

ABSTRACT

VEHABOVIC, NERMIN. A Community Classroom as “Our Home” for Children and Youth Resettled as Refugees and Tutors: Three Essays on Language and Literacy Practices in a Transcultural and Translingual Space. (Under the direction of Dr. Angela M. Wiseman).

My dissertation research project is reported in separately prepared essays that illuminate the language and literacy practices that took place in “Our Home,” an afterschool program located in a community classroom in a city in the Southeastern United States. I also engaged in research in which I made the methodological stance of humanizing research the center of my work. In Essay 1, I consider the ways in which children and youth from refugee backgrounds and their tutors navigate flexible language practices, characterized as translanguaging, in an afterschool program. I also examine how tutors foster students’ transcultural identities. Drawing on critical qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 2017) and using ethnographic approaches, I describe the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that students and tutors displayed as they participated in an afterschool program. Specifically, they had opportunities to traverse borders that do not require them to use only a fraction of their linguistic repertoire, and consequently to isolate parts of themselves in order to speak, read, write, and think.

The second essay reports a study focused on four children’s responses to multicultural, transnational and translingual picturebooks. The children (Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit) were born in countries in Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, DR Congo, Eritrea) and settled as refugees in 2016 and 2017. In order to consider what happens when the children in my study respond to picturebooks, I use a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) to establish profiles that focus on their response and include observational data that I collected as part of a larger qualitative study. Each child’s profile is unique because it highlights each one’s knowledge and articulation of critical perspectives in response to picturebooks that highlight issues of bullying and racism,

transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. I use a framework of critical literacy practice (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002) to examine the children's response to the picturebooks. Their responses reflected all four dimensions: they disrupted the commonplace (i.e., found problematic aspects of assumptions in the stories), interrogated multiple viewpoints (i.e., reflected on different and contradictory perspectives), focused on sociopolitical issues (i.e., understood the power relationships between characters), and offered alternative thoughts centered around social justice. By recalling occasions that occurred in their homeland, referring to the many things they know and love and want to share, and closely identifying with a character, the children built on their experiences. Although they all asked about the meanings of unfamiliar words in different languages, Lion, Ayonna, and Dawit used phrases in English and languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in the books they read and discussed with me. All cases provide insight into how interactive readaloud sessions empowered the children in my study to articulate critical perspectives in response to picturebooks.

The third manuscript is personal perspective piece, in which I share my own refugee background and experiences, as well as stories about myself in the research context, in juxtaposition with stories about children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds with whom I interacted as a volunteer tutor and researcher in an afterschool program. Drawing on San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) and Lee's (2020) notions of humanizing research, I illuminate my work in an educational setting as honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with study participants. In creating and sustaining relationships of care and dignity in an afterschool program, I extended and reinvigorated languages, cultures, and stories with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds.

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A Community Classroom as “Our Home” for Children and Youth Resettled as Refugees and
Tutors: Three Essays on Language and Literacy Practices in a
Transcultural and Translingual Space

by
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DEDICATION

Ovaj završni rad je posvećen mojim roditeljima i omiljenoj sestri. Konačno su se moje trojke iz matematike u Njemačkoj isplatile. Također, ovaj rad je posvećen mojoj rahmetli Majki. Ona je oputovala u Dženet prije nego što je dočekala završetak ovog rada. Uvjeren sam da bi bila ponosna. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to the intelligent, hilarious, and very generous students and tutors I encountered in “Our Home.”

BIOGRAPHY

I, Nermin Vehabovic, was born in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which at the time was part of the country Yugoslavia. In the year 1992, strife and ethnic cleansing policies forced my family to flee. My mother, sister, and I escaped the country while my father stayed behind. After reuniting as a family, months later, we settled in Dossenheim, Germany. There, I enrolled in the first grade, and subsequently, often experienced microaggressions rooted in xenophobia. “When are you going back to your country?” my classmates asked. Another time, the classroom teacher attempted to take a class picture of all the children who dressed up to celebrate the carnival season. As I joined my classmates, in my rabbit costume, the teacher said, “You are in every picture. You can’t be in this one.” These experiences, although traumatizing, allow me to recognize that my purpose in life involves working with culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth – to be the mentor, teacher, and tutor that I wish I had in elementary school and beyond.

A few years later, my family applied for refugee resettlement to the United States when the federal government of Germany introduced policies requiring all refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina to return to their country of origin. After settling in Wilmington, North Carolina, I enrolled in the sixth grade. A representative at the district office of education insisted that I must attend an English as a Second Language program located at a middle school which has historically served as a high school for African American/Black students prior to desegregation of public K-12 schools. In order to attend this school, I was bused for nearly two hours in the morning and afternoon.

Two years later, I received a scholarship to attend an independent non-sectarian K-12 school. In a class of forty students, only two students identified as African-American/Black; and,

all teachers identified as Caucasian/White. In that context, I learned about the history associated with the establishment of the school in 1968 as an institution serving only Caucasian/White students. The first African-American/Black student graduated from the school in 1984.

In my third year of management and political science studies at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, while feeling completely demoralized and disinterested in most of the classes, I decided to walk past the Department of Education. There, I overheard women talking about Sunday service at their churches. I remember thinking that I really do not belong there, either. And instead of changing my majors, I pursued an opportunity to serve as a Teacher Assistant and Reading Tutor in a 2nd grade class at a magnet elementary school. After two years in these roles, I eagerly took a job to teach English as an additional language, in grades 3 to 6, in two public elementary schools in Ulsan and Busan, South Korea.

These professional experiences inspired me to pursue a master's degree in International Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education. And while taking doctoral seminar courses as electives, in critical literacy and the intersections of race, gender, and ethnicity in language and literacy, I became interested in further expanding my understanding pertaining to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth in school and community contexts. I also wondered about the role of students' families when it comes to navigating language and using literacy practices. In order to pursue these interests, I sought out faculty mentors who seemed willing to support my proposed work. And that is how my journey of working toward a PhD in Teacher Education and Learning Sciences with a focus in Literacy and English Language Arts Education began in the College of Education at North Carolina State University.

At North Carolina State University's College of Education, my graduate student assistantships have primarily involved working with Dr. Dennis Davis at a university reading center (Literacy Space @ NCSU) and supporting professors who teach introductory and advanced qualitative research methods courses. In the first role, I provided support during the process of initially establishing and then co-facilitating Literacy Space @ NCSU and an afterschool reading program located at one of our partner elementary schools. These programs provide both coursework and field experiences for master's degree seeking students who are practicing elementary and middle school teachers qualified to pursue reading certification. The research I conducted with Dennis and graduate students over the course of several years used formative design methods to consider how teachers and specialists can be supported in integrating responsive reading interventions with inquiry and disciplinary learning goals. My additional assistantship duties included helping teachers organize tutoring materials and responding to the needs of their tutees, providing support during tutoring sessions, and engaging with translingual parents and caregivers. In addition to this Graduate Assistantship, I also served as a Teaching Assistant in face-to-face and online courses focused on literacy assessment, intensified instruction, and supervised practicum in literacy. In the second role, I supported the doctoral methods qualitative research course sequence by attending research methods classes, worked with four qualitative methods instructors and the Doctoral Methods Coordinator to identify ways to assist students, held regular office hours for one-on-one or small group student assistance, conducted group help sessions with doctoral students, provided online study sessions and coaching, and collaborated with qualitative methods faculty as they developed course materials.

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My deepest gratitude goes to the children, young adults, and tutors whom I encountered in “Our Home.” This dissertation would not have been possible without your willingness to share with me your stories, ways of knowing, and experiences. Interacting with you has always been the highlight of my day. On days when I worried about my ability to carry out this research project, you embraced me with love and encouragement. Mostly, you have taught me to appreciate the present moment and not worry about the future because everything always works out as it should.

I am grateful for the support I received at North Carolina State University’s College of Education and in the Teacher Education and Learning Sciences/Literacy and English Language Arts Education departments. In particular, I would like to thank my dissertation chair and academic advisor, Dr. Angela Wiseman, for her care and extraordinary support not only in my understanding of qualitative research and critical issues in language and literacy, but in all areas of my doctoral journey. **Angela:** Since our first encounter in 2016 during an educator/activist’s keynote address at NC State, when I held your purse in my lap, you have seen value in me. And subsequently, you have encouraged me to pursue professional and research goals while providing invaluable mentoring and guidance. Thank you for providing endless opportunities for me to engage in research and writing and attend social events. I would also like to thank the wonderful members of my dissertation committee (Drs. Crystal Chen Lee, Dennis Davis, Marc Grimmett, and Michelle Falter) who provided tremendous support, thoughtful feedback, and professional guidance. **Crystal:** It is always wonderful to talk with you. Thank you for suggesting that I read scholarship on qualitative inquiry and humanizing research. Following your advice, I have been able to think about the ways in which my own work aligns with

humanizing research. **Dennis:** It has been a pleasure working with you at the Literacy Space and our partner school. You have treated me as a colleague from day one and that made me feel safe to ask questions about teaching, research, and the ways in which we can support children when they struggle with reading and writing. During the past four years, you have always tried to listen and offer advice. I cherish our professional collaborations and friendship. **Marc:** You are the coolest professor I know and the epitome of a “man crush.” Thank you for embracing me with positive energy and reminding me to celebrate my cultural background, languages, life experiences, and ways of showing up in the world. Your advice came at a time in my life when I needed to hear it. **Michelle:** I appreciate you always asking about my progress with data collection and analysis. Thank you for reassuring me that I can do this! And, I am fortunate to have had encouragement and support from additional professors in the College of Education. Drs. Jessica DeCuir-Gunby, Jill Grifenhagen, Ann Harrington, DeLeon Gray, Jenn Ayscue, Peter Hessling, Soonhye Park, Meg Blanchard, Carl Young, and John Lee: Thank you for supporting me along this journey and offering advice. In addition, I am grateful that North Carolina State University’s College of Education has supported this research project through a dissertation support grant. I also have to give a shout-out to my friends and 2017 IYL Fellows: Thomas, Matty, Bogum, Ilgim, and Macarena. At a time when I was confused about the direction of my research endeavors, you all provided significant input. A big thank you goes to Dr. Thomas Crisp for offering to look over my written statements, chatting with me on the phone, and providing tips on navigating the job market.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my amazing friends at NC State. All of you have supported me in numerous ways – whether it was letting me complain or offering to share accommodation and attend dance parties at conferences in New

York City and Toronto. And when I would disappear and avoid people, sneak in and out of Poe Hall, many of you checked on me by calling, texting, or finding me in-person. A big thank you goes to Ashley, Whitney, Gregory, Brittney, Rachael, Iwinosa, Jill, Ha, Diane (my “bestie”), Amanda, Stephen, and Jenn (my neighbor in suburbia). I also appreciate friends who were excited when I decided to pursue a doctoral degree. Thank you, Stephanie, Mark, Roxanna, Becca, Yik, Patrick and Pedro, for showing interest in my work and encouraging me to keep going.

Lastly, but most importantly, thank you to the best family in the world. My mom and dad had an entire food shipping operation going on from Wilmington to the Triangle. Every few weeks, coolers filled with homecooked food would arrive at my doorstep. They made sure that I am well fed and do not become a loner who seemingly only writes. And my sister provided a roof over my head as well as endless advice – whether I asked for it or not. Well, all that advice has been more helpful than she will ever know. I also have to thank my extended family who are dispersed all over the world. My aunts, uncles, and cousins were ecstatic when they heard that I am going to pursue a doctoral degree. It brings me great pride as the first in the Isić and Vehabović families to become a doctor.

#micdrop

The best is yet to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
INTRODUCTION	1
Organization of Dissertation.....	3
Directions for Future Research.....	6
Implications for Research and Policy.....	6
“Our Home”	7
Situating “Our Home” in an Era of Accountability.....	10
Implications for Practice.....	11
References.....	13
ESSAY 1: FLEXIBLE LANGUAGE PRACTICES, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY BROKERING, AND TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITIES: TRANSLINGUAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM TUTORS DISPLAY LINGUISTIC, LITERACY, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCIES.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Theoretical Framework	21
Translanguaging Theory	21
Critical Sociocultural Theory.....	23
Relevant Literature.....	24
Methodology.....	28
Research Design and Method.....	28
Context and Participants	30
Data Collection.....	34
Data Analysis	37
Findings	40
Flexible Language Practices.....	41
Language and Literacy Brokering.....	46
Out in the Open: Backgrounds and Lived Experiences as Transcultural Identities.....	48
Conclusion	51
Implications for Research	52
Implications for Practice.....	53
References.....	55
ESSAY 2: EMPOWERED TO ARTICULATE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: TRANSLINGUAL CHILDREN FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS RESPOND TO PICTUREBOOKS	67
Introduction.....	67
Framework for Critical Literacy	69
Reading and Responding to Children’s Literature in Particular Contexts	70
Methodology.....	72
Context.....	73
Participants.....	76

Data Collection.....	77
Data Analysis	78
Findings	81
Lion.....	81
Ayonna.....	86
Gloria	91
Dawit.....	94
Looking Across Cases: Language Practices as Empowering	96
Coming Full Circle: Love as a Driving Force to Connect with and Motivate Translingual Children from Refugee Backgrounds	98
References.....	101
ESSAY 3: STORIES AS LIFE PERFORMANCES: HUMANIZING RESEARCH AS HONORING, RESPECTING, LISTENING TO AND LEARNING WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS	108
Introduction.....	108
Centering the Methodological Stance of Humanizing Research	110
Working with Children, Youth, and Families from Refugee Backgrounds in “Our Home”	112
Lives, Performance, Representation, Epiphany, and Interpretation: Connecting the Dots with Stories.....	114
Data Sources and Analysis.....	114
Telling of My Own Refugee Background and Experiences: Nermin’s Journey	115
Ayonna’s Journal Entry	117
“It’s Kinda Fun but [also] Boring”: A Day for Music Making Becomes an Ideal Day to Play Outside	119
“Hey, You Got a Pump?”: A Childhood Marred by Translation	121
Across Stories: Honoring, Respecting, Listening to and Learning with Participants.....	123
Centering the Methodological Stance of Humanizing Research in Work with Children, Youth, and Families from Refugee Backgrounds.....	124
References.....	126
APPENDICES.....	129
Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol with Tutors.....	130
Appendix B: Synopsis of Picturebooks	131

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Biographical profiles of afterschool program tutors	31
Table 1.2	Biographical profiles of child and youth participants	31
Table 2.1	Multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks to which each child responded.....	76
Table 2.2	Readers' critical response types and examples.....	80

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Examples of artifacts collected.....	37
Figure 1.2	Image of soft drink that Hamid handed to afterschool program tutors.....	43
Figure 1.3	World map children and youth used to exhibit their background experiences and knowledge.....	49
Figure 2.1	Ayonna produces a written response.....	91
Figure 3.1	Artifacts representative of Nermin’s lived experiences and refugee background	110
Figure 3.2	Ayonna’s journal entry.....	118

INTRODUCTION

Every year, the President of the United States decides the limit on how many people from refugee backgrounds can settle in the country (Krogstad, 2019). In 2017, the first year of the Trump administration, although a temporary freeze was imposed on refugee resettlement, about 53,700 refugees settled in the United States. In the prior year, the final year of the Obama administration, nearly 85,000 refugees were welcomed (Krogstad, 2019). During these time frames, of those who settled as refugees in the United States, approximately half were children and youth under the age of eighteen (Krogstad, 2019). And, as outlined in conventions that have been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, these young refugees who settle in the United States must be afforded equal schooling opportunities (Naidoo, 2008). However, once they enroll in schools, these children and youth typically experience discrimination, racism, and persistent devaluation of knowledge (Li, 2008; Roxas, 2011). At the same time, schoolteachers are likely underprepared to meet the needs of children and youth from refugee backgrounds (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Adams & Shambleu, 2006). Consequently, these students are tracked into lower level classes that emphasize acquiring English as an additional language while focusing on vocabulary and grammar development skills (Li, 2008; Omerbašić, 2015).

Afterschool programs may allow additional time, space, and opportunities for school-age students from refugee backgrounds to develop an understanding of interactions and expectations of themselves as learners and participants in activities (Beck, 1999; McPherson, 1997; Morrison, Robertson, Harding, Weissglass, & Dondero, 2000; Naidoo, 2008). Research shows that afterschool programs may foster students' pride, self-worth, and confidence about achieving goals, and increase their opportunities for social interaction, cooperation, and self-efficacy (Bergin, Hudson, Chryst, & Resetar, 1992; Danish, 1996; Halpern, 1992; Pierce & Shields, 1998;

Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019). In addition, when afterschool program activities focus on cultural and linguistic inclusivity, they enhance a sense of belonging and dignity in children and youth (Alvarez, 2017, 2014; Lee & Hawkins, 2008; Orellana, 2016; Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019).

This doctoral dissertation illuminates the language and literacy practices that took place in one afterschool program, referred to as “Our Home” by participants and their tutors. The study participants included 14 children and youth from refugee backgrounds and four afterschool program tutors. This program is administered by a non-profit organization that provides homework assistance for students in elementary, middle, and high-school grades who settled as refugees in a city in the Southeastern United States in 2016 and 2017. Using qualitative inquiry, this research project is reported in three separate essays. The first examines the language and literacy practices in one culturally and linguistically diverse afterschool program. The second explores the experiences and identities among multilingual/translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds. The third investigates children’s responses to multicultural, transnational and translingual children’s literature and readalouds.

In writing about this research project, I use the term *translingual* rather than multilingual in order to 1) consider the dynamic interactions between languages and communities as people use language varieties and navigate social boundaries (Canagarajah, 2013; Zheng, 2017); and, 2) resist promoting static notions of multilingualism as already achieved competence in named languages (e.g., “English,” “Spanish”) which are kept separate from each other (for instance, see García & Wei, 2014; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Piller & Takahashi, 2011). As a related term, *translanguaging* refers to the flexible ways in which people practice multilingualism and use their full language repertoire, which includes all the named languages they know in various abilities (García, 2009).

Organization of Dissertation

In the first study, I explore how an afterschool program, which is less constricted than schools in the United States by ideologies and subsequent policies that center *Whiteness*, such as instructing and assessing students in the English language, might provide unique opportunities for translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds to navigate flexible language practices in ways that are not inhibited by monolingual approaches. Tutors in afterschool programs may be able to encourage language practices based on students' translingual strengths. Drawing on critical qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 2017) and using ethnographic approaches (e.g., fieldwork, interviews, and collection of artifacts), I seek to illuminate the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that students and tutors displayed as they participated in a translingual and transcultural space. This study considers the following research questions: In what ways do translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds and tutors navigate flexible language practices, characterized as translanguaging, in an afterschool program? How do tutors foster students' transcultural identities? Overall, this study illustrates that participants had opportunities to display the linguistic, literacy, and cultural skills they already know without being policed in regard to the boundaries between languages, genres, groups, and ideas they may cross in an afterschool program.

The second essay reports on a study focused on four children's responses to multicultural, transnational and translingual picturebooks. The children (Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit) were born in countries in Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea) and settled as refugees in 2016 and 2017. In order to consider what happens when the children in my study respond to picturebooks, I use a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) to establish profiles that focus on their responses and include observational data that I collected as part of a

larger qualitative study. Each child's profile is unique because their responses to picturebooks were unique, although they shared common themes of bullying and racism, transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. The analysis shows how these children's insights were sophisticated, reflecting an acute awareness of multiple viewpoints as well as larger sociopolitical issues and social justice. By recalling occasions that occurred in their homeland, referring to the many things they know and love and want to share, such as closely identifying with a character, Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit built on their lived experiences. Although they all asked about the meanings of unfamiliar words in different languages, Lion, Ayonna, and Dawit used phrases in English and languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in books they read and discussed with me. All cases provide insight into how interactive readaloud sessions empowered children who recently settled in the United States as refugees to express their perspectives in response to picturebooks.

