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## **"Miss, Miss, I've Got a Story!": Exploring Identity Through a Micro-Ethnographic Analysis of Lunchtime Interactions with Four Somali Third Grade Students**

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“MISS, MISS, I’VE GOT A STORY!”: EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH A  
MICRO-ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF LUNCHTIME INTERACTIONS WITH  
FOUR SOMALI THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

JEAN KOSHA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of

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School of Education  
Education Research, Policy and Administration



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## DEDICATION

To Alia, Malika, Salim, Yusef and Mrs. Nadif, whose meaningful stories will always remain in my heart and mind, to Angela, Siaka, Sheikh, and Ansumana whose love of learning and continual support spurred me on, and to my parents, Robert and Helen, who always had faith in my ability to achieve my dreams.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Abraham Lincoln once said, “Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren’t very new at all.” This is the quote in front of a stack of 7000+ books all about Lincoln that stands three and a half stories high. Though many have written about Lincoln, there is something to learn from each of the author’s writings. I hope that in reading this study you also come away with something, if not new, still somehow meaningful to you. It is a book that many hands have helped to forge and I would like to recognize some of the many people who have helped to make this dissertation a reality.

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## ABSTRACT

### “MISS, MISS, I’VE GOT A STORY!”: EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH A MICRO-ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF LUNCHTIME INTERACTIONS WITH FOUR SOMALI THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

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This study is an exploration of the ways in which four Somali students use language to express their identity and assert their views. The study explores the ways in which the Somali students’ home culture and the school culture influence the development of their identity. Students participated in a lunchtime focus group on a regular basis over a period of several weeks. Using a micro-ethnographic approach to analysis, the students’ interactions were reviewed while considering the ways in which knowledge was affirmed and contested, examples of intertextuality and intercontextuality were identified and ideational notations or larger world view constructs were pinpointed. In this approach, specific events and interactions were linked to the broader contexts and connections that the participants were using in their communications. The result suggests a new and deeper understanding of the way in which these Somali learners use language to express their identity and negotiate the world. As a result of the examination of their

interactions, educators can take from these participants' experiences some ideas about issues to consider when working with second language learners and their families.

In this study students used language to assert their own identities as well as to position others in the group. These identities were continually negotiated by students and teachers alike. Students at times pushed back against ways in which they were identified. The Somali learners spoke of changing roles in the family as a result of learning English and being relied on to translate for parents who were non-English speakers. There were occasions where students used language in meaningful and contextually appropriate ways, but without understanding the power of the terms they used. Teachers have a significant role to play in shaping learners use of language and terms and guiding them to a more nuanced understanding of language. By examining children's language, it became apparent that teachers can provide critical information to help parents of second language learners negotiate the school and district resources. Students did express their Somali language and culture as they negotiated their school experience.



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you ”*

*~Maya Angelou*

This story is one that deserves telling. Provided within this dissertation is a glimpse at the interactions of four Somali third graders and the ways in which they use language to assert their viewpoints and express their multiple identities. The overarching question asked in this study is how do the participants use language to express their identity in school, and in what ways are the home culture and the school culture influencing the development of their identity? The sub-questions posed which help to provide insight to this over-arching question are:

- How does the acquisition of a second language, school culture and experiences in school shape these learners’ multiple identities?
- How do the children in this study express their multiple identities?
- Do the children’s home cultures bump up against the school culture and how do the children and adults negotiate that overlap?
- Do the participants strive to maintain their home culture and if so, how is that expressed and received in the school context?
- How do the learners use language to assert themselves and their views?

Through close analysis of these Somali children’s stories and interactions educators can take away a number of insights that can be helpful in working with second language learners and their families. It’s one of many stories that warrant being heard and told.

The first portion of the title, “Miss, Miss, I have a story!” is a phrase that I repeatedly heard in the classroom from the children I worked with. It’s a comment I continued hearing as I thought about the many conversations I had with the children. Often one of the participants, Alia, called me “Miss, Miss,” when she was trying to get

my attention about something she wanted to share. The children's interest and exuberance frequently showed through when they called out "Miss, Miss," to get my attention. On one particular occasion Alia called out to get my attention and to tell me that she had a story about an event she had seen over the weekend. Mid-way through our lunch she said "I have a story," but I was in the middle of discussing an issue with another child so I ignored her statement. I planned to go back and ask her what she wanted to share, but I forgot. Then just before it was time to end lunch and for the students to go to their next class, she again said, "I have a story." Within the next remaining minute for lunch, she told a significant story about a Somali wedding she had attended over the weekend. If Alia hadn't been persistent, I would have missed it. In listening over and over to the data, I realized how easy it can be to miss or overlook the stories these children have to tell. For me, this simple phrase, "Miss, I have a story" became a much larger statement about the stories that she and her peers have to tell and that we as educators may not have had the chance to hear. The dominant stories we hear about Somalis' experiences come through the media and are skewed toward war, famine and pirates. The day to day lives, interests and experiences of Somali immigrant children is one that often goes untold.

