it is difficult.

Any means of trying to capture an entire culture, including the use of children’s literature, is problematic. Gaining specific insight to provide support for culture in the classroom cannot be done in a prescribed way. There is too much risk for essentialization and lack of consideration for the individual. Teachers need to have time to build multiple relationships and to test hypotheses about culture. The use of children’s books with adults in an IEP is a start, only if students are encouraged and guided to transact with a text in ways that allow them to discuss with peers and with teachers how they situate themselves against the text. Instead of assuming connections, as Dudley-Marling did as he began his study with third graders, it might be best to consider disconnections and to explore that space with students. This is supported by Dudley-Marling’s (2003) findings, as well:

Only by participating in a conversation that includes a diversity of perspectives and experience can any of us hope to create a space that is considerate of students' social and cultural identities that allows teachers and students to be enriched by the diverse ways of being in the world our students bring with them to school each day. (p. 316)

As an ESL teacher in an IEP where students come from all over the world, there is a great diversity of perspectives to negotiate. There are multiple cultural identities that students bring to the classroom. Those identities are not static and cannot be generalized based on a student's national origin. My research supports that one way of creating a space considerate of these identities is through allowing students to honestly respond to representations of culture in children's picture books. It is the individual response that allows a teacher to become familiar with a student's unique perspective on their own culture and how they situate themselves within it. This space can be created by an approach developed through the research of Jones and Clark (2007). This research took place with elementary students in the midwestern United States and explored the ways students disconnected from texts they read in their elementary school classrooms.

Jones and Clark and Dudley-Marling both researched in primary school settings, but their work best speaks to the findings in my study. My study is unique and does not have many comparable elements. While literature has been explored in ESL classrooms, as I discussed in Chapter Two, there is little research on the use of children's literature with adults, and nothing, to my knowledge, about children's literature that is representative of students' home countries.

Conclusions and Implications

The best approach for using children's literature in an adult IEP context is best situated in the critical processes suggested in Jones and Clark (2007) that allow readers to address their unique positioning in relation to the text.

If readers can become sensitized to nuance in texts and in life, they may move beyond dichotomies, stereotypes, or assumptions made about people and society. This movement against the sweeping-up of the parts of texts that already "connect" with one's understandings and beliefs, and the ignoring of disconfirming evidence and ruptures in texts and experiences could promote more critical reflection as readers in a broad sense (Jones and Clark, 2007, p.112).

As shown in my data, some readers come to an IEP already "sensitized to nuance in text," while others may have little experience working with literature and need modeling and guidance in how to engage with a text. Appleman's method of explaining transaction theory is one place to start. (This was explained in Chapter Two.) Another place to start is having the teacher model his or her own interaction with a children's book that is representative of his/her cultural identity. Finally, having conversations about insider and outsider writers—so that students can develop their own framework for determining cultural authenticity—would make the best use of children's literature in an IEP setting.

The idea of cultural authenticity connects to the idea that a book can be a true artifact of culture that can be used for the purpose of providing cultural scaffolding and supports the learner using their own culture. One of my hopes for the study was to develop mechanisms for learning about culture through students' responses.

I've puzzled for many years as an educator over how to support the culture of my students when my student populations have either high rates of attrition or quickly shift, introducing me to cultures too briefly for me to learn how to support students using their culture. The difficulty of using a text as a way to create cultural support brings up an important issue: how do I know if the text will support a learner? That is, how will I know if it is authentic to an individual's experience?

One way I have addressed this is by continuing to assign students to work with children's books (that they either choose from the library or that I recommend) and developing a repertoire of books to which students respond positively. Another way I attempted to address this is making space for students to disconnect from the text, instead of assuming they will identify and embrace a particular book that relates to their home country.

I was trained early in my teaching career that I should help students connect to texts used in the classroom. Often, students would resist, and I was frustrated with what I misinterpreted as was an unwillingness to cooperate or an inability to make connections. It wasn't until later in my career that I considered perhaps it was my demanding a connection that was the problem, not the student response. As a result, I began to think about how to help students unpack what it was about the text they found irrelevant or problematic. This insight developed after teaching high-risk youth, and I am eager to get back to the classroom with this insight. Similar to the questionnaire questions I asked in this study, I will ask: What should the author change? Does this represent you, and why or why not? I hope that, with this line of inquiry, I can position the student as the expert on the cultural authenticity of a text.