The third manuscript is a personal perspective essay in which I attempt to turn "the traditional life story, biographical project into an interpretive autoethnographic project, into a critical, performative practice, a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology" (Denzin, 2014, n.p.). I pursue this goal by using a humanizing research methodology in my work with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds. Specifically, I define humanizing research as honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with research participants. This may be realized when researchers such as myself are invested in and care for study participants; when they build on the commonalities of their and participants' backgrounds; and when they bring a perspective that does not begin with a deficit view of participants' language and cultural knowledge and abilities.

Including stories as an essential feature of this personal perspective essay, I aim to relate experiences of pursuing humanizing research with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds in order to connect the dots between “lives, performance, representation, epiphany, and interpretation” (Denzin, 2014, p. 1). These stories were selected to illustrate the ways in which I honored, respected, listened to and learned with study participants by identifying closely with, investing in, and caring for them; building on our commonalities; and, committing myself to anti-deficit perspectives. In particular, I was influenced by autoethnography or critical autoethnography methods to analyze data that ultimately informed stories about study participants and myself (e.g., Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2016). This is why I share my own refugee background and experiences, as well as stories about myself in the research context, in juxtaposition with stories about children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds with whom I interacted as a volunteer tutor and researcher in an afterschool program. Such reflective and reflexive undertakings are particularly important to consider for researchers working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. When researchers create and sustain relationships of care and dignity in educational research (Paris, 2011), such as honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds, it is possible to extend and reinvigorate languages, cultures, and stories with study participants – ultimately listening, storying, and caring for one another (Lee, 2020; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017).

While prepared separately, these three essays remain related, and collectively illuminate the language and literacy practices that took place in a translingual and transcultural space, as well as the ways in which I, as a researcher, engaged in research which methodologically centered on a humanizing approach to learn about participants in my study. Directions for future

research and implications for research, policy, and practice are explored in the following sections.

Directions for Future Research

Scholars and researchers in the field of education are increasingly becoming more persistent with calls for decolonizing knowledge and our ways of knowing. Hence, my research project aims to “unsettle traditional concepts of what counts as research, as evidence, as legitimate inquiry” (Denzin, 2017, p. 8). This is an important notion for me to consider, as a researcher in the field of education, in order to push back against the history of qualitative and ethnographic work that seeks “...at worst, to pathologize, exoticize, objectify, and name as deficient communities of color and other marginalized populations in the U.S. and beyond, and at best, to take and gain through research but not to give back” (Paris & Winn, 2014, n.p). Also, equally important, I sought to pursue qualitative research that moves beyond simply focusing on racialized communities, and instead engages in naming and confronting racism, injustices, and inequity (for instance, see Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis Ellison, 2020). I envision that future qualitative studies concerning language and literacy practices among children and youth and their mentors, teachers, and tutors in school and out-of-school contexts could privilege the creation of sites for change and activism. Only then will students and educators have opportunities to participate in equitable language and literacy learning.

Implications for Research and Policy

My dissertation research project explored the ways in which translingual children and youth navigated language, used literacy practices, and responded to picturebooks in “Our Home,” an afterschool program located in a community classroom in a city in the Southeastern United States. I also considered the role of tutors in navigating language and using literacy

practices in this afterschool program. Designated as a Refugee School Impact Program, the afterschool program is funded by the Division of Refugee Assistance (DRA), which is a subsidiary division of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). States and state-alternative programs receive funding from the DRA to implement “activities that lead to the effective integration and education of refugee children [and youth ages 5 to 18],” and include English as a Second Language instruction, programs that encourage high school completion, and full participation in school activities, afterschool and/or summer clubs and activities, as well as parental involvement programs (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). In addition, participating children and youth are to be provided with access to bilingual and bicultural tutors, instructors, and counselors, as well as interpretation services. Despite having conducted my dissertation research in an afterschool program which is funded in an effort to facilitate “effective integration and education of refugee children [and youth],” in three essays I have not examined the success of the “integration” goal of this program, but rather tried to situate the language and literacy practices that took place in a translingual and transcultural space, as well as the ways in which I, as a researcher, engaged in research centering the methodological stance of humanizing research.

“Our Home”

Across the two years in which I have volunteered as a tutor, two days per week, in “Our Home,” children in elementary-grades and youth in middle- and high school-grades arrived to receive help with homework. When the younger children came to “play,” either of the two afterschool program facilitators would gently remind them that it is not a play area because others are working on their homework. However, at times, afterschool program facilitators would turn a blind eye to children who came to play with a toy truck, toy dinosaurs, cards and

shape blocks, or to read big books about sea and land animals. On several occasions, I witnessed children playing card games with each other, reading books to each other, or producing a sock puppet show. Yet, when a child came in with a basketball and started bouncing it against the wall, he was asked to leave. The children and youth, along with their families, lived in the same apartment complex in which “Our Home” is located. Generally, regardless of the number of people in their families, children and youth lived in one- or two-bedroom rental apartments. Parents worked in poultry processing plants or service industry jobs, such as cleaning office buildings, washing cars, or working in a university cafeteria. Few families had a vehicle; however, due to unreliable cars, all families used the sporadic city bus system.

The elementary, middle and high schools that children and youth attended provided important support for their learning about language and literacy. The children in elementary-grades seemed to like their teachers and school while youth in middle- and high school-grades often complained that their teachers or school staff “don’t understand” or were mean – even racist. Their schools are part of a large school system that is moving toward scripted approaches to teaching and increasingly focused on standardization of learning and testing of discrete skills. None of the children and youth have access to instruction in their heritage language or teachers and staff who speak their heritage languages, such as Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Tigrinya, Farsi, Dari, or Urdu. However, parents may request an interpreter to facilitate in-person or phone conversations with their child’s teacher or a school staff member.

I believe that, in referring to the afterschool program as “Our Home,” children and youth felt cared for in that space and had opportunities, in addition to receiving help with homework, to talk with each other and with program facilitators and volunteer tutors about their day at school, new things they have learned, or everyday experiences, such as being made fun of or bullied in

their community or school. As noted in Essay 1, children and youth had opportunities to use their linguistic strengths by navigating flexible language practices. This is significant because, rather than being required to communicate and to be assessed in less than half of their linguistic repertoire, they were not subjected to monolingual approaches to education that suppress translingual speakers while keeping monolingual speakers very powerful (García, 2017). Often, students also brought along younger siblings who were not formally enrolled in the afterschool program; this was an opportunity for children and youth to show off their siblings or watch them while receiving help with homework or engaging in conversation. Occasionally, parents came to inquire about paying bills, filing taxes, finding a new job, or signing up for adult English classes. Moreover, as noted in Essay 2, children also had access and opportunities to interact with multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks that I provided. While participating in interactive readaloud sessions with me, four children (Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit) responded to picturebooks that highlight issues of bullying and racism, transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. Their responses to the picturebook stories included insights into multiple viewpoints, sociopolitical issues, and social justice. Across these essays, it is not my intention to measure outcomes that indicate whether an afterschool program funded by the DRA has effectively contributed to the integration and education of children and youth from refugee backgrounds. Instead, I have examined the ways in which participants navigated language, used literacy practices, and responded to picturebooks in this translingual and transcultural space. In doing this work, I have illuminated the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that these students and tutors displayed as they read the word and the world in an afterschool program.

Situating “Our Home” in an Era of Educational Accountability

In an era of educational accountability, it is becoming increasingly important to measure learning and prove that it happens in afterschool programs. In their meta-analysis of afterschool programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents, Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) determined that participants demonstrated significant positive increases in their self-perceptions and bonding to school; positive gains in social behaviors, school grades and levels of academic achievement; and significant reductions in problem behaviors. Another study examined the characteristics of students participating in tutoring programs in the Pittsburgh school district, as well as the effects of participation on student achievement and program features associated with improved achievement (Zimmer, Hamilton, & Christina, 2010). The study notes that fewer than a quarter of all students eligible for tutoring programs take advantage of them and that participation rates decrease at higher grade levels. In addition, lower-performing students and African-American/Black students were identified as more likely to take advantage of these programs.

Although these studies underscore that funding agencies and programs are concerned with measuring learning to ensure that it happens in afterschool programs, my dissertation research project presents a different goal. I illuminate the ways in which students displayed and cultivated competencies that are often suppressed in schools, such as translingual and critical literacy skills, as well as human connections that involve respecting, listening to and learning with each other. I do not ask what exactly children and youth learned in an afterschool program, or how much they gained in vocabulary, reading skills, or on a test, or what leadership skills or attributes the children and youth gained? Rather, my research has been informed by questions such as Orellana (2016) asks:

[W]hat disservice do we do to kids when we rigidly police the linguistic and cultural boundaries that they traverse every day with tremendous flexibility, versatility, and grace? What injuries do we do to kids from non-dominant cultural groups when we ask them to speak, read, write, and think in ways that require cutting off parts of themselves? What harm do we do to young people when we provide no space to display what they already know and can do – rather than where their “problems” lie? The slow beating down of the human spirit may cause terrible injuries that go unseen. Don’t children suffer when we squander talents and capacities that they are only beginning to realize they have? (p. 133)

Despite documenting the language and literacy practices of children, youth, and tutors in an afterschool program that received grant funding, in separately prepared essays I show that students from cultural backgrounds other than the prevailing environment had opportunities to traverse linguistic and cultural boundaries in ways that do not always require them to isolate parts of themselves in order to speak, read, write, and think. In “Our Home,” this was possible because afterschool program facilitators recognized the dangers of rigidly policing the linguistic and cultural boundaries that translingual children and youth navigate daily with flexibility, versatility, and grace.

Implications for Practice

Practitioners in the field of education, especially those in the areas of language and literacy, likely encounter monolingual approaches to education. These approaches are enforced in most schools in the United States – ensuring that through the use of the English language and specific literacies, monolingual speakers are positioned very powerfully (García, 2017; Orellana, 2016). Subsequently, translingual children and youth, especially those from refugee

backgrounds, are instructed and assessed in just a fraction of the languages and specific literacies they know (García, 2017; Orellana, 2016). Therefore, it is essential that educators – regardless of whether they are teachers in schools, tutors in afterschool programs, or mentors in community-based organizations – recognize and choose to resist test-centric literacy instruction (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018) and emphasize activities that encourage translingual students to use all the languages and literacies they know in order to comprehend, speak, and engage in learning (Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014). Educators should also be aware that (and react through resistance when) children and youth from refugee backgrounds are more likely to experience language programs that center around vocabulary and grammar development than to have opportunities for programs which emphasize reading and writing processes and strategies (Li, 2008a; 2008b; Omerbašić, 2015).

When educators start to discover students’ “arsenal of language features” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17), they can make a significant impact in the lives of translingual children and youth. After discovering which language features and literacies children and youth are able to recognize and use, educators will likely be able to encourage interactions between students and others; also, they may motivate students to interact with texts that entail various language features (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17). Rather than “transmit[ing] a cannon of linguistic knowledge” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17; also see Li Wei, 2014), these approaches may lead to collaborative language and literacy learning between children and youth and their mentors, teachers, and tutors.

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ESSAY 1

FLEXIBLE LANGUAGE PRACTICES, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY BROKERING, AND TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITIES: TRANSLINGUAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM TUTORS DISPLAY LINGUISTIC, LITERACY, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

Introduction

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that nearly 71 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR Figures at a Glance, 2019). Approximately 26 million people, mostly from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria, are classified as refugees (UNHCR Figures at a Glance, 2019; UNHCR Refugee Facts, 2019). Over 17 million refugees are school-aged children and youth under the age of 18 (UNHCR Refugee Facts, 2019). Refugees are individuals who flee their country because of war or violence, as well as the fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social membership in a group (UNHCR Refugee Facts, 2019).

People from refugee backgrounds who settle in the United States occupy a unique position, in contrast to immigrants, in that their movement was forced and they often have had no control over their destination (Mosselson, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Following refugee resettlement and enrollment in school, students frequently encounter unwelcome learning environments where discrimination, racism, and devaluation of knowledge persist (Li, 2008; Roxas, 2011). Their classroom teachers are often underprepared to meet the needs of students from refugee backgrounds (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Adams & Shambleu, 2006). Hence, these students are tracked into lower level courses and placed in English as a Second Language classes that prioritize vocabulary and grammar development skills rather than

focus on reading and writing processes and strategies (Li, 2008; Omerbašić, 2015). Such classes take place in schools that are mostly English-dominant institutions, which instruct and assess translingual¹ students using less than half of their linguistic repertoire while prioritizing the English language and specific literacies that position monolingual speakers as powerful (García, 2017; Orellana, 2016).

With the exception of an initiative in the State of New York to extend students' home language practices into classrooms (Menken & Sánchez, 2019), schools in the United States emphasize monolingual approaches to education; these policies prevent translingual children and youth to fully participate as learners, and therefore have opportunities to (re)make themselves, their identities and discursive toolkits through flexible language practices and dynamic identities (Bauer & Colomer, 2017; Gallo & Hornberger, 2019; Hornberger, 2002, 2009; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Subsequently, translingual children and youth are discouraged from using these language practices characterized as translanguaging (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; García, 2009; Menken, 2013; Wiley, 2010). Translanguaging refers to the flexible ways in which people practice multilingualism and use their full language repertoire, which includes all the named languages they know in various abilities. However, afterschool programs might provide unique opportunities for translingual students from refugee backgrounds to navigate flexible language and literacy practices in ways that are not inhibited by monolingual approaches. Tutors in afterschool programs may be able to encourage language and literacy practices based on students' translingual strengths. Because afterschool programs are not required to instruct and

¹ I use the term *translingual* (as opposed to multilingual) in order to: 1) consider the dynamic interactions between languages and communities as people use language varieties and navigate social boundaries (Canagarajah, 2013; Zheng, 2017); and, 2) resist promoting static notions of multilingualism as already achieved competence in named languages (e.g., “English,” “Kinyarwanda,” “Swahili,” “Tigrinya”) which are kept separate from each other (for instance, see García & Wei, 2014; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Piller & Takahashi, 2011).

assess students in the English language, these settings are less constricted by ideologies and subsequent policies that center *Whiteness* (e.g., Alvarez, 2014, 2017; García, 2017; Orellana, 2016; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). Yet, no empirical studies have considered the ways in which translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds and tutors navigate flexible language practices and build on their background experiences and knowledge in an afterschool program.

Therefore, this research project took place in a linguistically and culturally diverse afterschool program that students and tutors refer to as “Our Home.” Designated as a Refugee School Impact Program, the afterschool program is funded by the Division of Refugee Assistance (DRA), which is a subsidiary division of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). States and state-alternative programs receive funding from the DRA to implement “activities that lead to the effective integration and education of refugee children [and youth],” ages 5 to 18, and include: English as a Second Language instruction, programs that encourage high school completion and full participation in school activities, afterschool and/or summer clubs and activities, and parental involvement programs (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). It is not my intention to consider whether this afterschool program has effectively contributed to the integration and education of children or assess what skills and attributes they have gained to become leaders. Instead, I seek to illuminate the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that students and tutors displayed as they participated in a translingual and transcultural space. Using critical qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 2017), this study draws on translanguaging and critical sociocultural theories to consider the following research questions: In what ways do translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds and tutors navigate flexible language practices, characterized as translanguaging, in an afterschool program? How do tutors foster students’ transcultural identities?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I present a theoretical framework by bringing together two theories; translanguaging and critical sociocultural theories. To explicitly move beyond the view of languages as bound systems and fixed codes, I lean on translanguaging theory to consider the ways in which translingual students and their tutors navigate flexible language practices. To consider how tutors foster students' transcultural identities, I draw from critical sociocultural theory.

Translanguaging Theory

As an alternative to a monoglossic view of multilingualism, where languages are considered separate systems with fixed codes (Grosjean, 1982; Gumperz, 1976), translanguaging theory highlights the flexible ways in which translingual people practice multilingualism (Crease & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012). Flexibility, from a linguistic standpoint, refers to the notion that people make decisions based on their knowledge while navigating between languages. Translanguaging theory also highlights the concept that both translingual and monolingual people use their full language repertoire in order to comprehend, speak, and engage in literacy and learning (Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014). Both translingual and monolingual people's full language repertoire includes all the named languages (e.g., "English" and "Spanish") they know in various abilities while disregarding whether they have achieved competence in those languages (García & Wei, 2014; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Piller & Takahashi, 2011). Therefore, translanguaging theory is an alternative to the notion of *code-switching*, which stipulates that translingual people separately use two or more languages that are comprised of distinct linguistic systems (Auer, 1999; 2005; Myers-Scotton, 2005). Translanguaging theory

provides a contrast also to words like code meshing, code mixing, style shifting, polylinguaging, and urban metrolingualism, terms that have been used to identify new language forms and ultimately to reinforce static and bounded notions of linguistic variation (García, 2009; Orellana, 2016).

Two forms of translanguaging are language and literacy brokering. In this context, language brokering is understood as the skills in multiple languages that translingual people use to read, write, listen, speak, and do things for their families (Orellana, 2009; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). Literacy brokering occurs when individuals seek informal help with the texts and literacy practices they encounter on an everyday basis (Perry, 2009). Together, these aspects of translanguaging entail the ways in which translingual people translate and interpret on behalf of others (Alvarez, 2014; 2017; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana, 2009; Orellana & García, 2014; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). As people translate and interpret, they “draw on their full linguistic toolkits in order to process information, make meaning, and convey it to others” (Orellana & García, 2014, p. 384). Research has demonstrated how people also move across languages in flexible and complex ways, for example, by using what amounts to a person’s own language, which differs from that of another individual (Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores & Woodley, 2012; Li Wei, 2011; Velasco & García, 2014). Language and literacy brokering, centered around the “crossing of linguistic borders,” are the skills that translingual children and youth bring to educational settings such as afterschool programs (Orellana & García, 2014, p. 386; also see Alvarez, 2017; Orellana, 2016). While using their full language repertoires to comprehend, speak, and engage in literacy learning, students, along with their tutors, make decisions based on their knowledge as they navigate between the

languages they know in various abilities (Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014).

Critical Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theories are often employed by language acquisition scholars who engage with research that moves beyond deficit-oriented perspectives to illuminate the social and cultural practices of people who come from different backgrounds (García-Sánchez & Orellana, 2019; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009). In this regard, identity can be viewed as a flexible socially and linguistically mediated construct that considers the different positions that people enact or perform in different contexts (Bucholtz, Liang, & Sutton, 1999; Gee, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). For instance, Lave (1996) and Gee (2001) maintain that learning entails shifts in identity as people take on new identities along with new forms of knowledge and participation.

Specifically, in this essay I draw upon critical sociocultural theory to recognize “larger systems of power as they shape and are shaped by individuals in particular cultural contexts” (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 9). In different cultural contexts, people shape their identities in relation to the conflicting discourses that are always present (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Steinbach, 2014). The term discourses refers to “a socially accepted association among the ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’” (Gee, 1998, p. 537). According to Lewis (2001), conflicting discourses that take place in cultural contexts, such as an afterschool program, are revealed as people negotiate their social positions. And as people participate in learning activities, they have opportunities to (re)make themselves, their identities and discursive toolkits (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Discursive toolkits refers to the discourses that we have available

and can draw from when participating in particular cultural contexts (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Wertsch, del Río, & Alvarez, 1995).

Using critical sociocultural theory allows me to consider how tutors foster students' transcultural identities. As they participate in learning activities in an afterschool program, children and youth interact with tutors in ways that entail power; subsequently, these interactions across larger systems of power shape and are shaped by participants in that particular cultural context (for instance, see Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). When afforded opportunities to build on their background experiences and knowledge, students' interactions with tutors center around (re)making themselves, their identities, and discursive toolkits (Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Relevant Literature

There are limited studies examining afterschool programs that combine academic tutoring and homework assistance. Studies such as Morrisson et al. (2000) and Beck (1999) have demonstrated that children and youth interacted socially in afterschool programs to solve problems and make decisions while developing a sense of commitment and responsibility to the immediate community. Further, afterschool programs establish expectations for children and youth around participation that fosters pride, self-worth, and confidence about achieving goals, and encourages increased social interaction, cooperation and self-efficacy (Bergin, Hudson, Chryst, & Resetar, 1992; Danish, 1996; Halpern, 1992; Pierce & Shields, 1998; Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019). By using their stores of knowledge in activities that focus on cultural inclusivity, children and youth have the potential to strengthen a sense of belonging and pride (Lee & Hawkins, 2008; Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019). While participating in an afterschool homework assistance program in New York City, translingual mothers, children, and tutors learned about homework while sharing their triumphs and defeats, speaking about their fears, and expressing

pride about children's educational accomplishments (Alvarez, 2017; 2014). As they worked on homework, participants used multiple languages and engaged in language brokering when a homework assignment required children and both their tutors and mothers to communicate about the content of an assignment, discuss family history, negotiate meanings, and compose what they heard phonetically (Alvarez, 2014).