Each of the participants in this study in fact, has multiple stories to tell about who they are as individuals at any one point in time. How they identify, what and who influences them, who and what's important to them, are all a part of their story and carry meaning for each of them as well as us. Through their stories we can learn not only about their individual lives, but about ourselves, our beliefs, our understandings. So

while I sometimes question whether I should be the one writing about the stories they have to share, I also believe firmly that their stories deserve to be told and heard.

The second portion of the title relates to the focus of the research on identity and the methodology used to analyze the data. Through this form of research I strive to put the participants' words at the forefront, to examine both the micro of what the participants expressed and the macro of the larger understandings we can take from those interactions, to provide background information as a way of providing some sort of context for the words and thoughts shared and to continually remind myself and the reader that our words and conversations represented here may have multiple interpretations.

While I have striven to record their exact words, capture the essence of those statements, relay what they were trying to convey and illuminate some of the potential lessons or meanings that we can take from the interactions presented here, I also realize that the meaning interpreted by one reader, may be viewed differently by another. This has been a continual struggle I've faced throughout this research. While definitive meanings may not be possible when interpreting participants' interactions, a strong effort has been made to reflect the speakers' meanings and intentions. In wrestling with this issue, I often go back to the importance of the Somali students' story, the significance that they bring to our understanding of the varied and multiple immigrant experiences in this country and the strong belief I have about the value of their story being heard and reflected upon by educators, those working with the immigrant community and the average citizen living in this multi-ethnic nation. With that said, I invite you to hear the stories of these four Somali children, reflect on their experiences and the way in which



they use language to express their identity and assert their viewpoint, and use the insights gained from an analysis of their interactions to shape the way in which you work with second language learners and their families.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The theoretical underpinnings for this study include an exploration of the concepts of culture, acculturation, second language acquisition, discourse analysis, identity and the historical background of Somalia. Within each of these sections I will provide a brief explanation of the rationale for the selection of the theoretical base and its relevance to this study.

#### **A. Culture**

The first concept I would like to explore is that of culture. Culture frames everything we do and how we view the world. Many of our interactions and expressions are a result of our cultural understandings. These cultural understandings and expressions are deeply imbedded in our language. At times our cultural understandings can provide cause us to pause for a moment as we negotiate our interpretation of these interactions. A personal moment that stands out as an example of this negotiation is when my husband who had just arrived in the United States for the first time said to me, “Is the car going to sleep on the road tonight?” I had to take a moment to think about what he was expressing. For him, it was perfectly clear that he was asking if I was leaving the car parked on the road overnight, but it took me a few moments to grasp what he meant. We have since had many laughs about this moment in time that is etched in our memory. Our expressions are often cloaked in our cultural framework. Our own and others’ cultural frameworks can be invisible. We might not see an interaction as having anything to do with culture. Understanding how culture influences our understanding in

interactions with others is paramount to the questions being asked in this study, and for that reason, I include it as a central part of my theoretical framework.

Geertz indicated that the definition of culture at times is, in fact, so broad that for all practical purposes it is meaningless. He argued that by having a clear delineation as to what culture is and isn't we would be more effective in "ensuring its continued importance rather than undermining it" (1994, p. 213). Geertz goes on to define culture as he sees it and as well point out the faults of other definitions that have arisen. He writes,

The concept of culture I espouse... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (1994, p. 214)

Geertz's focus is therefore on the meanings that we convey through language, expressions and gestures. The role of the ethnographer, in his view, is to observe these signals and identify the meaning(s) that are conveyed through them. A description of the movements alone is insufficient, for it is in the interpretation of those movements that meaning is conveyed. For example, as Geertz suggests, the blink of the eye may hold multiple meanings. It may be a twitch, a wink or even the mimicking of a wink. It is the ethnographer's role to interpret what the blink of an eye represents.

Geertz (1994, p. 218) views culture as a public phenomenon. Without cultural practices being out in the open the meaning cannot be conveyed. He suggests that we do not spend our time questioning the existence of cultural practices, but rather ask what their importance is and what exactly is being communicated through the gestures, words, or actions. Part of what he believes hampers us in our understanding of cultures other

than our own, is our lack of familiarity with the signals people send. A head nod, quick intake of air or smile in a particular context may mean very different things in different cultures. We are so deep within each of our own cultures, that there are times we may not even recognize a signal being given within a different cultural context.

According to Geertz there are some who would suggest that understanding culture is a cognitive or psychological process. He advises that we should instead look at the actions of individuals and through that process we can begin to identify what is being signaled. Geertz (1994, p. 222) writes, “Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation.”