In conclusion, my dissertation was able to address all three of my research questions using multiple conceptualizations. Chapter One explained the context and motivation for the study. Chapter Two addressed the conceptual frameworks interwoven with my teacher story, laying the foundation for this study. Chapter Three provided the rationale and explanation of my methodology. Chapter Four closely detailed the data I collected. Finally, Chapter Five used multiple lenses to approach and unpack the data. The necessity of multiple approaches reflects the multiple possibilities for a reader's response, which cannot be generalized by national identity.

My data does not give me a clear answer to my final research question. Coping with constantly changing demographics does not have any shortcuts, nor does learning about cultures outside of one's own. Children's literature creates a space to explore, alongside students, how they understand and position themselves in regards to the ways a text attempts to represent them. There must be room for disagreement and the opportunity for students in settings ranging from elementary schools to university-level IEPs to challenge the text's and author's authority.

In addition to responding to my research questions the data offered some insight to the significance of illustrations, positionality, and areas of future scholarship. One of the salient features of the books for the participants were the illustrations. Many commented on how much they enjoyed pictures in the books. In some instances, the pictures contributed to the sense of cultural authenticity the participants assigned to the books; in other cases, they detracted. For example, in the case of the book from Burkina Faso, the participant felt the colors captured the essence of his country. In the case of Venezuela, there were both positive and negative responses to the illustrations. One participant noted how it was an inaccurate

representation of the *barrios*, while others felt the book showed the natural landscape and true beauty of the country. The participant from Japan noted with surprise how the illustrations showed details from daily life that reflected diverse elements of Japanese culture. Todd said, “So, Totoro is kind of like a subculture, so I’m surprised that she tried to put tons of stuff like this.” Carey, from Germany, who was predominantly unhappy with her book, noted the lack of details in the illustrations, and thought that it showed that the book was created in a hurry for publication, rather than with an intent to create an accurate representation of German life:

Carey: Well, I thought, so, some of the pictures I liked? The ones regarding nature, for example, the one of the Black Forest? I thought it was, I mean it was, it seemed like-- I think you kind of have to like the style?

Monique: Mmhm.

Carey: And for me, many pictures were not really detailed enough? And that's what I kind of meant with the rush?

Monique: Mmhm.

Carey: And well, other pictures seemed, kind of too stereotypical for me, probably? Like-- If I just go, I just gonna try to find, yeah, two examples, like, most people in Germany don't dress like on the page, on page 11...yeah, and it just kind of, for me, the word that came up the most in my head when I was looking at the pictures was a bit romanticized...Yeah, and especially, this picture here, it kind of-- and also, that, like that one seems kind of like, from the 90s?

Further work beyond the scope of this study could be done to examine how illustrations contribute to the cultural authenticity of a book and how that influences the

reader's transaction with the text. This would entail more research design and questioning specific to the illustrations.

Beyond the scope of my research questions were issues of positionality of myself and participants. As discussed earlier, I position myself as a teacher first, and a researcher second. My participants all shared the positionality of being former students in an Intensive English program. That meant that they all were learners of English. Some planned to stay in the U.S. indefinitely, some to return to their home countries after earning degrees, and others were not yet sure what their future held. The context of the participants varied on class, culture, gender, educational attainment, linguistic backgrounds and race, as well as other innumerable characteristics. They all shared the context of reading for a study taking place at a university. During interviews, participants seemed unsure of how they were supposed to respond, and this may be because I was fairly open in my directions and intent, trying to honor the psychoanalytic approach I had envisioned for my interviews. This vagueness may have contributed to creating both uncertainty of expectations and insecurity over whether participants were doing things "right" for me as a researcher. In the case of former students who participated, there may have been an element of established expectations carried over from the courses they took with me.

My intent was to position participants as experts on the topics of the books they read. In many cases, those topics related to daily life in their home country. I did so in hopes of learning more about how they positioned themselves in relation to the text, if they felt it was accurate or authentic, and if they thought that it would teach me about them or their home country in a way that would help me be a better teacher. It wasn't the book that I wanted to

learn from, rather their response. I am not sure if this was clear to the participants. One participant was very explicit in asking me how he should respond:

Monique: So, what did it feel like reading this book?