Another study describes how translingual children and youth from immigrant backgrounds and undergraduate students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds participated in a play-based afterschool program in Los Angeles that engaged their languages, literacies, and cultures (Orellana, 2016). These kids employed unique ways with words, such as using one language with some speakers and another with others and combining them in different ways; deliberately translating or providing a loose translation; and sharing jokes and engaging with additional cross-lingual plays that illustrate an understanding of different language systems (Orellana, 2016). While the focus of this study was on translingual children and youth, undergraduate students/tutors and the researcher participated in program activities by inviting kids to be experts on the things they know and love, to explain things to each other, and to talk about what they like to do at home with their families (Orellana, 2016).

Additional studies show that translingual school-age children, as they interact with others (e.g., mentors, teachers, tutors, peers and family members), use written as well as oral language to navigate linguistically and culturally diverse contexts (Alvarez, 2014; Perry, 2014; Hall & Guéry, 2010; Trickett, Sorani, & Birman, 2010; Weisskirch, 2010; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). Such use of oral and written language is referred to as language and literacy brokering. Specifically, language brokering is linked to oral practices (e.g., Morales & Hanson, 2005; Morales, Yakushko, & Castro, 2012; Palmer & Martínez, 2016) while literacy brokering is

associated with written text (e.g., Perry, 2009; 2014; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003).

When translingual people engage with written text, they often translate words, explain genre, and mediate cultural content (Perry, 2009; 2014). For instance, Perry (2014) found that children in resettled refugee families from Sudan translated words in their homes as they supplied an English word and provided initial letters when parents sounded words. The translation of words in these ways is described as lexico-syntactic and graphophonic brokering (Perry, 2009; 2014). Children also explained genres by showing parents how to sign up for an email account; explaining that a permission slip allows one to go on a field trip; indicating the signature line of a permission slip; and, pointing out a word list in the back of a book (Perry, 2014). These are examples of genre brokering, which are “related to the *purpose* of the genre, the reason a given genre exists, and the *use* of that genre, or what people actually do with it” (Perry, 2009, p. 263; also see Perry, 2014). Last, children mediated cultural content by explaining what a note from school is about and what will happen at a Valentine’s Day party; providing information about an ID card program for kids; and, explaining that a teacher requested parents to donate snacks (Perry, 2014). These are examples of culture brokering, which center around knowledge of culture in ways that are specific to the U.S. context and institutions; the beliefs, values, and expectations that relate to the implicit rules in a context; and, socially constructed cultural expectations (as cited in Perry, 2009; Perry, 2014).

Additional scholarship in the field of education has focused on children and youth from refugee backgrounds who participate in learning and development activities in out-of-school educational contexts, such as summer camp and afterschool programs and writing workshops. These studies describe how, while using language and literacy practices in many different ways,

participants talked and wrote about the past and their visions for the future (Daniel, 2019; Omerbašić, 2015); participated in science discourse (Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019); cultivated a sense of belonging in the community while learning a new language (Symons & Ponzio, 2019); and challenged racially biased discourses around Asian identity (Kolano & Davila, 2019). Further, Lee (2019) recounts how, within a community space such as the Sauti Yetu's Girl Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (GELI) in New York City, instructors invited and brought in the languages and culture of translingual students.

In addition to using language and literacy practices in many different ways, as well as interacting with the languages and cultures of participants, being involved in an afterschool program can be transformative for translingual children and youth when tutors discover students' "arsenal of language features" (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17). After discovering what language features children and youth are able to recognize and use, tutors are able to encourage interactions between students and others; also, they may motivate students to interact with texts that entail various language features (García & Kleyn, 2016). Hence, when children and youth use their own language features to communicate and learn, they and their tutors are able to collaboratively pursue learning – instead of tutors simply "transmit[ing] a canon of linguistic knowledge" (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17; also see Li Wei, 2014).

Adults in out-of-school contexts who serve as tutors, mentors, and teachers play an important role – they are able to affirm the identities and backgrounds of resettled refugee children and youth (Daniel, 2019). For instance, as youth of Burmese descent contemplated which languages to use during interactions with peers and adults throughout their day, they enacted a translingual and transnational identity (Duran, 2015). In addition, using multimodal literacy practices across digital spaces (e.g., Facebook, ooVoo, and YouTube) allowed young

women from refugee backgrounds to enact complex ways of knowing and being when accessing content that is personally, socially, and culturally meaningful (Omerbašić, 2015).

The aforementioned empirical studies indicate that flexible language practices unfold in linguistically and culturally diverse out-of-school educational contexts such as afterschool programs. Using their funds of knowledge, children interacted socially and were able to solve problems (Lee & Hawkins, 2008; Ryu, Tuvilla, & Wright, 2019). In an afterschool homework assistance program, they used multiple languages and engaged in language brokering (Alvarez, 2014). Similarly, in a play-based afterschool program, children from linguistically and culturally diverse immigrant backgrounds used one language with some speakers and another with others, and combined them in different ways (Orellana, 2016). These interactions between students and tutors entail power and may contribute to (re)making themselves, their identities, and discursive toolkits (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Moreover, Perry (2014) illuminates the ways in which children who settled in the United States as refugees from Sudan used school-related oral and written language at home. However, the fields of literacy and literacy education know little about the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that translingual children and youth display as they traverse linguistic and cultural borders in settings that do not require them to use only a fraction of their linguistic repertoire, and consequently to isolate parts of themselves in order to speak, read, write, and think.

Methodology

Research Design and Method

In my roles as researcher and volunteer tutor in an afterschool program setting, rather than asking “who am I?,” I pondered, “When, where, how am I?” (Marcus, 2009). This way of thinking allowed me to draw on critical qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 2017), in order to represent

the voices of translingual students in an afterschool program and illuminate the ways in which they (re)made themselves, their identities and discursive toolkits. According to Denzin (2017), critical inquiry places the voices of the oppressed at the center of inquiry; reveals sites of change and activism to empower and help people; and discerns injustices and aspects of inequality. I used ethnographic approaches, such as extensive fieldwork and collection of multiple sources of data (e.g., observations, interviews, and collection of artifacts). This allowed me to take into consideration the working patterns of students and their tutors as a culture-sharing group and present an in-depth understanding of an afterschool program (Wolcott, 2008; Fetterman, 2010). Along with the use of multiple data sources, extensive fieldwork allowed me to generate thick and contextual descriptions (Wolcott, 2008; Wolcott, 2010; Fetterman, 2010). Such descriptions establish consistency and credibility, and allow people who read this essay to understand the findings (Wolcott, 1990; Wolcott, 1994).

I specifically use critical approaches to qualitative inquiry in order to “unsettle traditional concepts of what counts as research, as evidence, as legitimate inquiry” (Denzin, 2017, p. 8). This *unsettling* is necessary if, as scholars and researchers in the fields of literacy and literacy education, we desire to decolonize what and how we know in effort to repudiate the legacy of qualitative and ethnographic work that seeks “...at worst, to pathologize, exoticize, objectify, and name as deficient communities of color and other marginalized populations in the U.S. and beyond, and at best, to take and gain through research but not to give back” (Paris & Winn, 2014, n.p). Moreover, in their meta-ethnography of family literacy scholarship, Compton-Lilly, Rogers, and Lewis Ellison (2020) maintain that research studies examining language and literacy practices in homes and communities must move beyond simply focusing on racialized communities, and instead, engage in naming and confronting racism. Hence, by identifying sites

of change and foregrounding activism to empower and help people, and discerning injustices and aspects of inequality, I hope to move closer toward naming and confronting the ways in which children and youth of color from refugee backgrounds are impacted by racism – an ideology deeply embedded in the policies and circumstances that impact where people in the United States live, the food they eat, the healthcare they receive, and the schools they attend (Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis Ellison, 2020).

Context and Participants

This study illuminates the linguistic, cultural, and literacy competencies that students and tutors displayed as they participated in an afterschool program, which students and teachers refer to as “Our Home.” Funded by the Division of Refugee Assistance, which is a subsidiary division of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020), this afterschool program is located in a community classroom in a city in the Southeastern United States. Participants include four afterschool program tutors (see Table 1.1) and 14 child and youth participants resettled as refugees from Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea (see Table 1.2). The children and youth are members of five families resettled as refugees in the United States in 2016 and 2017.

Table 1.1. Biographical profiles of afterschool program tutors.

Name (Pseudonym)	Role in Afterschool Program	Current Position / Occupation	Language(s)
Linda	Facilitator	Non-Profit Resettlement Organization Employee	English; some Japanese, French, German
Kamran	Assistant Facilitator	Non-Profit Resettlement Organization Employee	English, Farsi, and “hodgepodge of many languages”
Arjun	Volunteer Tutor	Doctoral Student (Engineering)	Hindi, Urdu, English
Ella	Volunteer Tutor/Intern	Undergraduate Student (International Relations)	English; some French and Spanish

Table 1.2. Biographical profiles of child and youth participants.

	Name (Pseudonym)	Grade	Country of Birth	Heritage Language
Family A	Lion (male) Gloria (female) LeBron (male)	1 3 5	Uganda Congo (DRC) Congo (DRC)	Kinyarwanda
Family B	Divine (female) Ayonna (female) Kobe (male) Jabori (male)	8 3 5 1	Congo (DRC) Tanzania Tanzania Tanzania	Swahili
Family C	Dawit (male) Zula (male)	4 6	Eritrea Eritrea	Tigrinya
Family D	Aydin (male) Hussain (male)	9 11	Afghanistan Afghanistan	Farsi, Dari, Urdu Farsi, Dari, Urdu
Family F	Hamid (male) Aaliyah (female) Yasmina (female)	6 9 10	Afghanistan Afghanistan Afghanistan	Farsi, Dari

Although I believe that participants should have the opportunity to decide how they will be represented in an empirical study, I was worried that child and youth participants (all minors) might not understand my intention to publish this work in a peer-reviewed journal (for further discussion around issues of anonymity and representation in ethnographic research, see Perry 2007b; also see Perry 2011 in regards to ethics, vulnerability, and speakers of other languages). Thus, I asked all study participants to pick a pseudonym. “Lion” and “LeBron” insisted that I refer to them by those names. All other names are pseudonyms that I selected because participants either requested that I use their real name or said, “Call me whatever.” Two afterschool program tutors suggested that I might refer to them by their role in the afterschool program. Therefore, all participants remain anonymous in written representations of this study.

Seven students (Lion, Gloria, LeBron, Ayonna, Kobe, Jabori, Dawit) attended elementary school and, at the time of the study, were in grades 1 to 5. Three students (Divine, Zula, Hamid) attended middle school and were in grades 6, 7, and 8. Four students (Aydin, Aaliyah, Yasmina, Hussain) attended high school and were in grades 9, 10, and 11. Hussein withdrew from school shortly before completing 11th grade “to get a job and help his mom so she doesn’t have to work, but then he got into some trouble. And the mom is still working” (conversation with Linda, fieldnotes, June 6, 2019). Some children and youth shared their experiences, prior to refugee resettlement in the United States, as influenced by interrupted schooling. For instance, Aydin made and sold custom shoes while temporarily living in Pakistan with his mother and brother. He says, “I helped my family to get money and then buy food...The [shoe shop] owner was not so nice. It’s a lot hard work. I am so tired” (fieldnotes, January 22, 2019). Hamid describes his job in Afghanistan as “painting cars with paint” and consequently “[being] sick from paint smell” (fieldnotes, January 22, 2019). And, while Hussain also worked, he never

shared details with me about the duration and type of work he did. Moreover, Divine and Ayonna smile when talking about their “school in Africa.” Specifically, Ayonna recalls fond memories: “Kids from many grades sit in the same room with teacher...boys are on one side and girls on other side. But we sing songs, dance, laugh and play...and do math, reading and writing on green wall” (fieldnotes, May 7, 2019).

The four volunteer tutors (Linda, Kamran, Arjun, Ella) include an afterschool program facilitator and assistant program facilitator (who work for the non-profit organization), an undergraduate student (who attends a public research university and studies international relations) and one doctoral student (who attends a public research university and studies engineering). Kamran and Arjun identify as translingual and are able to communicate with students in Farsi, Dari, Hindi, Urdu, as well as in hybrid ways produced by drawing words from multiple languages. And, although Linda does not identify as translingual, she has lived and worked with people in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts. While living in Japan and Germany, she attended language courses. Consequently, she is comfortable when others communicate in languages that she might not understand.

Despite lighting up with excitement when talking about the students she works with, Ella describes herself as “not really a good teacher” (interview, April 24, 2019). She does, however, emphasize her involvement with the children and youth spanning a period of three years, which enabled her to participate in and organize activities such as reading, swimming, arts and crafts, and photography. Similarly, Kamran says his role centers around case management and involves working with resettled refugee families rather than teaching, yet he sees his tutoring as an important aspect of his duties. In addition, Arjun says, “The afterschool program is a good resource and improves the children. So, I can contribute to children’s development and learning

in the community” (interview, March 29, 2019). Linda proudly describes her background and professional experiences:

A few years out of college, I went back part-time and got a Master’s in Education. I got certified to teach Social Studies at the High School level, but I never ended up using that. Right after I finished, we moved to Japan. There, I worked at a conversation school—teaching English to preschoolers through retirees. And then, when we returned to the States, I worked a while for an AmeriCorps program. The students enrolled to complete their GED and also learn English because they were from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and that part of the world. I also worked for a while at a middle school in a program for at-risk students. I was their everything – depending on what their need was that day. But it was similar to the work I do [at this afterschool program] – helping with the schoolwork that needed to be completed. And some days I was a nurse, as well; or, a mother, helping them get lunch, and even dealing with the police. Then we moved to Germany and I went back to teaching English – this time to professionals online. So, coming back here, this is generally the type of work that I’ve always done and enjoyed. (Interview, June 4, 2019)

Child and youth participants in this study shared their lived experiences; tutors did the same, in addition to talking about their current role in the afterschool program and prior professional experiences. These participants contribute to the afterschool program in ways that perpetuate its existence as a linguistically and culturally diverse space.

Data Collection

Guided by my research questions, data collection for this study relied upon participant-observations, interviews, and collection of artifacts. It took place for two hours per day, two days

a week, for 19 weeks from January 2019 to June 2019. Prior to data collection, I served as a volunteer tutor from September 2018 to December 2018. And although data collection has ended, my involvement as a volunteer tutor has continued until June 2020.

Fieldnotes. Participant-observations occurred as I observed participants when not engaging in collaboration with students as they worked on homework-related tasks. This process of participant-observations is what Green (2014) metaphorically describes as Double Dutch Methodology, which entails the “fortuitous and, ultimately, instructive tensions” experienced by researchers who engage in participant observation (p. 14). My fieldnotes about each afterschool session generally included three elements: (a) physical descriptions of the afterschool program and community environment; (b) general activities in which children, youth, and tutors engaged; and (c) paraphrased and/or word-for-word transcriptions of conversations that occurred. These observations focused on the ways in which participants used their full language repertoire to comprehend, speak, and engage in literacy and learning. I also described information about translingual children, youth, and their tutors navigating flexible language practices, and students interacting with tutors in ways that build on their background experiences and knowledge.

Interviews. A variety of open-ended interviews were conducted in English to record participants’ oral histories of their everyday lived experiences and ways of thinking about flexible language practices. With afterschool program tutors I used semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to produce statements concerning beliefs, values and attitudes about language and learning (see Appendix A). These interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. With children and youth participants, interviews were informal, brief, and frequent, with a specific

focus on whatever was immediately happening. The information I obtained from these interviews was recorded in fieldnotes.

Collection of artifacts. I took 138 photographs of personalized notes and stickers, journal entries, and homework worksheets (see Figure 1.1). These examples highlight the participants' tendency to use English on their homework handouts and in their journals. Some of the photographs were taken of print or literacy events, to document the literacy environment and capture moments in which interactions around texts took place (Hamilton, 2000; Perry, 2009). However, it was not possible to collect examples of all print or literacy events in which children, youth, and tutors engaged at the afterschool program.

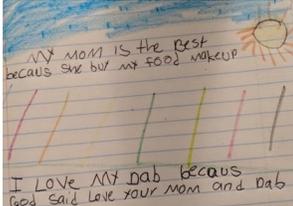
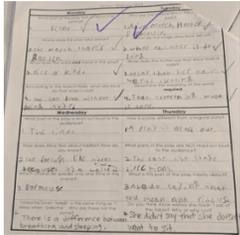
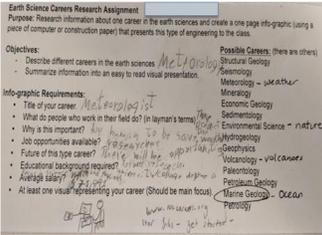
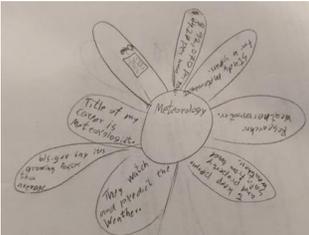
<p>A)</p>  <p>Dawit selected this notecard and attached it with tape to a piece of candy. Then, he applied a heart sticker on the notecard.</p>	<p>B)</p>  <p>Divine used a ball-point pen to write the phrase “no comment” on an eraser that she retrieved from the supply closet.</p>	<p>C)</p>  <p>Ayonna retrieved her journal from a box located in the supply closet. Then, she produced this journal entry.</p>
<p>D)</p>  <p>Dawit and I collaboratively completed this homework worksheet, which is based on a reading passage.</p>	<p>E)</p>  <p>Aydin researched information about an earth science career. Using my smartphone with access to the Internet, he and I collaboratively identified information about meteorology and meteorologists. Then, Aydin wrote the information on this handout.</p>	<p>F)</p>  <p>Aydin produced this info-graphic visual about meteorology.</p>

Figure 1.1. Examples of artifacts collected.

Data Analysis

To analyze the ways in which translingual children, youth, and their tutors navigated flexible language practices and transcultural identities in the program, I engaged in a multilayered analytic process that emphasized multiple readings of fieldnotes and interview transcripts. As I read fieldnotes and interview transcripts, I highlighted certain information and

wrote notes in the margins (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Then, I transferred all fieldnotes and interview transcripts to Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, which enabled me to assign descriptive codes that describe occurrences such as flexible language practices, language and literacy brokering, and issues of identity (e.g., building on background experiences and knowledge). Later, additional codes were assigned to data chunks, indicated by the following subthemes: “expressing oneself,” “joking,” “playing with words,” “co-construction of knowledge,” and “hybrid identity.” By grouping data thematically and identifying emerging themes or concepts, it was possible to examine relations between category properties and dimensions, as well as discover the central category that connects to the primary research theme (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

I also used Atlas.ti to include descriptive memos about photographs of personalized notes and stickers, journal entries, and homework worksheets. These memos describe the ways in which artifacts align (or do not precisely align) with emerging themes or concepts that were elicited through fieldnotes and interview transcripts. Specifically, I considered the tensions that occur when themes which reflect participants’ patterns of thought and behavior are explored across fieldnotes and interviews, and then juxtaposed with artifacts. For example, Divine used a ball-point pen to write the phrase “no comment” on an eraser that she retrieved from the supply closet. The descriptive memo attached to this artifact (see Figure 1.1 B) does not align with the information detailed in the fieldnotes, in which I described asking Divine what had prompted her to write that particular phrase on the eraser; she responded “no comment” and placed the eraser in front of her lips. Rather than arriving at fixed conclusions that artifacts must always precisely align with emerging themes or concepts that were elicited through fieldnotes and interview

transcripts, I embraced data analysis as a process that is uncertain (Hong, Falter, & Fecho, 2016; Sullivan, 2012).