In describing anthropological writings he suggests that ethnographers are constructing an interpretation of the culture under study. The term he uses is “fictio,” as in the root of fiction; that is to fashion or create it. In his view, ethnography can be nothing less than a creation. Geertz points out that in describing a culture there will not be uniform coherence in terms of the cultural system. While he sees cultural systems as having *some* coherence, the fact is that we are working with real people and real events, none of which can march in lock step uniformity to create an image of complete unity of action and belief.

In looking at culture it is important to note that while we can do our best to observe keenly, take copious notes, reflect on what different actions and words might mean, interpret these actions given the context, write about the culture as we understand it, it will still be up for debate. One cannot “do ethnography” and nail a culture down completely; there is always room for different interpretations. So in some sense, we are

aiming for a moving target. We may achieve an approximation of accuracy, but there are no bull's-eyes in ethnography when it comes to trying to capture the essence of a particular culture.

Sonia Nieto defines culture very specifically. She writes,

Culture consists of the values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion, or other shared identity. Culture includes not only tangibles such as foods, holidays, dress, and artistic expression but also less tangible manifestations such as communication style, attitudes, values, and family relationships. (2004, p. 146)

Meyer & Rhoades (2006) stress the importance of incorporating multicultural education in schools that is transformative rather than reliance on what is referred to as the “4 F’s, food, festivals, folklore and fashion. Limiting culture to these four ideas keeps our understanding of culture on a very superficial level. Nieto takes the concept of culture beyond the idea of the “4 F’s.” She is not content to separate the concept of culture from that of *power*. Nieto understands from her experiences with schools, teachers, administrators and learners, that intertwined with culture is power and that it plays a significant role in how the many cultures of learners are perceived and therefore how the learner is perceived. Those who are not from the dominant culture may be viewed as having practices that are wrong or ill-conceived.

Nieto also emphasizes the slippery slope we walk when we see culture as static or unchanging. She expresses her belief that, “This view can also lead to essentializing culture, that is, ascribing particular immutable characteristics to it. The result may be to think of culture as ‘pure’ and unaffected by other circumstances and contexts” (Nieto, 2004, p. 147). A further concern occurs when we view all people from a particular

culture as having been cut from one cloth and as being the same. Nieto's example of how two siblings from the same culture, upbringing, home-life and so on can grow up to be quite different sheds light on how culture may help to shape us, but "it does not determine who we are" (2004, p. 148).

When we view culture as static we risk viewing the people of that community as unchanging as well. Nieto cautions us, in particular educators, not to "exoticize" learners from cultures different than our own. She suggests that, "A more complicated view of culture is needed, especially among teachers whose classrooms are becoming more diverse every day" (2004, p. 148).

In the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2012) culture is defined as, "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." I find it interesting that the etymology of the word culture is Middle English from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is derived from *cultivated land* or *cultivation*. We can think of culture as the cultivation of knowledge and understanding of beliefs, values and practices of a particular group or society in their younger generations. It helps me to think about culture as a metaphor, that of planting, growing and nurturing. In the case of culture, it is ensuring that the youth raised in a society hold the same or similar beliefs, values and morals as those within the group raising them and nurturing their development into adulthood. It is expected that these children will practice the same rituals, ceremonies and traditions as their caregivers.

What does this mean for a population uprooted from their environment and transplanted in a new setting? When we think about transplanting a plant to a different

garden, we take care to make sure that the root system is not damaged, that we leave the some of the soil around it to provide support, that the sun, water and nutrients that it will receive in its new setting will allow it to grow healthy, strong, and to full maturity. A child is not a plant. However, we can use this metaphor to push us to think about how parents and members of a society assist the child to understand the mores, values, beliefs and traditions of their parents and ancestors. How do families successfully cultivate their culture when they are transplanted into a completely different environment? What are the support systems in place to ensure that the roots are not damaged? How can the children's and family's culture be nurtured when they are surrounded by multiple differing cultural practices? How do the encounters that children face influence the development of their identity?

If Sonia Nieto were in the room with me I think she might ask, but why would one even consider trying to *preserve* culture in the sense that it is not an in inanimate artifact and something to be kept on a shelf and admired. Culture in Sonia Nieto's definition is transformative. It is a process that changes as the members of that group need it to change. Even if families do not move from their homeland, culture is not something that is stagnant. It is a concept that is in motion; change within a culture is inevitable (Nieto, 2004). As societies are influenced by people, knowledge, technology and events, the culture and practices of people may change.

Bhatia (2007) explains that culture and identity for one person can be different in different contexts. How we act in one setting may be completely different than other settings. For example what occurs in the home environment may be drastically different than the school setting. This is an issue I would like to understand better. How do these

cultural roles play out at school and at home for the Somali children? When the children are together with the Somali aide in the classroom, do they fall into the more homelike cultural pattern or the more school like? Are there different cultural patterns and identities for them in different settings? How do the children see themselves at home and at school?