Todd: What kind of opinion do you need? Positive? Negative?

Monique: It-- either one, did you feel good feelings? Did you feel--

Todd: I'm--

Monique: Bad feelings? Happy feelings? Sad feelings?

Todd: So, that book was talking about ma.

Looking at this excerpt of dialogue, I notice how I interrupted, thus inadvertently taking away an opportunity for him to express his original response. My intention to position him as an expert was subverted when I dominated the conversation and tried to provide too much guidance. Perhaps it would have been better if I had just said simply, "Either one." My position as teacher and helper prevailed in my eagerness to provide more support to the learner, instead of listening to a participant. I thought, "Todd needs my help with directions so I better keep explaining and providing examples" instead of positioning myself as a researcher wanting to know his feelings reading the book.

In two other instances the research participants asked me what I was doing and why I was doing it. Unfortunately, I did not record all of these conversations, as they occurred after the formal focus groups or interviews. These moments demonstrated positionality and intent in the study.

Another way to look at positionality in this study is that of a sort of spectrum of readers. Because I have a degree in English, I consider myself to be a good reader; I can use evidence from the text to support my interpretation of literature and develop interesting

arguments about a text. I also considered some participants even better readers than myself because of their more sophisticated tastes in literature. For example, Bliss likes to read classic Russian literature, which I find to difficult to enjoy. Darlene is a very good writer and offered the deepest insight into her book, noticing things that I missed. On the other hand, two of the participants have business and science backgrounds, and I was hesitant to trust their plot-level understanding of their texts. Positioning myself as a better reader than them, I had not considered this bias until after data collection and analysis. This is a bias that other teachers may inadvertently hold against readers coming from different academic disciplines and could influence their acceptance of students' literary interpretations and how they value or scaffold the students' transactions with the text.

Looking across the data I am perplexed to draw one specific conclusion. I searched for a word to describe it and I could not find one. Instead, I can best explain it with a metaphor. It reminds me of a child's painting. There are large globs of paint that are like the data around the books with multiple readers like Roberto's *Trip to the Top*. Then, there are splatterings that don't create just one cohesive picture. Try as I may, I could not assert or argue one definitive thing except for this: People are messy and the human experience and interaction that is the nature of teaching and understanding is messy. But, there is also something magic and mystical when things connect or when they don't connect and we can articulate and understand why. There is something magical that happens when the right person reads the right text at the right time, such as Jessica when she read Abuela's *Weave* or Bliss when he wanted to talk about all the Spanish words in Roberto's *Trip to the Top*. Or when Kevin talks about the love of family in China that is captured in *A New Year's Reunion*. There is also something important about how terrible Carey found the book,

Germany *ABCs* even if it isn't the same sort of warm and exciting connection to culture that is seen with other books. As a researcher, I put the books in front of the students to see what would happen. My hypothesis was the books could build a bridge between students and teachers and something like could be a valuable tool for use in the classroom based on my evidence produced by this study. Therefore, I did the scholarly and scientific things. I wrote the research questions and refined them collaboratively, I looked at my data and carefully coded. I broke things down into small pieces. Methodologically, I treated this study along the lines of Mason's intellectual puzzle, trying to take the pieces and make a complete picture. But I am not a scientist. I am a teacher, who believes that there is something spiritual and magical and mystical in creating the relationships with students that are vital to learning. While this is what I believe about myself and my work in teaching English, I must navigate a world that is hungry for evidence. What I present in this dissertation is evidence that there are ways to get a relationship started with students that seem different from me in a short amount of time we may have together. There are ways to get to know students, and children's picture books, if used in an open and honest way, allowing for disidentification as much as identification, may serve this purpose. Further, they may motivate students to use the target language. The books do not, however, provide a short cut. You can't just have students read children's picture books and create cultural generalizations that you can rely on. You have to do the work of listening, learning, and then waiting to see where things come up again in similar or different ways with other students. This study taught me there are no shortcuts to building relationships with students, but there can be magic. The children's books can help manifest it.