Throughout my analysis, I sought to identify and describe the types of language and literacy brokering that children and youth from refugee backgrounds engaged with in an afterschool program setting. Because these practices are forms of translanguaging (Orellana & García, 2014), I identified 128 translanguaging literacy events documented in the fieldnotes. And when pertinent, I applied *a priori* codes developed by Perry (2009) that focus on broad categories of brokering. First, I applied codes that indicate the type of broad brokering category, such as lexico-syntactic and graphophonic brokering, culture brokering, and genre brokering. Then I returned to each of these codes in order to record what was brokered in each event.

Last, I conducted member checks with afterschool program tutors, in August and September 2019, regarding data analysis and findings. I talked with them about the theories that guided this study (i.e., translanguaging and critical sociocultural theories). I also talked about using software to identify themes. In addition, I offered to share an outline of the themes and subthemes that encompass my findings. Overall, tutors agreed with my findings and confirmed that the use of flexible language practices occurred in the afterschool program. Linda was fascinated by my finding that students, while interacting with tutors, build on their experiences and knowledge, and are ultimately supported with navigating their transcultural identities. She urged me to help her think how tutors can further expand these ways of supporting students.

In addition, I considered my own subjectivities and predisposition that Sipe and Ghiso (2004) posit all qualitative researchers bring to the data analysis process. In my case, these subjectivities and predispositions are mostly centered around my intersecting identities as a Bosniak man (Bošnjak) from Bosnia and Herzegovina who, in the late 1990s, settled as a child in

the Southeastern United States as a refugee. I identify as an insider in this research context in the sense that I associate with and continue to navigate the refugee resettlement experience as a translingual speaker (in various abilities ranging from native fluency to beginner) of Bosnian, English, German, Korean, and Spanish. Further, I recognize social reality as an expression of power, and therefore, turn to critical sociocultural and translanguaging theories as a step toward contesting power dynamics that contribute to systematic inequalities and injustices. For this reason, I come to understand language and literacy practices as specific to a context and defined by those who use them (Street, 2011).

Findings

The following findings illuminate the linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that translingual students and their tutors displayed in an afterschool program as they traversed linguistic and cultural borders that do not limit them to only part of their linguistic repertoire and cultural selves. These findings are reported as three broad themes: flexible language practices, language and literacy brokering, and transcultural identities. The first two themes pertain to translanguaging theory, which highlights the flexible ways in which translingual people cross linguistic borders with flexibility, versatility, and grace, and highlights how both translingual and monolingual people use their full language repertoire in order to comprehend, speak, engage in literacy and learning (Crease & Blackledge, 2010; Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014). The third theme pertains to critical sociocultural theory, which posits that students interact with tutors in ways that entail power, which may provide them with opportunities to (re)make themselves, their identities, and discursive toolkits (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007).

Flexible Language Practices

Translingual children and youth navigated flexible language practices in creative and complex ways; they expressed and clarified themselves, shared jokes, and engaged with cross-lingual plays. In addition, students and tutors drew on heritage and English languages to communicate and construct knowledge together. First, I illustrate the ways in which these children and youth used one language with some speakers and another with others based on when, where, and with whom they interacted; shared jokes and engaged in cross-lingual plays; and combined multiple languages in different ways. Second, I show that children, youth, and tutors communicated and constructed knowledge together.

Speaking with parents and relatives. Students always used their heritage language to speak with their parents or relatives who came to the afterschool program to pick them up, check-in on the younger children, or deliver snacks or an item that a child might have forgotten at home. Yet even while using their heritage language to speak with a parent or relative, participants used specific words or phrases in English. One time Hamid pulled out a letter out of his bookbag, and then handed it to the assistant afterschool facilitator, Kamran. After closely examining the letter, Kamran noticed it was a Wage and Tax Statement (W-2 form). “Wait, I go get my mom,” exclaimed Hamid. A few minutes later, he and his mom walked into the afterschool program. In that moment, Hamid turned to his mom and said the phrase “pay taxes” in English (fieldnotes, May 16, 2019).

And when Lion’s grandmother leaned in after opening the front door, he spoke in Kinyarwanda. Then he started singing the phrase “wheels on the bus go round and round” (fieldnotes, February 19, 2019). His older sister, Gloria, after engaging in conversation with her uncle using their heritage language, said after he left in English, “I hate this. It’s so not fair. I

don't wanna go home [to cook dinner]" (fieldnotes, April 11, 2019). Similarly, after listening to his mom talk in Tigrinya, Dawit turned to me and said, "coffee and sweet thing....wanna come to my house?" After I politely declined the invitation, Dawit addressed his mom using their heritage language and saying the words "coffee" and "food" in English while tapping fingers on his lip (fieldnotes, February 14, 2019).

Speaking with friends and tutors. When speaking with friends and afterschool program tutors, children and youth used flexible language practices based on when, where, and with whom they interacted. For example, participants whose heritage language is Kinyarwanda used English to speak with their friends whose heritage language is Swahili or Tigrinya, and vice versa. However, children and youth who are siblings, and therefore identify with and use the same heritage language, interacted with each other using mostly their heritage language, as well as combining multiple languages in different ways. For example, on one occasion the children from Family A (Lion, Gloria, LeBron) seemed distressed. As they talked in their heritage language, I noticed that two of the children wore their shirts inside out. Lion stepped away from his siblings and whispered in my ear, "I pee my pants." When I asked the children if they were okay, Gloria said nothing while LeBron nodded and said, "Yeah man...everything good." Then Lion exclaimed, "Mom didn't come home [after work]!" In response to her younger brother, Gloria said, "Shut up!" Then the children continued talking in Kinyarwanda (fieldnotes, February 12, 2019). This example shows that these children used mostly their heritage language, but also English, to speak with each other while they used English to speak with me.

Sharing jokes and engaging with cross-lingual plays. As creative and critical language users, participants shared jokes and engaged with cross-lingual plays, which entails using words in playful and perhaps unique ways. One time, Aydin and Hamid were talking in Farsi while

saying the phrase “what’s your goal?” in English. Later, Hamid explained that his classroom teacher asked everyone in class to think of a goal and share with the class. “My goal is to make soccer team but the girl in class said her goal is to get boyfriend,” he said. Aydin wondered if the girl is hungry and needs a boy to buy her food. While I explained that the girl does not need the boy to buy her food, Aydin and Hamid continued hysterically laughing. “What’s your goal?” they repeatedly asked each other while speaking in Farsi. On that day, Aydin handed afterschool tutors a soft drink that he referred to as “soda from my country” (see Figure 1.2). He said that it is a Middle Eastern soft drink and instructed Linda to “shake it really good.” “Good one,” she said. “You’re a trickster.” In response, Aydin first asked “What’s trickster?” and then countered, “No. It says on the can. You have to shake it for taste.” Hamid added, “It’s true. It’s not like cola. This one...you have to shake shake shake” (fieldnotes, January 22, 2019). This example shows that Aydin and Hamid shared jokes between themselves, as well as including Linda in the conversation.



Figure 1.2. Image of soft drink that Hamid handed to afterschool program tutors.

Combining languages. Children and youth from refugee backgrounds and their tutors communicated and constructed knowledge together by drawing on heritage and English languages. Five participants (Aydin, Hussain, Hamid, Aaliyah, Yasmina) identify with and use the same heritage language as two tutors (Kamran and Arjun). These students and tutors combined multiple languages in different ways to communicate. According to Kamran:

For a formal appointment, when I am working with families from Iran and Afghanistan, I will speak Persian even though there is a different dialect. It still helps, even with my own language, to get a professional interpreter regarding forms, paperwork, banking, school-intakes, or parent-teacher conference. We use an interpreter in these situations. But, for day-to-day interactions, such as when I am tutoring a kid, at this point I have picked up enough to speak in a sort of pigeon with many of the kids. I know enough Swahili now to ask [speaks Swahili], ‘What is that in Swahili?’ And I know enough French to say [speaks French], ‘Pardon me, no problem’...and Spanish to do similar things. There’s definitely a pigeon or partua that I develop with kids and families.

(Interview, April 3, 2019)

While discussing his background experiences centered around cultural background, language use, and job role and duties, Kamran is receptive of the notion that translingual people draw from their linguistic repertoire, and even combine multiple languages in different ways to communicate. Similarly, Arjun underscores, “I speak Urdu about 60 per cent and can use many of the words so that students from Afghanistan and Pakistan can understand. I use those words, and some words in English that they know. That’s how we communicate, and it is really good” (interview, March 29, 2019).

Constructing knowledge together. Afterschool program tutors participating in this study recognized the importance of discovering students' "arsenal of language features" (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 17). For instance, Ella noted, "I know that the students I tutor know so much. They speak other languages and that is an asset. They are able to approach situations and think in a way that I can't even grasp" (interview, April 24, 2019). Similarly, Linda said, "I don't know everything by any means. [The children] help me to figure out what a word or phrase [in English] might mean...especially when we read math problems and passages about science. A lot of the terminology has changed since I was a student and teacher in the classroom" (interview, June 4, 2019).

Although Kamran and Arjun also recognized the importance of incorporating and valuing students' ways with words, Ella pondered, "The difficult aspect, as a tutor, is knowing exactly how to discover students' language abilities. I know the kids really well now, so I feel like I can do that with most of them. But it can be challenging when a language barrier exists or the student might have missed out with attending school for the first five years of their life" (interview, April 24, 2019).

Learning and constructing knowledge together also took place between tutors and students in "Our Home." One time, Aydin asked Kamran what equity means. Kamran responded, "It means to be equal but has different meanings on when it's used." He clarified that, for example, an equity loan is about the value of the house. "But equity in an assignment means something different" (fieldnotes, April 24, 2019). Then, Aydin and Kamran read the text to identify the word *equity*. After discussing possible word meanings, Aydin and Kamran determined that in this context it means fairness or value.

Language and Literacy Brokering

A significant finding was how many ways there were in which participants acted as brokers of oral language and written texts. As they navigated multiple languages, the afterschool students facilitated oral communication between parents and afterschool program facilitators (Linda or Kamran). They became immersed in information relevant to such issues as paying bills, applying for permanent residency, completing income taxes, and enrollment in sports clubs for children and ESL classes for adults. One time, Hamid interrupted Linda as she was reading a children's picturebook with Dawit, "Ms. Linda, can you please come to our house. My sister wanted to tell you something. It's about our house...we called...I don't know what it's called." "The property managers?" Linda wondered. "Mm-hm," said Hamid. "Yeah, now she's on the phone" (fieldnotes, March 21, 2019). This shows important adult-like roles that Hamid and his sister, Aaliyah, often took on in their family. In addition, Hamid was able to advocate for his mother by navigating multiple languages, and by facilitating oral communication between a parent and afterschool program facilitator.

In another interaction with the afterschool facilitator, Gloria resisted brokering oral language because it is hard for her to understand and explain complex concepts in both heritage and English languages (fieldnotes, February 27, 2019):

Linda: Can you tell your dad I wasn't able to find anything about the Green Cards...the online thing? It's not telling me anything.

Gloria: I don't know how to explain that.

Linda: Just tell your dad Linda tried. He'll understand.

Gloria: Or you could just go with me now. He's here.

Linda: Sure, I can do that. There's nobody waiting for homework here, so I'll go do that.

By suggesting that Linda come to her family's home, Gloria interrupted roles of power in which Linda is usually the one who makes suggestions.

Participants engaged in literacy brokering when they sought help from afterschool tutors and peers with word meanings, spelling, and pronunciation. This occurred when they asked afterschool tutors (and sometimes their peers) how to sound out words, understand the meaning of a word in text, and write text so that it "sounds good." "Our Home" members also participated in culture brokering by asking questions pertaining to cultural content knowledge and expectations, beliefs, values, and practices. Supporting Perry's (2009) finding that certain types of literacy events are often marked by questions if something is a good thing or a particular action should be taken next, children and youth asked afterschool tutors about a wide range of cultural markers: U.S. holidays and traditions (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Valentine's Day, Black History Month), historical events and influential people (e.g., Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King Jr.), U.S. geography and relevant socially constructed aspects (e.g., Mason-Dixon Line, The South, and the Bible Belt), weather patterns (e.g., polar vortex, freeze watch/warning, heatwave), and unfamiliar items (e.g., ramen/instant noodles, tampons, condoms).

Written (textual) genres are social constructions that represent specific purposes for reading and writing within different social activities (Perry, 2009). Genre-related brokering occurred as children and youth inquired about "the purpose of the genre, the reason a given genre exists, and the use of that genre, or what people actually do with it" (Perry, 2009, p. 263). One time, Dawit inquired about the purpose and reason for existence of the following written (text)

genre featured on the card: “Valentine you had me at meow” (artifact, see Figure 1.1A). He also asked if it is appropriate to give a piece of candy with that sticker to his classroom teacher. After I explained that the phrase means you like someone, Dawit decided that it is more appropriate to give to a girl in his class rather than his teacher. However, examples of genre-related brokering most often occurred as children and youth completed school-related tasks. They inquired about the purpose and use of a genre, and how to make sense of a genre featured in such ways as reading passages such as plays and personal accounts (artifact, see Figure 1.1 D); homework handout directions (artifact, see Figure 1.1 E); and school-related paperwork (e.g., permission slips, extracurricular activity enrolment forms, field trip forms, letters and informational pamphlets intended for parents). These findings are similar to those reported in Perry’s (2014) study, in which she found that children in resettled refugee families from Sudan translated words in their homes as they supplied an English word and provided initial letters when parents sounded words; explained genres by showing parents how to sign up for an email account; indicated the signature line of a permission slip; and, pointed out a word list in the back of a book. They also mediated cultural content by explaining what a note from school is about and what will happen at a Valentine’s Day party; provided information about an ID card program for kids; and explained that a teacher requested parents to donate snacks.

Out in the Open: Backgrounds and Lived Experiences as Transcultural Identities

As tutors provided opportunities and created a space for children and youth to openly discuss their heritages and national identities, they fostered transcultural identity that would remain unactualized if students felt they had to remain silent about their backgrounds and lived experiences. Participants were able to cross cultural borders between countries, languages, groups, genres, and ideas. Most of them (Hamid, Dawit, Ayonna, Divine, Aydin) referred to their

heritage language and country as “my language” and “my country” while also celebrating a hybrid identity that transcends various borders. For instance, Ayonna listed the multiple languages she knows. Afterward, she said that knowing those languages made her “beautiful inside and out” and “from the world” (fieldnotes, March 7, 2019). Another student, Dawit, was curious which country sent the first person to the moon. When I said, “The United States,” he responded, “Oh, my...our country...this country.” He smiled when I said, “Yes, this is our country” (fieldnotes, February 14, 2019).

Moreover, most of the child and youth participants used a map of the world (see Figure 1.3), posted on a wall in the afterschool program, as a visual to reflect on their backgrounds and lived experiences. Because “visuals have a starting point in people’s everyday experience” in ways that “present concrete details... immediately accessible in a different way from verbal text” (Rowell, McLean, & Hamilton, 2012, p. 447), participants pointed and named their heritage country as well as additional countries in which they temporarily resided before moving to the United States.



Figure 1.3. World map children and youth used to exhibit their background experiences and knowledge.

Participants also linked their birth and residence in specific countries (including the United States) to a transcultural identity. For example, Gloria intensely looked at the map for what seemed a minute or two, and then, turned to Linda and said, “I’m from Congo, right? But I don’t live there now. I am here.” In response, Linda said, “We’re really lucky that you live here. Have your parents talked to you about why you moved to America?” “Yes, I know,” Gloria replied. “I also live in Uganda. Lion was so small when he was born in the place we stayed there. Umm, we are from Africa” (fieldnotes, May 23, 2019). Here, identity can be viewed as a flexible, socially and linguistically mediated construct that considers the different positions that people enact or perform in different contexts (Bucholtz, Liang, & Sutton, 1999; Gee, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

Similarly, both Lion and Jabori pointed to the map while Lion asked, “What’s that?” After I said that it is a map of the world, Jabori interrupted, pointed his finger toward Lion, and said, “Him...from Africa. I from Africa, too.” In response, Lion said, “Let me see!” Show me where I am [now]? “But before I am from Africa!” In an exchange that followed, Lion described himself as from Africa and asked me to show him where in Africa he is from. I said, “I am pretty sure that you were born in Uganda, but your family is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” Here, as Lion listened to me name countries in Africa, from a theoretical perspective, he experienced shifts in identity (Gee, 2001; Lave, 1996). Ultimately, Lion concluded, “No Uganda and Congo, I am from Africa!” (fieldnotes, March 12, 2019). This exchange in dialogue between Lion and me illustrates that conflicting discourses take place in cultural contexts as people negotiate their social positions (Lewis, 2001). And as people participate in learning activities, they have opportunities to (re)make themselves, their identities, and discursive toolkits (Moje &

Lewis, 2007). For Lion, he had opportunities to (re)make himself and his identity, and ultimately to identify himself as not from Uganda or Congo. Instead, he clarified that he is from Africa.

Further, Aydin and Hamid both shared their lived experiences after briefly looking at the map. Although Aydin explicitly noted that he is from “Afghanistan Pakistan,” both young men mentioned the jobs they performed while living in Afghanistan and then temporarily residing in Pakistan prior to moving to the United States (fieldnotes, January 22, 2019). Hamid said, “I miss life in my country [Afghanistan]. We played kite and also shoot rabbits with this [showed a Google image of a bow and arrow]. Life in Pakistan is so different. The wifi signal is really good there so I play on my phone and cannot sleep good. But in my country I can sleep good. The nature and look is so beautiful there” (fieldnotes, March 21, 2019). These conversations unfolded as Aydin and Hamid used a map of the world as a visual to reflect on their transcultural identities, which serves as a starting point in their everyday experience (Rowell, McLean, & Hamilton, 2012).

Conclusion

In this essay, I have documented the language and literacy practices of translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds and their tutors in an afterschool program, focusing on flexible language practices and language and literacy brokering. In addition, tutors provided opportunities and space for children and youth to openly discuss their heritage and national identity. In doing so, the tutors fostered a transcultural identity for each student that would remain unactualized if students felt they had to remain silent about their backgrounds and lived experiences. In describing these language and literacy practices, as well as the ways in which tutors fostered a transcultural identity, I illustrate that children and youth from non-dominant backgrounds and their tutors had opportunities to traverse borders that do not require

them to use only a fraction of their linguistic repertoire, and freed students from having to isolate parts of themselves in order to speak, read, write, and think.

Specifically, the children and youth in my study displayed and cultivated linguistic, literacy, and cultural competencies that abound in their out-of-school contexts. These competencies include translingual and transcultural skills. Why is this noteworthy? It is significant when translingual students participate in educational settings where they may display the linguistic and cultural skills they already know without being policed in regards to the boundaries they may cross. On the contrary, when these children and youth are prevented from crossing linguistic and cultural borders in educational settings, they are subjected to the “slow beating down of the human spirit [that] may cause terrible injuries that go unseen” – and ultimately suffer as their knowledge and talents are squandered (Orellana, 2016, p. 133).

Implications for Research

Although not generalizable to other afterschool programs for students from refugee backgrounds, this study draws on critical qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 2017) to place the voices of the oppressed at the center of inquiry; reveal sites of change and activism to empower and help children and youth; and discern injustices and aspects of inequality. The “Our Home” afterschool program became a site for change by offering a space where translingual students from refugee backgrounds had opportunities to use their linguistic strengths by navigating flexible language practices. This is significant because, rather than be required to communicate and be assessed in less than half of their linguistic repertoire, children and youth were not subjected to monolingual approaches to education that suppress translingual speakers while keeping monolingual speakers very powerful (García, 2017; Orellana, 2016).