Bhatia and Ram (2001) remind us that nation and culture are not synonymous. We cannot assume that there is one defined culture within the borders of the land that is called Somalia. Neither can we speak of the United States as having one culture. The multiplicity of people, language and belief systems, particularly in an urban environment in the United States is apparent. Somalia is also not a monolithic nation with one group of people who walk in lock step with the exact same set of beliefs and values. In fact, Somalia is comprised of many different ethnic groups. There are many different languages and cultures present in Somalia (Van Lehman & Eno, 2003). We may find cultural similarities, but we cannot assume that the population of a nation is one cultural unit. Bhatia and Ram (2001, p. 3) emphasize that, "...nation and culture cannot be used interchangeably and that home and host cultures are not hermetically sealed or mutually exclusive spaces."

Part of the exploration of this study will be to elucidate how these learners understand and express their multiple cultures.

### **B. Acculturation**

A second aspect of this framework is that of acculturation. Once we acknowledge that we are interacting with others within our cultural framework we can begin to explore how our cultural identity shifts and changes depending on our own cultural framework,



the cultural frameworks of the people we are interacting with, and the social situation we find ourselves immersed in. This discussion will center on how we define acculturation which will in turn help us to better understand how the participants in this study operate within their cultural framework, are influenced by the multiple cultures around them, and in turn influence the cultural frameworks of those around them. We will then be able to further explore the development of their identity with these push/pull forces of culture. Understanding the process of acculturation is a critical link in understanding how these participants identity is being shaped.

Within this framework I plan to briefly examine the concept of adaptation versus acculturation. Adaptation suggests that a person comes from one culture and “adapts” to another culture; the burden of change is on the new person arriving. It implies that they will do the changing, letting go of their own culture and changing themselves to fit into a new place. With this concept of adaptation, the immigrants must alter and adjust themselves to their new surroundings while the existing environment and people in it do not change or adapt. I would argue that often times both the immigrant, and those they encounter, change.

Acculturation takes the idea of adaptation a little further and deals more specifically with the concept of culture. The notion of acculturation has different proponents that have differing perspectives on what acculturation is or isn't. For example, Berry and other cross-culture and intercultural scholars suggest that there are four ways to categorize acculturation. Bhatia and Ram suggest reconsidering Berry's framework. According to Bhatia & Ram's description of Berry's framework, acculturation can be seen as assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization

(Bhatia & Ram, 2001, p.3). Assimilation is seen as an individual who forgoes his/her own culture to associate with and take on the culture of the dominant group. Integration is defined as individuals who maintain their own culture and connections with members of their ethnic group while also adopting the cultural practices of the dominant group. Separation is a term used to describe those individuals who maintain their own culture but do not assume the cultural practices of the dominant group. The final group, those who are marginalized, do not maintain their own cultural practices or take on those of the dominant group. According to Berry people who fall within this category may have been pushed to assimilate and give up their culture, while at the same time be treated unfairly and excluded from the dominant culture. Berry (1998, p.16) suggests that people within the marginalization category experience a loss of their culture and sometimes engage in unhealthy practices, “such as delinquency, and substance and familial abuse.”

This approach of categorizing individual’s acculturation, to me, has a “boxed in” and limiting feeling to it. It does not take into consideration the nuanced nature of culture, the variability of culture within countries, much less groups and it is lacking significant aspects within its framework. It suggests we can assign people to different groups and it is not clear how this categorization helps us to understand the different contexts in which individuals operate. It also implies that we can adopt and erase culture consciously and wholly.

Bhatia on the other hand, provides us with a more nuanced and comprehensive view of acculturation, seeing it as a process rather than a product. She explains the way in which an individual’s acculturation is a process of give and take. It is not only the newcomer that is influenced or changed; those living in the host country are also

influenced as a result of the interactions with the immigrants they encounter. It doesn't mean that everyone coming from a particular region of the world arrives with the exact same cultural beliefs and attitudes; rather there is variance within groups and regions. Bhatia stresses the importance of language, power and gender on acculturation. She explores the ways in which post-colonialism can help us to understand the acculturation process.