References

- Ali, S. (1993). The reader-response approach: An alternative for teaching literature in a second language. *Journal of Reading*, 37(4), 288-296.
- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Appleman, D. (2000). *Critical encounters in high school English: The culture of reading and the teaching of English*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Argryis, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D. (1985). *Action science: Concepts, methods, and skills for research and intervention*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Banks, J. A. (1994). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Basit, T. (2003). Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis. *Educational Research*, 45(2), 143-154.
- Beach, R. (1993). *A teacher's introduction to reader-response theories*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Bleich, D. (1978). *Subjective criticism*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Brooks, C. (1979). The New Criticism. *The Sewanee Review*, 87(4), 592-607.
- Brown, M. R. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43(1), 57-62.
- Cai, M. (2008). Transactional theory and the study of multicultural literature. *Language Arts*, 85(3), 212-220.
- Carlson, L. M. (1999). *Hurray for three kings' day*. New York, NY: Morrow Junior.

- Carroli, P. (2008). *Literature in second language education: Enhancing the role of texts in learning*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at risk for disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 351-371.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2014). An overview of language teaching methods and approaches. In M. Celce-Murcia, D.M. Brinton, & M.A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4th ed.) (pp. 2-14). Boston, MA: National Geographic Learning.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (1984). *The making of a reader. Language and learning for human service professions monograph series*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cole, M., & Engeström, Y. (1993). A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In G. Soloman (Ed.), *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations* (pp. 1-46). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooks, J. A. (1998). Let's get it started: Teaching teachers how to implement a culturally relevant pedagogy. *Trotter Review*, 11(1), 43-45.
- Corcoran, B. (1991). From transaction to resistance: An antipodean journey. In John Clifford (Ed.), *The experience of reading: Louise Rosenblatt and reader-response theory* (pp. 147-164). Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook.

- Davis, J. N. (1989). The act of reading in the foreign language: Pedagogical implications of Iser's reader-response theory. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(4), 420-428.
- De Jong, E. J., & Harper, C. A. (2005). Preparing mainstream teachers for English-language learners: Is being a good teacher good enough? *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32(2), 101-124.
- Dewey, J. (1929). *The sources of a science of education*. New York, NY: Horace Silverlight.
- Dudley-Marling, C. (2003). "I'm not from Pakistan": Multicultural literature and the problem of representation. In D. L. Fox, K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 304-318). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted from *The New Advocate*, 10(2), 123-34.
- Fish, S. E. (1980). *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Gee, J. P. (2000). The new literacy studies: From 'socially situated' to the work of the social. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanic (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 180-196). New York: Routledge.
- Ghosn, Irma (2002). Four good reasons to use literature in primary school ELT, *ELT Journal*, 56 (2) 2, p. 172-179.
- Harkin, P. (2005). The reception of reader-response theory. *College Composition and Communication*, 56(3), 410-425.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Hirvela, A. (1996). Reader-response theory and ELT. *ELT Journal*, 50(2), 127-134.
- Huberman, M. (1996). Moving mainstream: Taking a closer look at teacher research. *Language Arts*, 73(2), 124-140.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.
- Jacobs, J. S., & Tunnell, M. O. (2004). *Children's literature, briefly* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Jones, S., & Clarke, L. W. (2007). Disconnections: Pushing readers beyond connections and toward the critical. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 2(2), 95-115.
- Kelly, L. G. (1969). *Twenty-five centuries of language teaching*. New York, NY: Newbury House.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The action research reader*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (1991). Culture in language learning: A view from the United States. In K. Bot, R/ Ginsberg & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign Language Research in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, (pp. 217-240). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2004). *A handbook for teacher research*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill Education
- Lave, J. (1996). Teaching, as learning, in practice. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 3(3), 149-164.

- Lee, C. D. (2004). Bridging home and school literacies: Models for culturally responsive teaching, a case for African-American English. In J. Flood, S. Bryce Heath, & D. Lipp (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching literacy through the communicative and visual arts* (pp. 335-345). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lee, C. D. (2005). The state of knowledge about the education of African Americans. In J. King (Ed.), *Black education: A transformative research and action agenda for the new century* (pp. 45-72). New York, NY: Routledge
- Lee, O., & Luykx, A. (2005). Dilemmas in scaling up innovations in elementary science instruction with non-mainstream students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(3), 411-438.
- Macphee, J. S. (1997). "That's not fair!": A white teacher reports on white first graders' responses to multicultural literature. *Language Arts*, 74(1), 33-40.
- McCormick, K. (1994). *The culture of reading and the teaching of English*. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.
- McIntosh, P. (2010). *Action research and reflective practice: Creative and visual methods to facilitate reflection and learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McNair, J. C. (2003). "But *The Five Chinese Brothers* is one of my favorite books!": Conducting sociopolitical critiques of children's literature with preservice teachers. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 29(1), 46-54.
- Moll, L. C. (1992). *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Moreillon, J. (2003). The candle and the mirror: One author's journey as an outsider. In D. Fox & K. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in*