Activism has been enacted as translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds were encouraged by tutors and had opportunities in an afterschool program to use their entire linguistic repertoire. As someone whose experiences in school and afterschool settings have been influenced through instruction and assessment in the English language, I am well aware of the turmoil that occurs when a translingual person feels that using flexible language practices, if not frowned upon, nearly equates to a crime. In addition, talking directly to the afterschool program facilitator and tutors about my findings, which highlight several ways in which tutors can support students they work with, has the potential for this research project to make a difference in the lives of translingual children and youth.

Implications for Practice

Important implications of this research are that afterschool programs can successfully exist as linguistically and culturally diverse spaces. These spaces can enable refugee children and youth to participate in activities while providing opportunities for them to cross borders “that society constructs and works hard to enforce: between countries, languages, institutions, groups, genres, and ideas” (Orellana, 2016, p. 2). As these translingual students interact with tutors while navigating flexible language practices and transcultural identities, they resist pressure around instruction and assessment solely in the English language – ultimately countering ideologies and policies that undergird *Whiteness* (e.g., Orellana, 2016; Alvarez, 2014, 2017; García, 2017; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). If tutors in afterschool programs are not required to follow these ideologies and policies and can locate opportunities for resistance in order that they and students may navigate flexible language practices and transcultural identities, this suggests that teachers in schools may be able to find ways to do the same. While afterschool programs are not required to follow standards and guidelines imposed by districts and states, I am aware that teachers in

schools are under pressure to instruct and assess students in the English language. Still, they can recognize and choose to resist test-centric literacy instruction (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018) and give priority to activities that encourage translingual students to use their full language repertoire in order to comprehend, speak, engage in literacy and learning (Flores & García, 2013; García, 2009; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014).

Specifically, when alternatives to monolingual approaches to education are offered, as afterschool program tutors in “Our Home” have done, it will be possible for school and out-of-school settings, such as classrooms, afterschool programs, or community-based organizations, to become sites of change and activism. Moreover, when children and youth are encouraged to openly discuss their heritages and national identities, they actualize transcultural identities. For instance, the inclusion of a world map in any learning space and opportunities to engage with it – whether a classroom, afterschool program, or community-based organization – in conjunction with opportunities for students to openly discuss their backgrounds and lived experiences, could be a useful beginning for refugee children and youth to become aware of, and take pride in, their translingual and transcultural selves.

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ESSAY 2

EMPOWERED TO ARTICULATE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: TRANSLINGUAL CHILDREN FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS RESPOND TO PICTUREBOOKS

We are stories. We are two languages. We are lucha. We are resilience. We are hope. We are dreamers, soñadores of the world. We are Love Amor Love. – Yuyi Morales, Dreamers

Introduction

Translingual² children from refugee backgrounds are “Love Amor Love” (Morales, 2018, n.p.). As Marjorie Faulstich Orellana (2016) writes, “*love* can serve as a driving force to connect people with each other across all kinds of borders, and to motivate children to engage powerfully with learning and life” (n.p.). At such moments, children’s eyes light up as “a sparkle that glistens” and is “kindled by things [they] know and love and want to share” (Orellana, 2016, p. 55). In particular, when a tutor and mentor (also a translingual person from a refugee background) provides children from refugee backgrounds with access to picturebooks that represent different cultural and linguistic groups and approaches them in ways that embrace *Love Amor Love*, it is possible to illuminate that we are stories, multiple languages, *lucha*, resilience, hope, and *soñadores* of the world.

An emergence of multicultural, transnational, and translingual books in contemporary children’s literature depict the complex social networks and lived realities of diverse communities who live across and between nations, states, and borders – including physical, cultural, linguistic, racialized and gendered spaces (Brochin & Medina, 2017; Crisp, Knezek,

² I use the term *translingual* (as opposed to multilingual) in order to: 1) consider the dynamic interactions between languages and communities as people use language varieties and navigate social boundaries (Canagarajah, 2013; Zheng, 2017); and, 2) resist promoting static notions of multilingualism as already achieved competence in named languages (e.g., “English,” “Spanish”) which are kept separate from each other (for instance, see García & Wei, 2014; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Piller & Takahashi, 2011).

Quinn, Bingham, Girardeau, & Starks, 2016; Wiseman, Vehabovic, & Jones, 2019). These books make visible the complex dynamics and impacts of multiculturalism, transnationalism, and translanguaging in communities in the United States and beyond. They challenge linear notions of what it means to live, be, and do by drawing from one's cultural background and language in contexts influenced by global politics of power. Therefore, it is essential to consider the ways in which readers respond to narratives in children's literature that depict characters who cross borders between nations and states, as well as those that surround physical, cultural, linguistic, racialized and gendered spaces.

In this essay, I focus on four children (Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit) in grades one, three, and four, who were born in countries in Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea) and settled as refugees in 2016 and 2017, in a city in the Southeastern United States. I use multiple case studies (Stake, 2006) to describe the ways in which these four translanguaging children from refugee backgrounds articulate critical perspectives in response to multicultural, transnational, and translanguaging picturebooks. The children participated in an afterschool program administered by a non-profit organization that received (and currently receives) a federally funded grant through the Refugee School Impact Program, which is supported by the U.S. Division of Refugee Assistance, to provide activities that prioritize assistance with homework and additional school-related assignments. Although only two children were required by their classroom teachers to document the amount of time they read each day, all four children were ecstatic when they noticed that the picturebooks I provided feature characters whose cultural backgrounds, experiences, and ability to draw from multiple languages mirror their own ways of being, living, and doing. Hence, the following research question guided this study: Within an afterschool program, what happens when translanguaging

children from refugee backgrounds respond to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks?

Framework for Critical Literacy

Theorists and researchers in the field of education maintain that “as a framework for doing literacy work, ‘critical literacy’ should look, feel and sound different in different contexts” (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019, p. 300; also see Comber, 2016; Luke, 2014; Vasquez, 2010, 2014). Therefore, in this particular study, I make use of Comber’s (2013) understanding of critical literacy as relations of power that unfold when people navigate “the micro features of texts and the macro conditions of institutions” (p. 589). For instance, as children interact with picturebooks, they use many communicative modes to articulate critical perspectives by drawing on their everyday experiences and the places and spaces that they encounter and occupy, as well as the languages they use (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012). Consequently, children may have opportunities to unpack “myths and distortions and [build] new ways of knowing and acting upon the world” (Luke, 2014, p. 22). Their articulation of or acting on critical perspectives can be viewed through a framework of four dimensions: (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) foregrounding social justice (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

Disrupting the commonplace involves asking questions of text that problematizes historical knowledge (Shor, 1987) and taking an active stance towards text, such as recognizing one’s role as a reader who is impacted by the author’s use of language and literacy devices (Luke, 2000). As readers consider multiple and competing viewpoints of assumed knowledge, they are interrogating multiple viewpoints (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). Further, by focusing on sociopolitical issues, readers also identify relationships between culture, power, and

language (Gee, 1990/2008). And by foregrounding social justice, when readers reflect and take action on the world, they are provided possibilities to transform their individual ideologies (Freire, 1970).

Reading and Responding to Children's Literature in Particular Contexts

In this section, I consider the importance of both the selection of children's literature and the contexts that allow children to respond in ways that are meaningful for them. Children's literature provides a pathway for readers to develop and reflect on their own cultural identity, as well as understand and appreciate other people's cultures (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008). By engaging with texts, children participate in a transactional process of reading. This process provides them with opportunities to respond in ways that build on their culture and background (Rosenblatt, 1978). Specifically, when the children in my study from refugee backgrounds who share African heritage interact with multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, they are able to see their lived experiences reflected back through these texts and to relate the experiences of characters to their own multiple and intersecting identities (Brooks, 2006; Campano & Ghiso, 2011; Sims, 1983; Stewart, 2017). Also, when children interact with picturebooks, they are afforded opportunities to examine their own emotions and feelings about particular topics (Short, 2011; Sipe & Bauer, 2001).

Culturally Situated Reader Response, which is a theory of how culture enables literary interpretations of texts, highlights the importance of children's cultural backgrounds, which are influenced by associations with one or more ethnic groups and communities, as well as family and peers (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Stewart, 2017). Children are also influenced by additional cultural features, such as popular culture and the views of cultural groups living in the same society (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Stewart, 2017). Although Brooks and Browne's (2012)

conceptualization of culturally situated reader response is based on their work with African American middle school students reading multicultural literature, Stewart (2017) applied this notion to consider how a translingual refugee adolescent from Burma (Myanmar) responds to literature by drawing from her lived experiences as a refugee and adolescent girl. The participant identified with issues related to the refugee and immigrant experience, talked about romances, and noted elements of fashion, makeup, and hairstyles in the books she read (Stewart, 2017). She responded to literature by drawing from the “heart of [her] own culture” (Stewart, 2017, p. 241). And when readers personally relate to picturebooks through “cultural access points,” a story resonates and becomes meaningful for them (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 83).

Interacting with picturebooks also provides opportunities for readers to contemplate their lived experiences. In her study, Sutherland (2005) describes the ways in which six sixteen-year-old young Black women connected with characters who share similar intersecting identities. She maintains that the young women used *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison, 1994) as a launching point from which they analyzed their own life experiences, such as discussing perceived expectations by people in their school, community, and outside their community to behave in particular ways; questioning their experiences centered around a Eurocentric standard of beauty; and contesting others’ ascriptions of identity to act as boundaries in their lives (Sutherland, 2005). These findings coincide with Brooks’ (2006) case studies of three African American youth who experienced increased engagement with books when seeing their lived experiences and intersecting identities reflected back. Participants drew from their culture, African American linguistic patterns and ethnic group practices to develop literary understanding (Brooks, 2006). Across both studies, young Black/African American women interacted with literature featuring

Black/African American characters, and these interactions enabled these readers to reflect on their lived experiences and intersecting identities.

Children who are developing abilities across English and their heritage languages are more likely to advance their reading abilities when they relate to the characters in literature (Araujo, 2013; Ebe, 2012; Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010). When these learners can relate to the characters, they have extensive opportunities to make meaning from the words on the page (Van Lier, 2000; Stewart, 2017). As they engage with the stories, children build on their strengths and extend knowledge as language users, as well as participate in conversations that ultimately lead to independent reading (Adomat, 2009; Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). As they interact through conversations about literature, children are capable of employing a critical perspective in their reading; that is, they are able to disrupt the commonplace, interrogate multiple viewpoints, focus on sociopolitical issues, and foreground social justice (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

Methodology

This essay is part of a larger qualitative study in which I consider the ways in which translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds and their tutors navigate flexible language practices, characterized as translanguaging, in an afterschool program. The study also examines how students' interactions with tutors help them to navigate transcultural identities. This article, in effort to consider what Campano and Ghiso (2011) identify as a need for "researchers [to] understand the lives and learning of students" (p. 166), focuses on four children's responses to literature across 18 readalouds, lasting approximately 40 minutes each. Most readalouds involved children interacting with books individually; however, one time, two

students read together. These books highlight issues of bullying and racism, transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

In order to consider what happens when the children in my study respond to picturebooks, I used a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) to establish reader profiles that focused on their response and included observational data that I collected as part of the larger qualitative study. Hence, each participant's profile is unique because it highlights their knowledge and response to picturebooks. Interactive readalouds usually refer to how a teacher reads in classroom settings and children collectively engage in conversations with a teacher and respond to picturebooks (e.g., Pantaleo, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). This type of readaloud disrupts the notion that correct answers might be produced by children, which are then evaluated by a teacher (Pantaleo, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). Instead, children's responses to picturebooks are informed by their own lives and experiences, from which they draw to build and create knowledge within classrooms (Wiseman, 2011). However, in my study I extend the notion of interactive readalouds in which, rather than being among a group of children in a classroom setting, each child read with me individually in a reciprocal conversational flow, which enabled us to build and create knowledge together within the afterschool program (Barrentine, 1996; Freire, 1983; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007; Pantaleo, 2007; Wiseman, 2011).

Context

The afterschool program is administered by a local non-profit organization (all names of people and local organizations are pseudonyms). The organization, Southeast Christian Services, receives a federally-funded grant through the Refugee School Impact Program, which is supported by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, to provide activities that prioritize assistance with homework and additional school-related assignments for refugee children and

youth between the ages of five and eighteen (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). The afterschool program takes place two days per week, for two hours in the afternoon, in a two-bedroom apartment unit within one apartment building. Three two-story apartment buildings comprise the Azalea Park Apartments complex, where the afterschool program participants live with their families. The proprietor waives checking the tenant's credit history, which is why Southeast Christian Services encourages new arrivals to initially settle in Azalea Park Apartments. Approximately half of the tenants are refugee families who arrived in the United States within the past three years.

Other tenants are mostly immigrant families from countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Some of the infants, pre-school, and elementary-grades children have been born in the United States. About half of the individuals who regularly attend the afterschool program are translingual (Spanish and English) immigrant children, but not refugees. However, U.S. refugee resettlement guidelines and rules governing the Refugee School Impact Program grant stipulate that only children and youth resettled as refugees can be enrolled in the afterschool program. For this reason, only those formally enrolled in the afterschool program can participate in activities such as annual field trips to local museums and Washington D.C., sports events, arts performances, summer reading and swimming activities. The afterschool program facilitators, who are Southeast Christian Services employees, expressed strong disagreement with this policy. They have attested to never turning away non-refugee children who want help with homework or to read books just because they are immigrants or were born in the United States to immigrant parents.

Two Southeast Christian Services employees facilitate the afterschool program. In addition, volunteer tutors are recruited by the organization; they included undergraduate and

graduate university students. My role in the afterschool program, which lasted from August to December 2018, began as a volunteer tutor. After my research proposal was proved by my university's Internal Review Board, this role evolved into tutoring and conducting research two hours per day, two days a week, for 19 weeks from January to June 2019. Although 14 elementary, middle, and high school students participated in a qualitative study to document their language and literacy practices within the afterschool program, I regularly read children's literature with four children (see Table 2.2 in regard to biographical information for each child). Ayonna and Dawit, who at the time of the study were third and fourth graders, were motivated to read for 20 minutes each day as a way to keep a reading log and ultimately receive "school money" from their classroom teacher. Gloria, a third grader, was not required by her classroom teacher to document how many minutes she read each day; she came to participate in readalouds with me when I told her that she would love the books I have. Lion, a first grader, after rummaging through his bookbag, handed me a note from his classroom teacher highlighting the benefits when parents read to young children. I explained to him that his parents must be tired when they come home from work late at night, and therefore, he could read with me, and that we would read really fun books. He agreed to read at that time, but only if he could play a little with the toy truck tucked away in a box stored in the closet.

In order to select picturebooks that focus on topics such as multiculturalism, transnationalism and translanguaging, I utilized a search engine (NoveList Plus) that categorizes children's literature by topic and age range, websites that include lists of literature about refugees and immigrants (e.g., *Colorín Colorado*, *I'm Your Neighbor Books*), scholarly publications highlighting culturally relevant children's literature (e.g., Stewart, 2017), and my own knowledge of the field of children's literature and of research which center around children's

literature, readalouds, and responses. Ultimately, I chose eight books. Table 2.1 lists the picturebooks to which each child responded, for the most part individually. On a few occasions, children wanted to read together or join a friend as they responded to a picturebook. Appendix B includes a synopsis of the picturebooks to which children responded.

Table 2.1. Multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks to which each child responded.

Book Title/Author/Publication Date	Lion	Ayonna	Gloria	Dawit
<i>Chocolate me!</i> (Diggs, 2011)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>I am Enough</i> (Byers, 2018)		✓	✓	
<i>Dreamers</i> (Morales, 2018)		✓	✓	✓
<i>Two White Rabbits</i> (Buitrago, 2015)	✓			✓
<i>Dear Primo</i> (Tonatiuh, 2010)				✓
<i>I'm New Here</i> (O'Brien, 2015)		✓	✓	✓
<i>Drawn Together</i> (Minh Le, 2018)	✓		✓	✓
<i>I'm an Immigrant Too!</i> (Fox, 2018)				✓

Participants

To consider the cultural positions of four children (Lion, Gloria, Ayonna, Dawit) who are influenced both by culture and by the views of cultural groups living in the same society, I discuss relevant insight about each child that I have come to understand through participant-observations, informal or impromptu interviews, and collection of artifacts (e.g., personalized notes and stickers, journal entries, and homework worksheets). I have asked all participants in this study to pick a pseudonym. Lion insisted that I refer to him by that name because he

considers himself “a big lion from Africa.” All other names are pseudonyms that I selected because participants either requested that I use their real name or said, “Call me whatever.” The children included in this study were born in Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Uganda. Dawit’s parents identify as originally from Eritrea while Ayonna, Lion, and Gloria’s parents say their families are from “Congo.” All children are learners of English and of their heritage language (Kinyarwanda, Swahili, and Tigrinya). Along with their families, the children settled in the Southeastern United States in 2016 and 2017. They attended Oak Street Elementary School (pseudonym), which had a student population of 732 students and a student/teacher ratio of 15. Students at this school are identified by race and included 34% African Americans, 31% Caucasians, 21% Latinos, 7% Asians, 6% two or more races, and 1% Native Americans/Pacific Islanders/Others. Further, 65% of students were receiving free or reduced lunch.

Data Collection

Each of the four children was a single case study, and data for this multiple case studies approach were collected twice per week for 19 weeks. Each case serves as a *telling case*, which refers to “the particularity of the circumstances surrounding any case or situation... [that] must always be located within some wider setting or context” (p. 239). In this study, I use the notion of *telling case* to highlight the ways in which each child articulates critical perspectives.

To specifically understand what happens when four translingual children with diverse lived experiences, cultural and linguistic backgrounds respond to picturebooks, the present study answers the guiding research question using thick description of the research setting and children’s responses to picturebooks (Denzin, 2001; Emerson et al., 2011). Although 14 children and youth resettled as refugees and four afterschool teachers (in addition to myself) participated

in my qualitative study that had a broader focus featuring a variety of data forms (participant-observation notes, researcher memos, collection of artifacts, interview and readaloud transcripts), I selected four children who were interested in reading multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks and participated in interactive readalouds with me. These children gave me permission to record. I transcribed verbatim all audio recorded readalouds. Then, in order to triangulate the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I used three supplementary data collection approaches: informal/impromptu interviews with children, observation notes during afterschool program sessions, and artifacts of writing that were produced in response to readalouds.

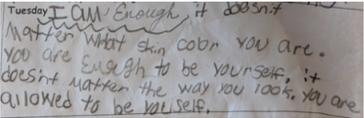
Data Analysis

After producing readaloud transcripts and highlighting significant participant quotes, I read through the data and recorded initial impressions. This is what Layder (1998) refers to as pre-coding while Boyatzis (1998) uses the expression “codable moments” to describe the recording of initial impressions. Ultimately, reading through the data and recording initial impressions provided “key pieces of the evidentiary warrant to support...propositions, assertions, and theory” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 20; also see Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008). For example, while reading *Chocolate Me!* (Diggs, 2011), Lion moved from a sitting position to stand tall, pointed his finger, and directly looked at characters in the picturebook depicted as three White/Caucasian boys who are racist and making comments to the main character by pointing their fingers and saying, “Look where your skin begins! It’s brown like dirt. Does it hurt to wash off?” (n.p). Lion continued to quip at the White/Caucasian characters who were chastising the main character, “Hey! What about your skin? It’s like a stupid cloud.” I found this particular response fascinating because the child articulated a critical perspective. That is how I realized that this and other codable moments across participants’ readaloud transcripts are informed by

critical literacy as a theoretical framework. According to Saldaña (2016), when codable moments across data can be linked to a theoretical framework, that particular framework then becomes the *through-line* of a report (Saldaña, 2016).

In this study, I engaged in First and Second Cycle coding. For the First Cycle, I applied In Vivo and Process codes using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis and research software, in order to illuminate data that specifically speak to what happens when four translingual children from refugee backgrounds respond to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks. In-Vivo codes are participant-generated words from the language found in the data record (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and Process codes focus on actions across time, such as things that emerge, change, occur in particular sequences or are implemented through time (Charmaz, 2002; 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For example, process codes were assigned to data where children moved from sitting position to stand, used gestures (e.g., pointing, clapping hands), and performed actions (e.g., dancing, singing). For the Second Cycle, I grouped segments of data into smaller categories in order to establish Pattern Codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014); these exploratory or inferential codes are used to identify emergent themes (Saldaña, 2016). Readers' response types and examples of critical reader response are provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Readers' critical response types and examples.