Bhatia cautions us that,

...we must be attentive to issues of race, gender, and religion, and we must also understand the immigrant's status both before and after migration to the host country. The acculturation process in the United States has a different developmental trajectory if, say, the migrant were part of a powerful center or majority in his or her local milieu before migration and found himself or herself to be part of a minority living on the margins after migration. As Frankenberg and Mani (1993) allege, race and gender are crucial signifiers of our locations and positions either in the center or on the margins. We use these signifiers to identify ourselves and our selfhood, and others as well use them to identify us. They describe several personal incidents to demonstrate that modes of othering and racialization are inseparable from the everyday experiences of a non-European/nonwhite immigrant in the United States. (2007, p. 87)

Bhatia goes on to emphasize the importance of considering gender, race, nationality and power dynamics, "...we need to recognize that both old and new immigrants, whether they are labeled as Asian Americans, Europeans, Caribbeans, Latino/as, or Chicano/as, are socially and historically positioned to one another and to the dominant groups in the United States. When we adhere to universal models of acculturation, we undervalue the asymmetrical relations of power and the inequities and injustices faced by certain immigrant groups as a result of their nationality, race, or gender" (2007, p. 88).

The Somali immigrant population not only contends with being minorities in the United States in terms of race and religion but also has to face the assumptions people may make because of their refugee status.

Bhatia provides for us a view of acculturation that helps us to break away from this concept of acculturation as an “either/or” model. Our tendency is to think of immigrant groups as coming to the United States with a particular culture and to acculturate, they leave their culture and assume the culture of the host country, whatever that “culture” may be. This view of acculturation is one which suggests that it is a process of acquisition, something that a person takes on and assumes as his or her own over a period of time. Bhatia & Ram suggest that acculturation is a *process* rather than *product* or the acquisition of an entity. Acculturation is not finite and clearly defined. They write,

In contrast to the universal models of acculturation in cross-cultural psychology, the dialogical view of acculturation does not emphasize that the voices that are in conflict with each other need to be replaced by a set of voices that are integrated or harmonious with each other. Rather, a dialogical approach to acculturation emphasizes that asymmetrical power relations between conflicting voices and /positions are very much part of the diasporic self. Viewed from a dialogical perspective, acculturation and the construction of hybridity is not necessarily a series of phases where one goes from being less acculturated to more acculturated over time. Instead, drawing on theories of dialogicality, we suggest that there is a dynamic play among several competing voices, and we need to think of acculturation as a process and not as a product. It is not a process that is moving inexorably toward a finite end that can be captured by fixed categories, but a process that is spiral, revolving, and interminable with an emphasis on multiplicity, conflict, and contradiction. (Bhatia & Ram, 2004, p. 237)

They continue by arguing that, “many second-generation children of transnational immigrant families are not going back and forth between roles or simply acquiring ... ‘traits,’ rather, the concept of voice allows us to understand the plural, infinite, dynamic

permutations of transnational identities that are created at the border between the social and the personal and self and society” (Bhatia & Ram, 2004, p. 237).

I think that this concept of acculturation as a fluid, dynamic, ongoing process makes a good deal of sense. At the same time, I recognize *my* tendency to go back to more traditional views of acculturation as a product and sometimes fall into the trap of seeing acculturation as the acquisition of particular characteristics associated with a particular society. Viewing acculturation dialogically frees us up to not think of people either having the “new” culture or not. It allows us to see the many ways in which we all move in and out of culture as a function of our varying needs in multiple contexts.

A final point that Bhatia and Ram make on this topic is the concept of variability within groups and the individual nature of how one may form their identity. They write, “Universal models of acculturation erase the social situatedness and culturally constructed nature of hybrid identities and fail to recognize the diversity and variability involved as immigrants and their children struggle to come to terms with their multiple voices and worlds” (Bhatia and Ram, 2001, pp. 237-238).

### **C. Second Language Acquisition and Discourse Analysis**

Theories around the acquisition of a second or third language will be a part of the framework that helps me to explain how these learners use language to advocate for themselves, share who they are as individuals, and interact with one-another in contexts in and around school. The participants of this study were children who have spent a few years in the United States. They have acquired a level of language that allows them to communicate with fellow students and teachers. Part of the exploration of this study will be to examine how the language they currently have is used to communicate with one-

another and teachers in an informal setting. To help understand this phenomenon I will rely upon theories of language acquisition and discourse analysis. An understanding of how learners use language to assert their views will help educators in serving this population. Exploring how these learners perceive and use cultural clues will aid us in teaching them.

Boxer and Cohen (2004) help to explain how research in second language acquisition and discourse studies are coming together to inform our understanding of how people learn a second language. They make clear that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Discourse Studies (DS), sub-fields of Applied Linguistics, in recent years have begun to inform one-another. It would appear that in Boxer and Cohen's view SLA and DS are a natural fit and can lead to a deeper understanding of the learning process and inform educators so as to be effective in their instruction. They write,

These two strands of research, discourse studies and SLA research, have only recently begun to intersect. This fact hold true despite the belief held by many that SLA and DA can and should inform each other. While it is true that some recent research in SLA has begun to glean insights from the various approaches to the analysis of spoken discourse, there is much more to be studied that can lend theoretical illumination and practical applications to second language (L2) learning and pedagogy. By studying how language users employ their language(s) in a variety of contexts, with a variety of types of interlocutors, and on a variety of topical issues, students, teachers, and scholars can create curriculum, materials, and assessment instruments based on something more substantive than the intuitions of mother tongue users. (Boxer & Cohen, 2004, pp. 3-4)