- children's literature* (pp. 61-77). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted from *The New Advocate*, 12(2), 127-39.
- Nodelman, P. (1988). *Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. W., van der Steen, J., & Nijveldt, M. (2014). A study of the quality of practitioner research in secondary education: Impact on teacher and school development. *Educational Action Research*, 22(1), 122-139.
- Orellana, M. F., & Reynolds, J. F. (2008). Cultural modeling: Leveraging bilingual skills for school paraphrasing tasks. *Reading research quarterly*, 43(1), 48-65.
- Paley, V. G. (1996). *Kwanzaa and me*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pawan, F. (2008). Content-area teachers and scaffolded instruction for English language learners. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(6), 1450-1462.
- Power, R. S & Power, B. M. (1999). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher-researchers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Rabinowitz, P. J., Smith, M.W., & Booth, W.C. (1998). *Authorizing readers: Resistance and respect in the teaching of literature*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Rearick, M. L., & Feldman, A. (1999). Orientations, purposes and reflection: A framework for understanding action research. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15(4), 333-349.
- Riojas-Cortez, M. (2001). Preschoolers' funds of knowledge displayed through sociodramatic play episodes in a bilingual classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29(1), 35-40.

- Ro, Y. E., & Cheatham, G. A. (2009). Biliteracy and bilingual development in a second-generation Korean child: A case study. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 23(3), 290-308.
- Rochman, H. (2003). In D. L. Fox, & Short, K.G (Ed.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 101-115). Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English. (Reprinted from: Rochman, H., *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World* (1993). American Library Association.).
- Rogers, A. (2009). Race and gender in teacher preparation programs: How does being a white female inform leadership decisions in creating a culture of excellence for tomorrow's teachers? *InSight: Rivier Academic Journal*, 5(2), 1-8.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America.
- Salomon, G., & Perkins, D. N. (1998). Individual and social aspects of learning. *Review of Research in Education*, 23, 1-24.
- Scanlan, M., & López, F. (2012). ¡Vamos! How school leaders promote equity and excellence for bilingual students. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 583-625.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Short, K., Lynch-Brown, C. & Tomlinson, C. (2013). *Essentials of children's literature* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.

- Smith, W. S. (2003). Meeting the moon from a global perspective. *Science Scope*, 26(8), 24-28.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, R. W. (2010). The role of teacher education programs in creating culturally competent teachers: A moral imperative for ensuring the academic success of diverse student populations. *Multicultural Education*, 17(3), 24.
- Tompkins, J. P. (1980). *Reader-response criticism: From formalism to post-structuralism*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Van de Pol, J., Volman, M., & Beishuizen, J. (2010). Scaffolding in teacher–student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 22(3), 271-296.
- Vertovec, S. (2001). Transnationalism and identity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*, 27(4), 573-582.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes* (original work published 1930, 1933, 1935). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, L. M., Hall, K. W., Hedrick, W. B., Lamkin, M., & Abendroth, J. (2013). Developing an observation instrument to support authentic independent reading time during school in a data-driven world. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 9(2), 24-49.

Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The miseducation of the negro*. Washington, DC: Associated Publishers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Key Terms and Acronyms	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix B: Consent Form	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix C: Student Questionnaire	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix E: Follow-up Interview Protocol.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Appendix A: Key Terms and Acronyms

Aesthetic reading: Reading for deeper meaning

Efferent reading: Reading for informational purposes

ESL: English as a Second language (used generically in this paper to also include English as a foreign language, English language learners)

IEP: Intensive English Program

L1: Students' first or native language

L2 Students' second or target language

Target Language: language student is working on to acquire

Appendix B: Consent Form

Researcher Name: Monique Stone

What is the Research?