Participant (pseudonym)	Grade Level	Heritage Language	Critical Response Types	Examples of Critical Reader Response
Lion	1 st Grade	Kinyarwanda	Speech, gestures, laughter, silence	<p>"Hey! What about your skin? It's like a stupid cloud."</p> <p>"Look at your hair. It looks like yellow, um, pudding."</p> <p>"Don't be sad. Make new friends that have, um, like you."</p>
Ayonna	3 rd Grade	Swahili	Speech, gestures, singing, silence, writing	 <p>"Why are they bullying him like that? If I am him, I would hit them."</p> <p>"They are afraid because they just came here. And, they make mistakes because they don't know the language."</p>
Gloria	3 rd Grade	Kinyarwanda	Speech, laughter	<p>"All of them are enough. It doesn't matter what they look like."</p> <p>"They are making fun of his look because he is chocolate. But I am like that...chocolate!"</p>
Dawit	4 th Grade	Tigrinya	Speech, gestures, laughter, silence	<p>"That's like me. I run away from soldiers. They are bad."</p> <p>"In my country, we have donkey. Bad guys with knife stole him."</p> <p>"They keep her in jail because she is not from that place."</p>

I also considered my own subjectivities and predisposition which Sipe and Ghiso (2004) posit all qualitative researchers bring to the data analysis process. In my case, these subjectivities and predispositions are mostly centered around my intersecting identities as a Bosniak man (Bošnjak) from Bosnia and Herzegovina who, in the late 1990s, settled in the Southeastern United States as a refugee. I identify as an insider in this research context in the sense that I associate with and continue to live the refugee resettlement experience; in other ways, as a man of European heritage, I am an outsider since I will never know what it is like to identify and live as a person of African heritage. However, just as the participants in this study, I am a translingual

person from a refugee background; and therefore, I was determined to ensure that Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit have access to picturebooks that represent different cultural and linguistic groups – enabling them to “engage powerfully with learning and life” (Orellana, 2016, n.p.).

Findings

The following section describes findings in four case studies that detail what happens when translingual children from refugee backgrounds respond to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks that highlight issues of bullying and racism, transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. Beginning with observational data documented in fieldnotes that I collected as part of a larger study in order to draw attention to the life and learning of Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit (e.g., Campano & Ghiso, 2011), I created a profile for each child that identifies the ways in which they articulated critical perspectives using a framework of critical literacy theory: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and foregrounding social justice.

Lion

Lion was born in a refugee camp in Uganda to parents from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He has three older siblings (2 brothers and 1 sister) and one younger sister. His heritage language is Kinyarwanda. When this study took place, Lion attended first grade at Oak Street Elementary. His mom and dad worked (and currently work) in a poultry processing plant; they rotate their work shifts so that one parent is at home in the mornings and the other in the evenings. With neighbors, Lion’s parents carpool for an hour to and from their job, which is in a nearby rural county.

When Lion abruptly stopped attending afterschool program sessions, I joined the afterschool program facilitator to pay a home visit. Lion answered the door, hugged us, and then

wrapped himself around my leg and said, “I don’t like homework. I like cartoon.” A few days later, his mom said that he has been watching a lot of TV; she seemed shocked that her child was not attending afterschool program sessions to do homework. The following week, Lion announced that the TV remote control went missing; he wondered if one of his siblings broke it. Since then, he regularly attended afterschool sessions.

Lion liked to touch my hair and, in return, asked for me to touch his hair. He always smiled when I said, “I wish I could have a hairstyle like yours.” One time, he said, “Flex your muscles.” “What muscles?” I wondered. Then, he got on the ground to show his ability to do ten push-ups. Afterwards, he declared, “I am a bodybuilder when I grow up...when I am big.” Another time, Lion walked up to me as tears rolled down his cheeks. Someone had kicked his bike and the steering wheel was bent. I was able to pull it back to its original position. Pleasantly surprised, he got on his bike and cycled away while calling out “thank you.”

Most recently, Lion joined his older brother and other children for an adventure that entailed biking more than a mile down a busy two-lane street. Without asking their parents for permission, the children wanted to go swimming in a lake situated within a 300-acre park. Since swimming and wading is not allowed, the children were pulled out of the lake by police officers and then driven home. As a consequence, Lion was grounded for two weeks. Following that incident, as requested by his parents, an adult needed to walk Lion back to his grandmother’s apartment as soon as afterschool sessions ended.

While interacting with multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, Lion engaged with issues of bullying and racism, transnationalism, and translingualism. In doing so, he used particular words and phrases featured in the books we read and discussed. Specifically, he took an active stance towards the text by countering offensive and racist remarks – and in that

way, he disrupted the commonplace (Luke, 2000). In addition, as he engaged in conversations about crossing physical and linguistic borders, Lion considered multiple and competing viewpoints of assumed knowledge. In these conversations, he also recognized relationships between power and language.

As Lion responded to *Chocolate Me!* (Diggs, 2011), he recognized the depiction of power exerted by three boys pointing their fingers and saying derogatory language about a Black/African American boy's appearance. Specifically, Lion used speech, gestures, and silence to respond to issues of bullying and racism.

Nermin: That's great! I am glad you said something to the mean bullies. [Lion laughs].

[Reading] They often stared at my hair. 'Why do you look scared? It's so poofy and big, like a wig. Not straight--don't you hate to comb it?'

Lion: [Stands up and points index finger at illustration] Look at your hair. It looks like yellow, um, pudding.

Nermin: [Reading] As they pointed at my nose, I froze. 'It's so big and wide!' I tried to hide. [Talking] Oh my goodness, that's so mean.

Lion: [After prolonged silence, Lion takes a deep breath and puts his head down]. He feels sad because they're making fun of my nose. [Lion appears visibly upset and crosses his arms].

Nermin: I have to tell you that I think all people are beautiful and it doesn't matter what your nose looks like. [I pat Lion on his back. He smiles and hugs me].

He is going home to his mom now. What do you think she is going to say?

Lion: Don't be sad. Make new friends that have, um, like you.

By countering the offensive and racist remarks of White/Caucasian characters, Lion disrupted the commonplace when he took an active stance towards text (Luke, 2000). Clearly, at that moment, he was impacted by the author's use of language and literacy devices, such as the use of offensive remarks about a person's race and/or ethnicity. And by urging the African American/Black main character being chastised for his physical appearance to "make new friends that have ... like you," Lion foregrounded social justice in order to maintain that the character would find comfort in associating with friends who look like him. In doing so, Lion inferred that the character would avoid being bullied based on his intersecting identities as a Black/African American boy.

Lion also attended to the language of the picturebooks when he noticed that some words, such as the word *frontera* in *Two White Rabbits* (Buitrago, 2015), can be said in "their country but no after frontera." After I asked, Lion confirmed that he meant that some languages (e.g., Spanish) are discouraged in countries where another language (e.g., English) is widely spoken and enforced. Hence, Lion used speech and gestures to respond to issues of transnationalism and translingualism, which reinforce the notions that people cross borders between nations and states, as well as those that exist in physical, cultural and linguistic spaces.

Nermin: So, this sign says frontera. Any idea what that means?

Lion: Oh, fronteta [sic] is a country.

Nermin: Good guess! Frontera means border in Spanish. Do you think this is a border?

Lion: [Closes eyes and taps index finger on lips.]

Nermin: Do you know what a border is?

Lion: It's a big thing, that, um, goes all the way down the ocean and it has a road so the bus can go over it.

Nermin: Yes, this is the bridge and it's a border because this is one country and on the other side of the river, the houses are in a different country. Right?

Lion: Yeah.

Nermin: So, what are these people doing?

Lion: They are going to frontera.

[Another child says: "They can't do that!"]

They can do that because there's no train coming. They are going back.

Nermin: Oh, they are going to their own country?

Lion: Mm-hm. They're going to see a friend. They can say frontera in their country but no after frontera.

Nermin: Oh, I see. So, in their country they can say the word frontera but when they cross over to the other country, they have to use another language.

Lion: Mm-hm.

By engaging in conversation about what a border is and how it impacts people who are crossing physical and linguistic borders, Lion considered multiple and competing viewpoints of assumed knowledge. And by focusing on sociopolitical issues, such as movement of people across borders between nations and states, Lion recognized relationships between power and language. For instance, he articulated that borders, in addition to existing as physical barriers, determine which languages are enforced and, subsequently, can be used by the people who cross borders.

Lion also used his experiences to respond to picturebooks. Based on the things he knows and loves and wants to share, such as experiences in his homeland, Lion noted, "Africa trains are bigger, like, really big. My dad lets me go outside the train and play. I saw ten men, ten ladies, ten trees." Moreover, it is significant that his spoken responses were expressed using phrases in

English and languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in books that we read and discussed; these words and phrases included *frontera* (border) and *chucho* (dog) in Spanish and สวัสดี / “sawasdee” (hello) in Thai.

Ayonna

Ayonna enjoys writing in her journal and drawing flowers. She showed me a journal entry detailing an opportunity to eat lunch at school while sitting across from her boyfriend. Other entries were sketches of flowers and animals. Ayonna has five siblings (2 older sisters, one older brother, one younger brother and sister). Although her dad says that the family is from “Congo,” Ayonna clarifies, “I am from Tanzania. That’s where I was born [in a refugee camp]. My mom is from Tanzania, too.” Ayonna’s heritage language is Swahili, which she uses to communicate with her parents. When speaking with her siblings and friends, Ayonna uses either English or Swahili.

Ayonna’s dad works at a poultry processing plant and her mom recently started cleaning corporate business offices, which requires her to be away from the family in the evenings. Therefore, Ayonna’s older sister, who is in the eighth grade prepares dinner and cares for a three-year-old sibling. This circumstance allows Ayonna, as she says, “to play and act really crazy.” She describes her close friends, who live in the same apartment building, as a clique. “We like to talk about boys and gossip, and sometimes we are mean,” she says. Two of the girls that are part of the “clique” were born in the United States to immigrant parents from Mexico and Honduras. They teach Ayonna phrases in Spanish, such as *rojo*, *amor*, and *hola chica*. Yet, she says, “They make fun of my language just like kids at school.” “And they make fun of my country – Africa,” she noted. But when Ayonna said “*malaya*,” all girls that are part of the “clique” laughed.

“What? Why do you think it’s a bad word? C’mon,” she said. When I looked up the meaning of the word using Google Translate, I learned that it translates to *prostitute*.

Recently, the apartment unit in which the afterschool program takes place was vandalized. A window was broken, and the front door was slightly dented. Appointing herself as a detective, the afterschool program facilitator interviewed all the children enrolled in the program to see if they might be aware of additional information. “I know everything, like, everything. That boy who did it is weird, but nobody asks me...so bye!” Ayonna blurted and then left. Later, she came back and said that a boy in middle school who lives down the street is part of a gang. She explained that he did it because of the “Y” symbol that was engraved in the front door of the apartment unit. “It’s his gang and he streaks us,” Ayonna said. Then, she agreed, in the presence of a parent, to be interviewed by the police to provide additional information about the incident.

Ayonna responded to picturebooks by engaging with the following issues: transnationalism, transculturalism, translingualism, bullying and racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. In doing so, she used words and phrases in English and Spanish featured in the books we read and discussed. Specifically, Ayonna considered multiple and competing viewpoints of assumed knowledge as she questioned why people migrate and discussed the ways in which *migrantes* draw from their culture and language. And by focusing on the topic of (im)migration, Ayona identified relationships between culture, power, and language. Further, when responding to issues of bullying and racism, Ayonna disrupted the commonplace. And she provided multiple viewpoints in discussions that centered around issues of xenophobia and Islamophobia.

Responding to *Dreamers* (Morales, 2018), Ayonna suggested that a mother and her child dreamed to “came together” and then “appeared together” in the United States. Although there is no text in the book that identifies the characters as people migrating from Mexico to the United States, Ayonna pointed her index finger at the illustrated image and said, “Mexico doesn’t look like this. I am a hundred percent sure it’s prettier than this.” When I asked how she knew that the mom and her child are coming from Mexico, Ayonna said, “Because they, like, dream of coming here and the people here are not nice to them.”

We also discussed particular words and phrases featured in the book in English and Spanish. For instance, Ayonna mentioned, “Oh, migrantes. I know what’s migrante. That mean they go somewhere like butterflies.” When I mentioned that I am an immigrant, or migrante, because I came to the United States from another country, Ayonna smiled, pointed to herself, and said “me too.” Later, she asked a question about what the word *caminate* means, to which I responded “hikers.” Further, Ayonna underscored that the characters can understand and are afraid to speak because they just came here. But at the same time, she clarified that for migrantes “It’s more easy [to speak] in their language.”

These conversations illustrate that Ayonna recognized issues of transnationalism, transculturalism, and translanguaging. She responded to depictions of settling in a new place while navigating culture and language. In addition, she considered multiple and competing viewpoints of assumed knowledge as she analyzed why people migrate and discussed the ways in which *migrantes* draw from their culture and language. And by focusing on sociopolitical issues, such as (im)migration, Ayona identified relationships between culture, power, and language.

Ayonna also responded to *Chocolate me!* (Diggs, 2011), and subsequently, saw problems with the text when responding to issues of bullying and racism.

Nermin: [Reading] Sitting on the stoop when I was five. Not like Johnny, Timmy, or even Mark. Though I wanted a name like theirs.

[Talking] Why would he want a name like theirs?

Ayonna: So, he can be like them and not different ... Why are they so mean to him? If I am that boy, I would hit them. They are bullies.

Impacted by the author's use of language and literacy devices, such as the author assigning Anglo names to White/Caucasian characters depicted as bullies and racists, Ayonna disrupted the commonplace. For instance, she said that she would respond forcefully to derogatory language directed towards her about her racial and ethnic identities. Such response requires taking action on the world in order to transform the ideologies of people who exemplify bullying and racist dispositions. Her response also recognized the need for social justice.

In addition, Ayonna responded to issues of xenophobia and Islamophobia while interacting with *I'm New Here* (O'Brien, 2015).

Nermin: Why would she be nervous?

Ayonna: Because, um, she's just new there. She doesn't know the other people and feels sad.

Nermin: How do you think the other people treat Fatimah?

Ayonna: Not good because she looks like that. She's from Africa, I think. I am Christian but she's not.

Nermin: I see. So, the other kids are not nice to Fatimah because of the way she looks and because of her religion.

Ayonna: Yeah.

In discussions about the ways in which xenophobia and Islamophobia impact a newcomer person's experience at school, Ayonna provided multiple viewpoints. She also identified ways in which newcomer people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds are sometimes mistreated in society. Such treatment is often based on aspects of culture, power, and language.

While interacting with multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, Ayonna articulated critical perspectives that center around recognizing problems in the commonplace, focusing on sociopolitical issues, providing multiple viewpoints, and identifying relationships between culture, power, and language. It is significant that her spoken responses were expressed using phrases in English and Spanish featured in books that we read and discussed. Words and phrases in Spanish that Ayonna said included, *adiós corazón* (goodbye my love), *rojo* (red), *caminantes* (hikers). She also responded in writing to *I Am Enough* (Byers, 2018) (see Figure 2.1). As Ayonna completed writing the sentence "It doesn't matter what skin color you are..." which Gloria dictated, she shot back, "It matters!" Although she did not elaborate on what she meant by this remark, I perceived this reaction as Ayonna's recognition that in our society race is not perceived as neutral. For instance, racism and White privilege are pervasive in the United States – impacting where people of color live, the schools they attend, the food they eat, and the healthcare they have access to (for instance, see Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis Ellison, 2020; Hayes & Grimmett, 2013). Then she continued writing the sentences in Figure 2.1 in her reading log, which Gloria also dictated.

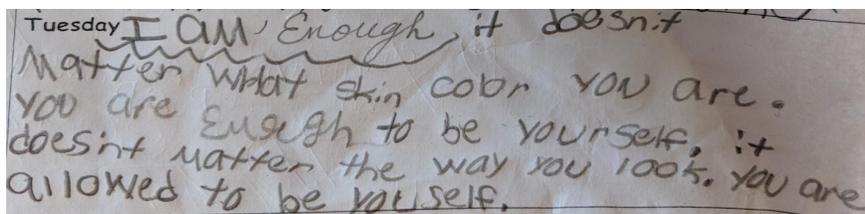


Figure 2.1. Ayonna produces a written response.

Ayonna also built on her experience to respond to picturebooks. Based on the things she knows and loves and wants to share, such as experiences in her homeland, Ayonna talked about her “Africa school.” She recalled that “kids from many grades sit in the same room with teacher...boys are on one side and girls on other side. But we sing songs, dance, laugh and play...and do math, reading and writing on green wall.” Then, she juxtaposed this recollection with a claim that “It’s easier to talk to boys in here school.”

Gloria

Gloria is Lion’s older sister. She was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and was a young child when her family settled in a refugee camp in Uganda. “I’m from Uganda Africa,” she says. Gloria’s heritage language is Kinyarwanda, which she uses when communicating with her parents. In her family, Gloria also engages in language and literacy brokering (for instance, see Orellana, 2009; Perry, 2014). When communicating with her siblings and friends, she uses either English or Kinyarwanda.

Gloria is expected to help her mom with cooking and household chores. She says that, as the oldest girl in the family, she has to carry food that her mom prepares the night before over to grandmother’s apartment. When I noticed that Gloria carried two heavy pots placed in plastic bags across the courtyard of the apartment complex, I offered to help. “I got it. I always have to do this. It’s not fair,” she said. Gloria also takes it upon herself to keep an eye on Lion and a

younger five-year old sister. “Sometimes I have to say bad words in my language to them. And they still don’t listen to me – damn it!”

During a basketball tournament at Oak Street Elementary School, in which Gloria’s older brother participated, she sat next to me and whispered, “I don’t really want to play basketball next year. I want to play soccer.” Gloria clarified that she really enjoys playing soccer with the other kids at home. Later, her classroom teacher came to say hello; she told the afterschool program facilitator that Gloria is “just lovely” and a pleasure to have in class. I also noticed that on Saturdays, Gloria patiently waits in front of her apartment building for church group volunteers to pick her up. At Arrow Church, she participates in a weekend program geared toward children and youth. Spread across several locations in a city in the Southeastern United States, Arrow Church strives to point every person to Jesus. In addition to summer camp for children, weekend services for families are provided in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda). Although Gloria says that her siblings do not regularly attend weekend and summer programs at Arrow Church, she is always eager to go.

Responding to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, Gloria particularly engaged with issues of bullying and racism. In doing so, she asked questions about words in English and languages featured in the books we read and discussed. But while responding, she did not use phrases in languages other than English. Gloria responded to *Chocolate me!* (Diggs, 2011), noting, “They are making fun of his look because he is chocolate. But I am like that...chocolate!” She was impacted by the author’s use of language and literacy devices, which enabled her to recognize problems in the way the text portrayed the commonplace. She also drew on her understanding of social justice by wondering why the Caucasian/White characters would use derogatory language about a Black/African American

boy's appearance. She referred to the three Caucasian/White boys as "really mean." "Why would they say that?" Gloria wondered. Ultimately, she and I decided that mean bullies (and racists) who make fun of people for the way they look should not be taken seriously. Gloria concluded, "All of them are enough. It doesn't matter what they look like." Gloria foregrounded social justice in order to suggest that such behavior should not be accepted in society – implying that we all deserve to be part of spaces and live in communities where "it doesn't matter what [people] look like." Ultimately, she articulated the need for our communities to be safe and inclusive spaces for all people, regardless of what they look like.

It is significant that Gloria dictated sentences that Ayonna wrote in response to *I am Enough* (Byers, 2018) (see Figure 2.1). When Ayonna said that skin color does matter, Gloria did not respond; however, she tilted her head and appeared deep in thought. Yet, when I asked what she is thinking about, Gloria shrugged her shoulders and said, "I dunno." Based on the things she knows and loves and wants to share, such as closely identifying with a character, Gloria referred to herself as "chocolate." In that way, she demonstrated closely identifying with a character who is Black/African American.