One of the theoretical models put forth within SLA is that of Language Identity. Within this framework are several models. The focus of researchers in this area of study, as they put it, is "in studying how incorporating an additional language and culture impacts on one's sense of who one is in the world" (Boxer & Cohen, 2004, p. 8). This concept fits right in with my interests in this study. Boxer and Cohen refer to writings by

Boxer and Cortes-Conde (1997, 2000), in which they describe the concept of “relational identity.” They write, “Relational identity is displayed and developed between and among specific interlocutors in their interactions over time” (Boxer & Cohen, 2004, p.9). In this idea they suggest that learners develop a sense of connection with other learners and through these relationships have the opportunity to build on their language skills because they have the chance to interact more and scaffold for their peers, leading to more language development. This is an idea that bears greater examination in the context in which I studied. The group of students that I interacted with as a part of this study has been learning together in the classroom for a significant amount of time. They have clear relationships both in and out of school. The concept of “relational identity is one which I kept in the back of my mind as I examined the ways in which this group of L2 learners interacted during their academic time and informal times of the school day.

#### **D. Identity**

The concept of identity development is a major piece of the framework for this study. The central question of this study is how these four Somali children use language to express their identity and the ways in which their home culture and the school culture influence the development of their identity. By exploring what is meant by identity we are better positioned to analyze the data and understand how the children perceive themselves, how they want to be perceived, and how others perceive them.

Bhatia and Ram call to our attention that 20% of children in the United States are immigrants and therefore, “questions related to acculturation and migrant identity are central to human development” (2001, p. 1). I would agree with them. Understanding what identity development is and how the process emerges will help us to get a grasp on

what is happening in these particular children's lives. As mentioned earlier, Bhatia (2007, p. 63) suggests that identity may look different for individuals in different contexts. The identity a child projects in a school environment may differ from the identity that same child projects at home. The researcher must always be aware that it will never be possible to fully see the participants' multiple identities. Identity is not something tangible that can be pointed out, but rather it is a constantly changing concept, and how we express our identity is dependent on where we are, who we're with, the circumstances of the situation, the power relations present, the goals we have in mind, how we feel physically, mentally, spiritually, and so on. Bhatia brings to our attention research that Visweswaran has done on identity. Visweswaran explains from her ethnography that, "identities are multiple, contradictory, partial and strategic" (as cited in Bhatia, 2007, p. 69).

This insight is important, especially when considering the role of the researcher and the way in which the presence of the researcher may influence the kinds of information the participants may share in interacting with the researcher. Representing the identities of the learners will not be a cut and dried process and will be open to interpretation. One must always keep in the forefront the idea that we are only seeing part of who the participant is and the person he/she reveals is influenced by who is present, the circumstances, and the persona each person may want to present. Additionally, how the identity is reported may also be skewed by the researcher's own biases.

Barker explains that within the discipline of cultural studies, identity is viewed as "wholly social and cultural" (2000, p. 218). We are social beings and the way in which



we understand ourselves and others is through the language and culture that surrounds us. How we perceive ourselves is dependent on the contexts within which we find ourselves. We are shaped by those contexts and those around us. He writes, "It matters whether we are black or white, male or female, African or American, rich or poor, because of the differential cultural resources to which we will have had access. Here identity is a matter not only of self-description but also of social ascription" (2000, p. 218). The idea here being that we tap into the cultural resources that surround us to shape the person we are. In explaining identity, Barker (2000, p. 219-220) suggests we look to Hall's description of three different concepts of identity over time including the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject. The enlightenment subject is the idea that a person has a core or center of who they are as a person and that this being is a rational individual with an awareness of self, who is capable of taking action and determining his or her future. The sociological subject is the notion that a person is comprised of who they are and their identity is central to their being, but that their identity is shaped through the interactions with the people surrounding them, including family, teachers, and community members. It is through this socialization process that identity is formed. The third notion of identity is that of the postmodern subject. Whereas in the enlightenment subject and sociological subject there is the sense of a cohesive inner self, with the postmodern subject the person has multiple identities that can be in contradiction to one-another. Identity is not stable, but is rather a function of time, place and surrounding people. Identity shifts and moves depending on the circumstances.

It is Hall's concept of postmodern identity that most resonates with me. I see aspects of the notion of the postmodern subject in my own life and actions. The idea that our identity shifts depending on context makes sense to me. When I reflect on my own life, I consider that the way I feel and act varies depending on who I'm with, where I am at, and the context of our interaction. Barker points out that in today's world we interact with a myriad of people in numerous places and contexts. For children this may include the classroom, playground, bus, home, neighborhood, mosque, or even virtual worlds through computer games, all of which provide opportunities for interaction and the construction of identity.