You have been asked to take part in a research study about Adult ESL students' response to children's literature

Why have I been asked to take part?

- You are an adult ESL student who is in, or has completed, the advanced level at SWUIEP
- I want to know more about what you think of children's books about your home country, culture, or language,

Voluntary Participation

- Participation is voluntary; you do not have to take part if you do not want to.
- If you do not take part, it will have no effect on you.
- If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them.
- You may stop participating at any time for any reason.

What will you do?

- I will lend you a book to read that is about your home country, culture, or language and you will answer questions. This should take you about 1 hour. At the end of the study you will need to return the book to me.
- You will attend a focus group to discuss your book. This will take about 1.5 hours
- You may be asked to participate in an interview if I have questions after reviewing your questionnaire and observing the focus group.

Risks

- I do not think any risks are involved in taking part in this study.
- This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits

There are no benefits for taking part in this research. I hope to learn more about your culture.

Privacy

- Your privacy will be protected.
- Your name will not be used in any report that is published.
- The discussion will be kept strictly confidential.
- The other participants in the focus group will be asked to keep what we talk about private, but this cannot be assured.
- Regulators, sponsors, or Institutional Review Board members that oversee research may see research records to make sure that the researchers have followed regulatory requirements.
- The video recordings will only be used to remind the researcher what is said. Questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.
- All digital research data will be stored in an encrypted file.

Study Permission

- I have been told that the Focus Group and Interview discussion will be video recorded.
- I have been told that I can state that I don't want the focus group or interview to be recorded and it will not be. I can ask that recording stop at any time.

I agree to be video recorded ___ Yes ___ No

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this project. If I have any additional questions about the study, I may call Monique at 505-944-6257. Please write your name below and check yes or no. If you want to take part, sign your name at the bottom.

PRINT NAME

_____ Yes, I would like to take part in this study

_____ No, I would not like to participate in the study

SIGNATURE

Appendix C: Student Questionnaire

On the paper provided, please respond to the three questions.

1. Please explain what happened when you read the book.
 - How did book make you feel when you were reading?
 - What did you see in your mind when you read the book?
 - What questions the book brings to your mind?
 - How did it feel to use English to read about your country?

2. If an ESL teacher in America wanted to learn about you and your culture, would this be a good book to use?
 - If someone wanted to understand **who YOU are** how would this book help them? How might it not help them?
 - What do you think the author should change?
 - What do you think the illustrator or photographer should change?

3. What other thoughts do you want to share about this book?

Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol

Groups of 3-4 students will meet to discuss their books in a quiet campus location.

Students will be prompted with the following:

Thank you for coming today. Our goal is to learn more about what you thought about your book in a small group setting. There are some logistics to go over before we begin:

Anything shared during this meeting must be confidential. That means no one is to tell other people what was said during our time together. Please turn off any cellphones and put them away.

We need to be respectful of time and make sure each person has a chance to speak. I have sticky notes here, please place them on any pictures you discuss in detail so that I can reference them when I review the recording. You can request for the video to be stopped at any time.

Please tell the group about your book. You may use your questionnaire to help if you would like. Each person will have 10-15 minutes to talk about their book and answer questions from other group members. You may learn something about another country or culture that is very different from what you know or believe. It is ok to ask questions, but it is very important to be respectful of each other. This is entirely voluntary which means don't have to answer any questions if you do not want to, you may also leave at any time.

Appendix E: Follow-up Interview Protocol

I will begin the interview with the following:

Thank you for meeting with me today. I asked you to participate in this interview because there were things you wrote in your questionnaire or said during the focus group that I want to know more about. There are no right or wrong answers, I just want to know what you think. If you feel uncomfortable or decide you don't want to answer a question, just let me know and we can stop. I am video recording this conversation, at any point you can ask me to stop the recording.

General Questions

What do English teachers need to know about you and your country so that they can help you learn more?

If a teacher knew more about your culture, would that make you want to learn more and work harder in that class?

I'd like to know what you remember thinking or feeling when you were reading the book the first time?

How did you feel about answering questions about your book and your culture?

What did you think of the questions your peers asked in the focus group?

How did you feel about using English to talk about your culture and to answer your peers' questions?

What is your opinion on the use of children's books to learn English?

Now I want to talk more about _____. I noticed that _____, and I was wondering _____?