It is also notable that Gloria asked me questions about the meaning of particular words in English and other languages featured in the books we read. She asked about the meaning of the English words *swell*, *speechless*, *resplendent*, *ancestors*, *improbable*. Also, Gloria inquired about the meaning of the Spanish words *adiós corazón* (goodbye my love), *caminantes* (hikers), *migrantes* (migrants). However, while interacting picturebooks, she did not use any of these words and phrases, or any other words in Spanish featured in the books we read.

Dawit

When I first met Dawit, he told me, “I am going to buy a Lamborghini...in cash.” “That’s how rich I going to be,” he said. He has two older brothers and one younger brother. Dawit was born in Eritrea. His family fled to Ethiopia to apply for refugee resettlement. Initially, they settled in the U.S. state of Minnesota. “The snow is so big – bigger than me!” Dawit recalled. After establishing contact with relatives, the family relocated to a city in the Southeastern United States. When this study took place, Dawit’s dad worked (and currently works) at a car wash. According to the boy, his mom “cooks and stays at home.”

During an afterschool program session, as he wrote a sentence, Dawit turned to Gloria and said, “Guess what my biggest fear is?” “I don’t know...school?” answered Gloria. “No! It’s reading and writing. That’s my biggest fear so much.” While Dawit refers to himself as “human calculator,” a title that is synonymous with his preference for mathematics, he recognizes that he has difficulty with reading and writing. “Sometimes I go to help kids in second grade,” he said. But when Dawit realized that his classroom teacher sends him to participate in reading activities in a second-grade classroom, rather than volunteer as a helper, he said, “Now I act silly, and my teacher doesn’t send me to go there.”

Most recently, as I walked toward my car in the parking lot while chatting with Dawit, he called out to his mom. Then, he asked if I have an air pressure pump. In that exchange, Dawit navigated varied “ways with words” and used his linguistic toolkit with versatility and flexibility (Orellana, Martínez, & Martínez, 2014, p. 311; also see Orellana, 2009; Perry, 2009; 2014). By living and learning in settings where more than one language is spoken, Dawit shifts flexibly between languages as needed to do things for others, such as inquiring about a pump.

While responding to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, Dawit engaged with issues of bullying and racism, as well as transnationalism. In doing so, he used phrases in English and in languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in books that we read and discussed. Dawit also responded to issues of transnationalism by recognizing details pertaining to the (im)migration and detention of (im)migrants. For instance, he hypothesized that a refugee girl might be forcefully kept in detention simply because “she is not from that place.”

Dawit articulated critical perspectives around issues of bullying and racism. For instance, I read, “Your skin is brown like dirt. Does it hurt to wash off?” (Diggs, 2018, n.p.). “That’s bully,” declared Dawit. As I continued reading, he repeatedly exclaimed, “Chocolate me!” When I asked what he thinks about the message that it is important to love what we see in the mirror, Dawit reassured me that he loves what he sees – “chocolate me!” Dawit pushed back against the text, disrupting the commonplace, as he reacted to the author’s use of language and literacy devices. He called out the Caucasian/White characters as bullies for using derogatory language about an African American/Black boy’s appearance. Dawit also referred to himself as “chocolate me,” which illustrates that he closely identified with a Black/African American character.

In addition, Dawit responded to issues of transnationalism in *I’m an Immigrant Too!* (Fox, 2017), which features depictions of newcomers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds.

Nermin: [Reading] Sadly, I am a refugee – I’m not Australian yet. But if your country lets me in, I’d love to be a vet.

[Talking] So they won’t let her in, but she wants to be a veterinarian – an animal doctor – when she grows up.

Dawit: They keep her in jail because she is not from that place. Maybe she has to wait for long time.

Responding in this way, Dawit recognized details pertaining to the (im)migration and detention of (im)migrants.

Dawit also built on his experience to respond to picturebooks, noting, “That’s like me. I run away from soldiers. They are bad.” He also said, “In my country we have donkey. Bad guys with knife steal him. They also get the food we have to make *injera*,” which is a sourdough-risen flatbread. In addition, when discussing issues such as racism and bullying, as well as transnationalism, Dawit used phrases in English and languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in books that we read and discussed; these words and phrases included *amor* (love), *corazón* (heart), *adiós corazón* (goodbye my love), *caminantes* (hikers), *primo* (cousin), and *chucho* (dog) in Spanish and สวัสดี / “sawasdee” (hello) in Thai.

Looking Across Cases: Language Practices as Empowering

When considering the cases of Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit, it is evident that these translingual children who share African heritage and are from refugee backgrounds, were empowered to articulate critical perspectives in response to picturebooks. They each challenged the common assumptions behind the stories, and were able to articulate multiple viewpoints. These children were also aware of sociopolitical issues underpinning the stories and had an acute sense of fairness and social justice. The children demonstrated a sense of empowerment when they engaged with picturebooks that illuminate issues of bullying and racism, transnationalism, transculturalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. By recalling occasions that occurred in their homeland, referring to the many things they know and love and want to share, such as closely identifying with a character, Lion, Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit built on their experiences. Although they all asked about the meanings of unfamiliar words in different languages, Lion,

Ayonna, and Dawit used phrases in English and other new-to-them languages (Spanish and Thai) featured in books they read and discussed with me.

All cases provide insight into how interactive readaloud sessions with picturebooks elicited critical perspectives from children who recently settled in the United States as refugees. A multicultural picturebook with which all four children interacted, *Chocolate Me!* (Diggs, 2011), provided opportunities for them to engage with issues of bullying and racism. Lion took an active stance toward the text by countering offensive and racist remarks uttered by characters depicted as three White/Caucasian boys. Ayonna, Gloria, and Dawit were impacted by Taye Diggs' use of language and literacy devices. For Ayonna, noticing and elaborating on the depictions of characters with Anglo names as bullies and racists enabled her to challenge the status quo. Gloria, on the other hand, disrupted the commonplace by wondering why the “really mean” boys would say derogatory and racist remarks. Subsequently, she called for social justice by suggesting that such behavior should not be accepted in society. Dawit called out the characters as bullies for using derogatory language about another boy's appearance. In addition, he repeatedly referred to himself as “chocolate me” to reinforce a shared experience with the Black/African American character.

Lion also engaged with issues of translingualism and transnationalism. While interacting with *Two White Rabbits* (Buitrago, 2015), he suggested that some languages (e.g., Spanish) are discouraged in countries where another language (e.g., English) is widely spoken and enforced. In addition, he identified borders as physical and linguistic barriers that impact people who cross them. Similarly, in response to *Dreamers* (Morales, 2018), Ayonna recognized issues of transnationalism, transculturalism, and translingualism. She raised the question of why people migrate and discussed the ways in which *migrantes* draw from their culture and language. And

by focusing on sociopolitical issues, such as (im)migration, Ayona identified relationships between culture, power, and language. Dawit, on the other hand, engaged with issues of transnationalism as he interacted with a picturebook, *I'm an Immigrant Too!* (Fox, 2017), which features depictions of newcomers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds—including a refugee child who is in detention. Saying that “they keep her in jail because she is not from that place,” Dawit recognized details pertaining to the (im)migration and detention of (im)migrants. In addition, for Ayonna, noticing and elaborating on depictions in *I'm New Here* (O'Brien, 2015) of a character from immigrant and Muslim backgrounds enabled her to engage with issues of xenophobia and Islamophobia. She noted that newcomer people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds are mistreated in society based on aspects of culture, power, and language.

Looking at the language practices across all four cases provides insight into how, in response to picturebooks, translingual children who share African heritage and are from refugee backgrounds were empowered to articulate critical perspectives. In doing so, they unpacked “myths and distortions and [built] new ways of knowing and acting upon the world” (Luke, 2014, p. 22). They also participated in equitable learning opportunities involving interactions with text and visual resources (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). These learning opportunities came about as children recognized and responded to important issues that address power and marginalization based on race and ethnicity, language, immigrant and refugee backgrounds.

Coming Full Circle: Love as a Driving Force to Connect with and Motivate Translingual Children from Refugee Backgrounds

Beginning this essay with a quote featured in Yuyi Morales' (2018) book, *Dreamers*, I focus on a belief that translingual children from refugee backgrounds are “Love Amor Love” (n.p.), or more precisely, embody stories, multiple languages, lucha, hope, and *soñadores* of the

world. As a translingual person from a refugee background myself, it seems familiar, if not effortless, to embrace *Love Amor Love* to connect with these children and motivate them to engage with learning and life (Orellana, 2016). By identifying multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks, and then providing them to four children who recently settled in the United States as refugees, it becomes possible for them to access contemporary children's literature depicting the complex social networks and lived realities of people from different backgrounds who live in diverse communities.

In considering what it means to empower translingual children from refugee backgrounds to articulate critical perspectives in response to picturebooks, and simultaneously engage with learning and life (Orellana, 2016), I underscore the importance of adults reading picturebooks with these children – whether they are a teacher, tutor, mentor, parent or caregiver – to collaboratively unpack myths and distortions, build new ways of knowing, act upon the world, and participate in equitable learning opportunities involving interactions with text and visual resources (Luke, 2014; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). Adults may provide opportunities for translingual children from refugee backgrounds to articulate critical perspectives by drawing on their everyday experiences and the places and spaces that they encounter and occupy, as well as the languages they use (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012). Unlike parents or caregivers who likely share the same heritage language and occupy many of the same places and spaces as children, it is important that teachers, tutors, and mentors in classroom and out-of-school contexts embrace translingual children from refugee backgrounds as people who use multiple languages and have valuable everyday experiences across different places and spaces. This empowers these children to articulate or act on critical perspectives that might entail disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues,

and foregrounding social justice (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). As I continue to consider what it means to empower translingual children from refugee backgrounds to articulate critical perspectives in response to picturebooks, it is my hope that more children will have opportunities to participate in interactive readalouds with adults who recognize that these children are “Love Amor Love” (Morales, 2018, n.p.).

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ESSAY 3

STORIES AS LIFE PERFORMANCES: HUMANIZING RESEARCH AS HONORING, RESPECTING, LISTENING TO AND LEARNING WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

Lives and their experiences, the telling and the told, are represented in stories which are performances. Stories are like pictures that have been painted over, and, when paint is scraped off an old picture, something new becomes visible. What is new is what was previously covered up. A life and the performances about it have the qualities of pentimento. Something new is always coming into sight, displacing what was previously certain and seen. There is no truth in the painting of a life, only multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is. (Denzin, 2014, p. 1)

Introduction

It was a day in the early spring of 1992. I had just turned six years old, and even to this day, I clearly recall that gut wrenching feeling of uneasiness which indicates that something terrible will happen. As I kicked a ball as far as possible in the backyard, I looked up high toward what seemed to be a shadow. As my eyes moved upward, from floor to floor of a nearby apartment building, I saw a man looking down and holding a gun. That night, my parents were in shock that a sniper appeared in our neighborhood. This was an everyday occurrence in the besieged capital city, Sarajevo, but not something that was supposed to happen in our hometown, Banja Luka, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The adults around me talked about checkpoints and enforced curfews.

On the way home after visiting neighbors, as I walked alongside my parents and held their hands, a soldier appeared. I do not remember what my mom said to my dad at that moment,

but I recall that she was worried. We were not supposed to be outside after the curfew. As my mom squeezed my hand, she walked faster and faster. My dad stayed behind; he appeared to talk with the soldier and gesture to imply directions. That is how I knew that my life, and the lives of those around me, would soon drastically change.

The following day, I joined my mom as she went to the hair salon. There, when I saw children running around in front of the salon, I asked if I could join them. “Don’t go too far and stay right in front of the building so that I can see you through the window,” my mom said. Outside, I sat on the stairs next to a boy I recognized from kindergarten. Then, a girl who was a complete stranger joined us. Instantly, she looked at me and asked, “Where are you going with your family?” I was confused, and wondered, “Going where?” “Oh, they haven’t told you yet. Well, I am leaving later this week and you’ll have to leave too,” the girl said. “Wait, I will be right back.” She returned, reached into the pocket of her jacket, and pulled out a toy. “Here, take Garfield with you.” Then, she leaned toward me and kissed me on the cheek. Without even learning her name, that was the first and last time I saw her.

That evening, as I was playing with my remote-controlled car in the living room, my mom walked in. “We have to leave tomorrow morning, and I am not sure when we’re coming back,” she said. “So, pick your favorite toy – that’s all we have space for in the suitcase.” I asked if I could bring my panda stuffed animal. “That’s too big,” my mom said. So, I chose my remote-controlled car and Garfield. However, in the midst of packing, the remote was left behind. Months later, after reuniting with my dad, he said, “Look what I brought from home – the remote.” These artifacts are displayed in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1. Artifacts representative of Nermin’s lived experiences and refugee background.

These stories attest to my refugee background and – in juxtaposition with stories about children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds with whom I interacted as a volunteer tutor and researcher in an afterschool program – relate experiences that connect the dots between “lives, performance, representation, epiphany, and interpretation” (Denzin, 2014, p. 1). In this personal perspective essay, my goal is to turn “the traditional life story, biographical project into an interpretive autoethnographic project, into a critical, performative practice, a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology” (Denzin, 2014, n.p.). I pursue this goal by making the methodological stance of humanizing research the center of my work with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds. Specifically, I define humanizing research as honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with research participants, which may be realized when researchers such as myself identify closely to, are invested with, and care for study participants; build on the commonalities of their and participants’ backgrounds; and undertake anti-deficit perspectives.

Centering the Methodological Stance of Humanizing Research

Humanizing research with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, such as work with people from refugee backgrounds, is a “methodological stance which requires that our inquires involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for both researchers and participants” (Paris, 2011, p. 140). Drawing from Freire’s (1970)

call for students and educators to reflect and act upon the world, Paris (2011) and Lee (2020) maintain that researchers must do the same; this is especially crucial to do for researchers working with marginalized communities that are plagued by inequalities and injustices with regard to newcomer/refugee/immigrant status, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and language.

To describe the process of *humanization*, Roberts (2000) and Blackburn (2014) draw on Freire's (1970, 1998) claims that all of us are in the process of becoming more fully human. Rather than progressing unhindered or uninterrupted, becoming fully human entails "[getting] stalled out or stuck; it can even get derailed or unraveled. This happens when a person is dehumanized, that is, made less human by having their individuality, creativity, and humanity taken away, as when one is treated like a number or an object" (Blackburn, 2014, p. 43).

Although Blackburn (2014) argues that this is especially true for LGBTQ youth, as they are marginalized by systems of inequality based on categories of difference (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and language), I consider these understandings as relevant to children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds. As a researcher working with people from refugee backgrounds in an education context, while developing my own understanding of humanizing research as honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with research participants, I also considered recent scholarship on humanizing research and critical issues (e.g., Lee, 2020; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017; Souto-Manning, 2013; Winn & Ubiles, 2011).

According to San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) and Lee (2020), in order to create and sustain relationships in educational research, researchers must extend and reinvigorate languages, cultures, and stories with study participants – enabling them to listen, to story, and to care for one another. In their article, San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) argue that co-construction of knowledge,

co-creation of relationships, and exchange of stories are of great importance to educational research. They also contend that fostering relationships in educational research centers around “the human capacity to listen to, story with, and care about each other,” which are moments of inclusivity and interconnectedness that disrupt systematic inequalities entrenched in Western constructs of educational research (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 373S). Moreover, in her personal perspective essay, Lee (2020) revisited her three-year qualitative case study examining how a community-based organization, Sauti Yetu’s Girl’s Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (GELI) led, bolstered, and transformed the literacy development of multilingual and multicultural African immigrant girls in New York City schools. By viewing her work through a lens of relationship building and dialogic consciousness-raising, Lee and study participants read and acted upon the world together by grasping cultural, linguistic, and social meanings of their work (Lee, 2020). The researcher and study participants embraced their activities in GELI as ethnographic work that is humanizing, which is imperative in order to move away from *giving participants a voice*, and therefore resist colonization in educational research (McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006, Paris, 2011; Winn & Paris, 2013). These studies inform my understanding of humanizing research as building relationships of care and dignity. In the following section I draw on my work in an education context with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds.

Working with Children, Youth, and Families from Refugee Backgrounds in “Our Home”

For the purpose of this personal perspective essay, I draw from research I conducted that explored the ways in which translingual children and youth from refugee backgrounds navigated language, used literacy practices, and responded to multicultural, transnational, and translingual picturebooks. Administered by a non-profit organization based in a state in the Southeastern

United States, the afterschool program was called “Our Home” by the student participants and tutors. The non-profit organization receives a Refugee School-Impact Program grant, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to provide activities that prioritize assistance with homework for students between the ages of five and eighteen who resettled as refugees (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020). Participants included four program tutors and 14 students from Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea. The children and youth are members of five families resettled in the United States in 2016 and 2017.

I came to know of “Our Home” after a representative at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants recommended a place that I could contact. His recommendation came at a pivotal time in my life as I was searching for a research site to carry out my dissertation research project. I also sought to connect with an organization in the community that supports people from refugee backgrounds. It was particularly important to me that my dissertation research project involve working with people who, like me, identify with a refugee background and/or are sympathetic to the experiences of recently resettled refugees.

Data collection in “Our Home” took place for two hours per day, two days a week, for 19 weeks from January to June 2019. Prior to that time frame, I volunteered as a tutor for six months. I have also continued volunteering as a tutor after completing data collection. Throughout the data collection phase, however, I struggled with balancing my simultaneous roles of volunteer tutor, mentor, and researcher. I grappled with this as I read articles and books, mostly rooted in post-positivist perspectives, about research and ethics. I then began engaging with scholarship which identifies building relationships of care and dignity as a core tenet of humanizing research (Lee, 2020; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006; Paris, 2011; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017; Souto-Manning, 2013; Winn & Ubiles, 2011; Winn & Paris, 2013).

Subsequently, I began to notice the ways in which building relationships of care and dignity are prevalent in my work, through the simple acts of listening to and learning with participants in my research. I consciously identified closely with them, became invested in them, actively cared for them. I shared with them my refugee background, which had much in common with theirs. Importantly, I did not approach them as having a deficit which English and literary skills were going to fill. Rather, I regarded them as already full of language (often multiple languages), culture, knowledge, and personal histories and experiences that had shaped them.

Lives, Performance, Representation, Epiphany, and Interpretation:

Connecting the Dots with Stories

Because including stories is an essential feature of this personal perspective essay, in this section I relate experiences of pursuing humanizing research with children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds in order to connect the dots between “lives, performance, representation, epiphany, and interpretation” (Denzin, 2014, p. 1). These stories were selected to illustrate the ways in which I applied the principals of humanizing research, and in doing so I internalized them as well.

Data Sources and Analysis

I was influenced by autoethnography and critical autoethnography methods to analyze data that ultimately informed stories about study participants and myself (e.g., Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2016). First, I revisited my fieldnotes and researcher memos after the study had been completed. The fieldnotes detail observations of study participants as they participated in afterschool program activities while researcher memos include reflections about my own refugee and multilingual background and insights and/or epiphanies about working with participants who share these backgrounds. Second, I identified data chunks that

align with broad themes – “honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with study participants.” I then grouped these data into sub-themes, such as “participants are like me,” “deeply caring for participants,” “actively resisting deficit perspectives.” Therefore, in the following sections, I share my own refugee background and experiences; then draw on personal stories that I have shared earlier in this essay, as well as stories about myself in the research context, in juxtaposition with stories about children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds with whom I interacted as a volunteer tutor and researcher in an afterschool program. Ultimately, these engagements with stories enable me to consider broader implications regarding culture, discourse, history, and ideology (Denzin, 2014).