Barker (2000, p. 229) writes, "Cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting set of subject positions. Further, the points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating." He explains that social identifications such as gender, religion, class and ethnicity are many and are concepts which are in flux. The notion of what it means to be middle-class, Somali, Muslim, female or adult are concepts that are not fixed or unchanging. These ideas fluctuate within societies. When reflecting on these ideas of identity and the way in which it seems that everything is continually in flux, depending upon who is present, where the interaction takes place, which identification is being proposed, when this interaction is occurring, it feels impossible to speak of a person's identity. Barker helps to explain how we can speak of a person's identity in this ever shifting landscape when he writes,

Identity then becomes a 'cut or snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible. This anti-essentialist position does not mean that we cannot speak of identity. Rather, it points us to the political nature of identity as a production. (2000, p. 229).

I use this concept of identity to understand how the students in this study view themselves and one another. As Barker (2000, p. 229) writes, “Cultural identity is seen not as a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being but as a process of *becoming*.”

Through the participants’ language we can get a sense of how they identify at that moment in time. In looking closely at interactions it is possible see the ways in which identities are proposed, claimed, ignored or refuted by those involved in the discussion. Those identity claims may be about the speaker herself or about another member of the group. What is significant in looking at the interactions is examining how participants respond to such claims. Antaki & Widdicombe, write, “Membership of a category is ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people’s lives” (1998, p. 2). These assertions of identity are made both by students and teachers. Rex and Schiller write about the importance of teachers considering the ways in which they position students as they believe that it can have an effect on how students respond in the classroom. They write, “If we want students to assume particular identities, then we must be aware of how we position them and what we say, which over time creates identities that students adopt” (2009, p. 21). Gee writes about the way in which language is used to say, do and be things. He writes, “Language allows us to be things. It allows us to take on different socially significant identities” (1999, p. 2). In this study you will see several occasions where one member of the group claims a particular identity or positions another member of the group as being a particular kind of person. The students at times refute, ignore or acknowledge those claims. It is this interaction around these identity claims that is of significance in this study.

### **E. Somali History**

Three of the four students in this study are “Somali Bantu.” An important part of understanding the acculturation process and identity development of the learners is to review briefly the history of the Somali Bantu people. They have a unique history and life stories to tell. Their history, of course, influences their world view and experiences in the world. Familiarizing myself with the history of the Somali Bantu will add to my understanding of the issues they face in migrating to the United States.

In recent years we hear little about Somalia except that there are pirates off the coast of Somalia wreaking havoc. We are reminded through the media that Somalia is in a continual state of war and that there is no effective government that can reign in the pirates or govern the country. We are reminded of the unspeakable horrors that occurred in the early 1990’s when U.S. forces attempted military action to bring stability and aid to the area. In 2009 there was some positive news coming from Somalia. The results of a national election indicated that Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed was elected to govern the nation. Aside from this election, almost all the news we hear from Somalia is of troubling times. Throughout the past several years, one of the groups within Somalia that has been most deeply affected by the wars and instability are the Somali Bantu. They have often faced discrimination, which has worsened in difficult times.

The Somali Bantu are said to have been enslaved from various locations, including Tanzania, Mozambique, and Malawi in Southeastern Africa in the 1800s and uprooted to Somalia. Slavery had occurred in earlier years, but was especially widespread during the 1800s. It is estimated that 25,000-50,000 people were enslaved, taken to Somalia, and often forced to work on the plantations in the Shabelle River

Valley and near the coastal regions in Somalia (Van Lehman & Eno, 2003). During the 1800s some of the slaves were able to escape and settle in an unpopulated forest region in Southern Somalia called the Juba River Valley. Van Lehman and Eno claim that there may have been as many as 35,000 ex-slaves who established villages based on their ethnic identity in the Lower Juba Valley. This group of ex-slaves was able to maintain their culture and language as a result of the way they settled in villages in language groups. Slavery continued in Somalia into the 1900s and finally by 1930 was eliminated. Ex-slaves who settled in Southern Somalia in later years in a nearby region, the Middle Juba Valley, lost their language and culture because they did not stay within their ethnic groups and they tended to integrate into the larger Somali population. Van Lehman and Enos write, “Many of these Bantu adopted dominant Somali clan attachment and names as a means of social organization and identity” (2003, paragraph 12). Even though some of the ex-slaves were integrated into the clans of the general Somali population, the prejudice against these forced immigrants from southeastern Africa continued to be a factor in the lives of all of the ex-slaves.