Telling of My Own Refugee Background and Experiences: Nermin’s Journey

Due to strife and ethnic cleansing policies that began in 1992 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, my mother, sister, and I escaped the country while my father stayed behind. Our journey first took us to Belgrade, Serbia. There, we stayed with family friends. Days later, we took a train, via Budapest, Hungary, to Zagreb, Croatia. We settled in a town on the outskirts of the city. Months later, after my dad successfully made it to Budapest, we reunited with him and then relocated to the Croatian city of Rijeka. I enrolled in the first grade; however, my parents were unable to obtain work permits and permanent residency, which forced us to move to Germany. We settled in Dossenheim – a small town close to Heidelberg. There, I started the first grade again, and subsequently, often experienced microaggressions rooted in xenophobia. “When are you going back to your country?” my classmates asked. Another time, the classroom teacher attempted to take a class picture of all the children who dressed up to celebrate the carnival season. As I joined my classmates, in my rabbit costume, the teacher said, “You are in every picture. You

can't be in this one." These experiences, although traumatizing, have taught me to celebrate and enjoy children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds.

A few months later, my mom received a work permit and started working. Nearly two years later, my dad also received a work permit, which enabled him to start working. Still, our residency status in Germany remained temporary with the understanding that it will be revoked when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ends. Shortly after the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in 1995 to ensure an end to the war, and a peaceful transition, federal states in Germany started revoking the work and temporary residency of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because we were not able to return to our hometown, Banja Luka, my family applied for refugee resettlement at the United States Embassy in Berlin.

After settling in Wilmington, North Carolina, I enrolled in the sixth grade. A representative at the district office of education insisted that I must attend an English as a Second Language program located at a middle school which has historically served as a high school for African American/Black students prior to desegregation of public K-12 schools. In order to attend this school, I was bused for nearly two hours in the morning and afternoon. On the first day of school, unable to remember my bus number, I paced up and down the street where busses were parked in hope to see the bus driver I met in the morning. "Not here yet," a school staff member said. "You sit here." As I sat on concrete steps next to a building, I felt a hard punch on the right side of my face before I fell to the ground. As I regained consciousness, I saw school staff circled around me on the ground – gasping in disbelief. That day, I realized that in the United States my heritage did not confer significant privilege.

Two years later, I received a scholarship to attend an independent non-sectarian K-12 school. In a class of forty students, only two students identified as Black/African American. All

teachers identified as White/Caucasian. In that setting, I learned about the history associated with the establishment of the school in 1968 as an institution serving only White/Caucasian students. The first Black/African American student graduated from the school in 1984. In that environment, shortly after September 11, 2001, I began experiencing derogatory language directed towards me on the basis of my immigrant and ethnic background (e.g., Bošnjak/Bosniak heritage). “Are you with us or against us?” several classmates continuously shouted as we walked in the halls between classes. These experiences have made me determined that my interactions with others would foreground *humanization* rather than disrespect, nonattention, and the arrogance of certainty that I could learn nothing from people from refugee backgrounds. As a researcher in a culturally and linguistically diverse context, such as “Our Home,” I identify as an insider in the sense that I associate with and continue to navigate the refugee resettlement experience as a translingual speaker (in various abilities ranging from native fluency to beginner) of Bosnian, English, German, Korean, and Spanish. This is noteworthy because when researchers work with populations to which they also belong or identify as members, they and study participants likely share intersecting identities, language(s), and experiences (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000). Hence, as an educational researcher, I am deeply committed to honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with study participants who, like me, are from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee backgrounds.

Ayonna’s Journal Entry

Ayonna, a girl in the third grade, wrote in her journal after finishing homework for the week (see Figure 3.2). After she finished writing and coloring, she read the journal entry to me. “Moms are the best,” I said. “And so are dads.” As she smiled, I continued, “I really like what you wrote and drew. It’s beautiful. And I really appreciate you sharing this with me.” This

conversation illustrates one of the many instances in which – by identifying closely to, being invested with, and caring – I resisted deficit perspective by recognizing Ayonna’s background experiences and knowledge as valuable.

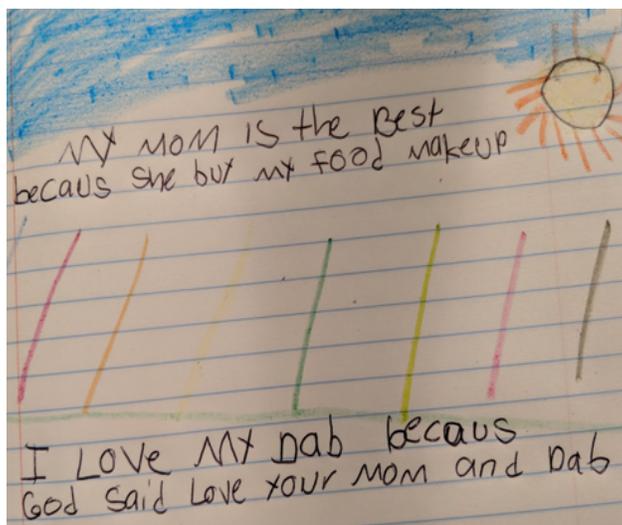


Figure 3.2. Ayonna’s journal entry.

At first glance, this journal entry seems to be a child’s proclaimed love for her parents. However, at this moment, while thinking about Ayonna’s mom buying make-up as an act of love and sacrifice, I recalled instances when my parents acted in loving and sacrificing ways. These recollections, which are detailed in the following paragraph, enable me to reflect on the ways in which I built on commonalities with Ayonna.

Like Ayonna’s parents, my parents had professional jobs in our homeland. But, because of the language barrier in the United States, they started by working in factories and the service industry. I am well aware of what it is like for both of my parents to work for minimum wage. After all the bills are paid, there is not much left. This requires money to be carefully allocated just to provide basic necessities. And luxuries, such as make-up that Ayonna’s mom buys, requires a parent to withhold money that is designated for something else deemed as actually necessary. My parents certainly have done this many times. For instance, my mom acted in

loving and sacrificing ways each time she took me to Shoe Carnival, a national shoe store franchise. Every time we walked in, employees would shout. “Welcome to Shoe Carnival.” Then, they eagerly encouraged us to try our luck by spinning the wheel. “Go, go, spin it with force so that we get to buy one pair and get one free,” my mom urged me. “Your dad needs a pair of steel toe boots for work.” As I tried my luck, watching the wheel spin fast and then slow down, I knew the stakes were high. If I were able to get a good deal, my parents would save the little money that we desperately needed more of.

“It’s Kinda Fun but [also] Boring”: A Day for Music Making Becomes an Ideal Day to Play Outside

It was a special day in “Our Home.” Not only was it the last week of the school year and nearly the beginning of summer break, but a special visitor was on his way. A man arrived and asked for a helping hand to carry musical instruments. Children’s eyes grew wide as they saw one drum, then another drum, and then a flute. “Is that for Africa music?” asked Lion, a boy in the first grade. He was eager to touch a drum when the visitor said, “You can touch it gently, but you have to ask first. Just ask!” Soon, children and youth attending the afterschool program gathered, then sat on the floor in circular formation. The visitor announced, “I am from the Congo, Africa, like many of you. Today we will learn special songs in Swahili and English. We’ll start with the English song.” He turned around, faced the whiteboard, and wrote the lyrics. In unison, we practiced the song lyrics that pays particular attention to divine intervention on behalf of oppressed people. When I glanced at Lion, I found him unenthusiastically repeating the lyrics while flipping the pages of a picturebook with one hand and holding a toy car in the other hand. I thought to myself that he was about to get in trouble for not listening and multitasking. And then he will be mad and will want to go outside. Moments later, that is exactly what

happened. As Lion went outside, while pouting, I leaned toward the afterschool program facilitator and said, "I'll go outside and keep an eye on him. We'll be right in the front here." "That'll be great," she said.

As Lion saw me opening the door and walking outside, he said, "It's kinda fun but [also] boring." I smirked, which prompted him to laugh. Together we kicked a ball back and forth. Then, Lion said, "I want to see how far it can fly." He kicked the ball and it went up in the air and across the street into a runoff ditch. Rather than discouraging him from doing this, I embraced an anti-deficit perspective in order to value Lion's experiences and knowledge. In the following paragraph, I describe ways in which I identified closely to, was invested with, cared for Lion, and also built on our commonalities.

I leaned on my knee so that I could be at Lion's eye level. "I am going across the street to get the ball, but you need to stay here because cars drive really fast on this street." Lion pinky promised that he would do that. In the runoff ditch, as I reached into thorny shrubbery, I heard what sounded like a million footsteps approaching. Then I heard heavy breathing and felt a small hand on my back. At this moment, memories of me as a child kicking a ball flashed in my mind. I then thought of the shadow toward the top of an apartment building that I saw as a child, which was a sniper. "I told you to stay on the other side. What if a car had come?" "I can help," Lion reassured me. "I look and see no car." As my mind flooded with different memories, I sighed in relief because both Lion and I were safe. While holding hands to cross the street, I said, "I am sorry I got angry. It's just that when I was your age, I kicked a ball when I still lived in my country and then saw something scary. This reminded me of that. But you need to promise me to look really carefully when you cross the street." "Okay, I promise," said Lion.

“Hey, You Got a Pump?”: A Childhood Marred by Translation

As I walked toward my car in the parking lot when an afterschool program session ended, I chatted with Dawit, a boy in the fourth grade. He called out to his mom, who seemed to be checking the tire of a car. I was unsure of what the problem might be, but Dawit clarified that his mom needs an air pressure pump. We engaged in the following dialogic exchange:

Dawit: We need pump for the car.

Nermin: Like a pump with air?

Dawit: Yeah.

Nermin: I used to have one but then I gave it back to my dad.

Dawit: She needed it.

I explained that I only have a wheel lift but no air pressure pump. Then, Dawit clarified what happened and what his mom needed help with.

Dawit: I think, like, someone popped [the tire].

Nermin: Oh, so this one is no good?

Dawit’s mom: No good!

Nermin: Does she need to go somewhere? I can give you a ride.

Dawit: Like, she wanted, like, pump it.

Nermin: I am sorry I couldn’t help.

Dawit’s mom: Oh. Okay.

Dawit: Can she like...do you know where to buy new pump?

Nermin: You have to go to a gas station and there is a machine. So you can pump it.

Dawit’s mom: Mhm. Yes. Machine. Gas station. Aha.

Nermin: And sometimes you have to pay and sometimes it's free. Sheetz gas station has a free air pressure machine.

Dawit's mom: Aha.

Nermin: Do you need me to take you somewhere?

Dawit's mom: Yeah, permit.

Nermin: Permit? Oh.

Dawit: She have no, like, it's a permit. Do you know, like, where to buy the pump?

Nermin: Walmart.

Dawit: Mama...[talking to his mom in Tigrinya]...Walmart.

Dawit's mom: A ha. Walmart.

Nermin: They have a pump.

Dawit's mom: Yeah, pump. Ok.

Nermin: But it's better if you go to the gas station. It's cheaper. Maybe the pump is expensive.

Dawit: Hey, let's go, like, my mom said let's go drink tea.

As I engaged in conversation with Dawit and his mom, who were both trying so hard to explain an issue that they thought I could help solve, I immediately remembered the many times when I, like Dawit, had to translate for my parents. This happened in school, grocery stores, restaurants, car dealerships, doctor's offices, and many more public places. Whether I had to speak to an insurance broker about increased property taxes or explain to my parents what the special meal of the day includes at a particular restaurant, there have been times when my parents were treated with dignity and respect and times when nurses rolled their eyes or car mechanics blatantly asked me why my parents did not speak English. "They do speak English,

just not well enough to explain complex issues,” I remember explaining. However, in my interactions with Dawit and his mom, by co-constructing knowledge and centering a caring demeanor, I interacted with them as a friend who understands fully. I know exactly how stressed Dawit must have been while mediating language between his mom and me, but also inserting himself into the conversation. And I knew at the bottom of my heart how important it was for his mom to feel cared for and treated with dignity. After all, I see myself in Dawit and my mom in his mom, which allowed me to fulfill my intent of identifying with them, caring for them, building on our commonalities, and avoiding any sense of Dawit’s mom having a personal deficit because English is not one of her languages.

Across Stories: Honoring, Respecting, Listening to and Learning with Participants

Looking across the aforementioned four stories about study participants and myself, it is noticeable that these stories humanize study participants and detail the ways in which I identified closely to, was invested with, and cared for them; built on our commonalities; and, committed myself to anti-deficit perspectives. When interacting with Ayonna, Lion, and Dawit and his mom, I listened holding the perspective of my own identity and heard through our shared experiences as they talked about the things they love, know, and wanted to share with me. Such listening involves co-construction of knowledge, co-creation of relationships, and exchange of stories between researcher and study participants (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Ultimately, a researcher listening to study participants attests to the human capacity to establish moments of inclusivity and interconnectedness through listening, storying with, and caring about each other (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017).

As a person who is also from a refugee background, I embraced the people I encountered in my research site by identifying closely with them and being invested in them. After all, I have

lived and continue to navigate the refugee resettlement experience. And because the schools, professional and academic contexts in the United States that I have previously occupied and currently occupy are predominantly monolingual and Anglo-White spaces where particular literacies are encouraged, while other literacies are discouraged, I am empathetic when people from refugee backgrounds must navigate English-dominant spaces; and subsequently are forced to use only part of their linguistic repertoire, which really is like cutting part of yourself off in order to speak, read, write, and think (e.g., García, 2009; 2017; Orellana, 2016). Hence, in an effort to entertain knowledge that extends beyond the understandings of monolingual and Anglo-White people and the institutions which they occupy, I am deeply committed to conducting research which entails actively resisting deficit perspectives. That is how I pursued humanizing research in an educational context by honoring, respecting, listening to and learning with study participants from refugee backgrounds.

Centering the Methodological Stance of Humanizing Research in Work with Children, Youth, and Families from Refugee Backgrounds

In the opening vignette of this personal perspective essay, I describe my lived experiences and refugee background, along with additional stories which I juxtapose with stories about study participants with whom I interacted as a volunteer tutor and researcher in an afterschool program. The stories I include about children, youth, and families from refugee backgrounds represent them in humanizing ways. Specifically, to foreground multiple voices and perspectives that are heard and performed and seen, these stories de-center the knowing “I” and unsettle the notion of past experiences as sites of subjectivity (Denzin, 2014), which Scott (1991) maintains are already performative, “at once already an interpretation, and something that needs to be interpreted” (p. 797).

Focusing on stories, I was able to relate experiences between myself and participants; and subsequently, connect the dots between “lives, performance, representation, epiphany, and interpretation” (Denzin, 2014, p. 1). Such reflective and reflexive undertakings are particularly important to consider for researchers working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. And when researchers create and sustain relationships of care and dignity in educational research (Paris, 2011), it is possible to extend and reinvigorate languages, cultures, and stories with study participants – ultimately listening, storying, and caring for one another (Lee, 2020; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol with Tutors

Part I: Background

Tell me about your professional background. Have you worked as a school teacher before? If so, what made you leave that formal education setting?

What is your role? How did you become involved with this organization?

Why are you motivated to work with resettled refugee children, youth, and families?

What languages do you speak? Read? Write?

When/where/with whom do you use each of these languages you know?

What are you passionate about?

What are your hopes for the refugees that you work with/support? What are your fears?

Part II: Using and Learning Language(s)

What language(s) do you use when you communicate?

How do you communicate differently (or similarly) in “Our Home” than in other spaces?

Do you feel as though you use and navigate multiple languages? Have you learned anything in another language?

Tell me about a time when you learned something new or took on a new perspective in “Our Home”?

What feelings or thoughts come to mind when you think of supporting resettled refugees with learning and using language?

Have you encountered challenges in communicating with students in “Our Home”? In what ways do you overcome those challenges?

Appendix B: Synopsis of Picturebooks

Title	Author & Illustrator	Synopsis
<i>Chocolate me!</i>	Taye Diggs & Shane W. Evans	On the sidewalk and playground, a Black/African American boy is teased by three Caucasian/White boys, who make fun of his appearance (e.g., skin, nose, teeth, hair). He wishes he were not different until his mom reaffirms, “Wait a minute, my sweet. You have skin like velvet fudge frosting mixed in a bowl. You can lick the spoon. Cotton candy hair soft to the touch of my fingertips or braid it like rows of corn with a twist. And your smile makes me so happy ... I could cry. No amount of money could buy how it makes me feel, for real. It’s perfect!” (n.p.).
<i>I am Enough</i>	Grace Byers & Keturah A. Bobo	A Black/African American girl celebrates herself by perceiving the ways she resembles beautiful things in the world, such as: the sun, a bird, a tree, mountains, time, being a champ, a heart, ladder, air, wind, rope, rain, moon, a student, water, fire, being a winner. She reaffirms, “I know that I may sometimes cry, but even then, I’m here to try. I’m not meant to be like you; you’re not meant to be like me. Sometimes we will get along, and sometimes we will disagree. I know that we don’t look the same: our skin, our eyes, our hair, our frame. But that does not dictate our worth; we both have places on earth. And in the end, we are right here to live a life of love, not fear ... to help each other when it’s tough, to say together: I am enough” (n.p.).
<i>Dreamers</i>	Yuyi Morales	In prose that include English and Spanish, this book is about a woman and child who migrate and eventually settle in a city. At first, they do not understand the rules. Subsequently, they play in a public fountain when a police officer approaches. With hands on her hips, the mother cries, “Ay!” Then, she and her child discover the library – “Suspicious. Improbable. Unbelievable. Surprising” (n.p.). There, she says, “We learned to read, to speak, to write, and to make our voices heard” (n.p.). Ultimately, the mother and her child are able to draw from multiple languages, noting, “We are two languages. We are lucha. We are resilience. We are hope” (n.p.).

<p><i>Two White Rabbits</i></p>	<p>Jairo Buitrago & Rafael Yockteng</p>	<p>Although there is no mention of the setting and reasons why a girl and her father are traveling, the characters are embarked on a journey. The girl counts many things she sees – clouds, people, animals, stars, the moon. She notices that the moon is always alone. Yet, there are many soldiers – so many in fact that the girl has stopped counting them. The story ends as the girl recounts, “We are back on the road. And I have two white rabbits” (n.p.).</p>
<p><i>Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin</i></p>	<p>Duncan Tonatiuh</p>	<p>This book is about two cousins. Carlitos lives in Mexico and Charlie lives in the United States. Although they have never met, they write letters to each other. It is evident that they have different routines. Carlitos rides his bicicleta to school while Charlie takes the subway, which he compares to “a long metal snake” (n.p.).</p>
<p><i>I’m New Here</i></p>	<p>Anne Sibley O’Brien</p>	<p>In this book, readers meet three new students. Maria is from Guatemala, Jin is from Korea, and Fatimah is from Somalia. They speak different languages, dress differently, and come from different cultural backgrounds. The children reminisce about the homes and people they left behind while trying to make sense of their new environment. However, as time passes, Jin teaches a boy to write the word cloud in Korean while the boy shows him how to write cloud in English. Fatimah’s classmates recognize her as a good artist. “Here is a place for me. Here is a new home,” she exclaims.</p>
<p><i>Drawn Together</i></p>	<p>Minh Lê & Dan Santat</p>	<p>A grandfather and his grandson have difficulty finding something that they have in common. In the panel artwork, the grandfather’s speech is Thai script while the boy’s speech is in English. In despair, the boy pulls out his sketchbook and draws a boy wizard with a peaked hat. Grandfather, it turns out, can draw, too. His wizard is dressed in Thai ceremonial garb. A duel begins between the wizards – “All the things we could never say come pouring out” (n.p.). They defeat the dragon that separates them, and ultimately discover that communication does not have to center around speaking.</p>

<p><i>I'm an Immigrant Too!</i></p>	<p>Mem Fox & Ronojoy Ghosh</p>	<p>“I’m Australian! How about you?” asks a child in the first spread. “My mum was born in Sydney, my dad in Ballarat” (n.p). Other parents who settled in Australia are from countries around the world. As a father and son wait at the bus stop, the narration reads, “Syria was where I lived, but then we had to flee. Our family’s now in Brisbane, and we’re as safe as safe can be” (n.p.). The last spread reads “[w]e open doors to strangers,” and ends with the following message: “Together now, we live in peace, beneath the Southern star.”</p>
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