Though all of the Somali Bantu were freed from slavery, their low status within the society has remained. While the official practice of slavery ended by 1930 Somali Bantu were compelled to work on the plantations of the Italian colonial powers during the 1930s. During the 1940s-1950s the British were the colonial power in charge. In 1960 Somalia gained independence. Discrimination against the Somali Bantu continued as some Somali Bantu men were forced to fight in the war against Ethiopia.

The Somali Bantu living in Middle and Lower Juba are comprised of many different ethnic groups with several different languages. As a result of the topography of

this area of Somalia, the regions are very fertile and make good farmland. Many of the Somali Bantu who lived in these regions were farmers and held 1-10 acres of land (Van Lehman & Eno, 2003). During 1991 civil war broke out in Somalia resulting in a disruption to food supplies. Since the Middle and Lower Juba regions are very fertile areas and farmed extensively by the Somali Bantu, they often became targets for those seeking food supplies.

In 1992 many of the Bantu fled Somalia to refugee camps in Kenya and Tanzania. Van Lehman and Eno report that 75% of Somali Bantu in Kenya's Northeastern Province expressed a desire to return to Tanzania where their ancestors originated from. The plans to have Somali Bantu relocate to Tanzania or southeastern Africa have never been implemented. Finally in 1999, the U.S. agreed to resettle 13,000 Somali Bantu in the U.S over a number of years.

Within the Somali Bantu population, there is great diversity. The Somali Bantu originate from at least 11 different cultural groups from Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique. Their languages and cultural practices are distinct. Some of the Somali Bantu have not been able to maintain their language over the past 200 years due to settlement patterns, yet they too have a unique history and way of life. The concept of identity for this group of immigrants is a fascinating one. Over the past 200 years, the Somali Bantu have faced many challenging circumstances, including the resettlement to the United States. Some of the immigrants have seen moving to the U.S. as a great opportunity. At the same time, in their relatively short time here, there have already been many hardships and difficult transitions. As the children learn the language and many cultures they encounter, it will be intriguing to begin to understand how it is their identity

is shaped and how they impact those around them. If they are able to trace their roots to southeastern Africa, do they identify more with that culture, than the culture of Somalia? Have they begun to identify as American? How do school, friends, family and the larger society push/pull on the identity development of these youngsters?

As I mentioned earlier, these theories provide a rough framework for an analysis I have undertaken of the language interactions of four Somali children in a third grade classroom. While they are not exhaustive, they have helped me to think about how the children in the study are learning, interacting and negotiating their identity in a school environment.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Research Methodology**

This research study is ethnographic. Fetterman, describes ethnographic research in a nutshell when he writes, “An ethnography attempts to be holistic – covering as much territory as possible about a culture, subculture, or program – but it necessarily falls far short of the whole” (p. 11, 1998).

I think of ethnography as a metaphor of an old growth forest. When standing in the forest one can look 360 degrees around, up and down, taking in all there is to see, hear, feel, and smell. It may be possible to view the ground or portions of it. You may need to pull away the brush, move aside the leaves and grass to see what is underneath. One can search the trees, birds, insects, animals, and perhaps the sky. In different seasons we might observe different things such as trees losing leaves, emerging buds or intense shades of green leaves. Trees may be in various stages of growth. Wind may be passing through or it may be completely calm. Rain may come in a downpour, a drizzle or not at all. It may be quiet, loud, or interspersed with noise. We may not be able to see the depth of the soil, the rocky layers, and the nutrients that feed the environment, deep within the soil, but still know it’s there from observing the visible portions of the forest. We know that in the next month, day, hour or minute our observations may be different, and that all is not visible or accessible to us, but for that moment, in that space in time we can get a glimpse of some of what the forest has to share with us.

In this study I have endeavored to provide as clear as a picture as possible of the phenomena under study; that is, how four Somali third graders who are second language



learners use language to reveal and negotiate their identity. Yet in this process I am aware that it is impossible to completely capture the entire essence of the participants and their experiences. According to Fetterman, a study that is well done should be authentic to those within the culture who are familiar with the issues. Sharing the study with the participants is one way in which I have verified that the insights I gleaned resonate with those who are familiar with the culture and experiences of those participating.

I began this study by identifying a topic to focus on. As mentioned earlier, I investigated how the participants used language to express their identity in school and in what ways the home culture and the school culture influenced the development of their identity. While this was my guiding question, I kept in mind that learning and understanding what my participants were going through as second language learners was a constantly evolving process. As one question was potentially answered, another often arose.

Throughout this study I had a few questions to guide me, but more importantly I continually looked and listened to the data which generated more questions. In the kind of study I conducted, it is the data that drives the questions, rather than the questions driving the data. While I initially identified an overarching question and sub-questions I also kept in mind that those questions could change during the study and very likely would change when I reviewed the data. As described by researchers familiar with this field, questions are most often generated from the data. Boxer and Cohen explain, “Like ES [Ethnography of Speaking], CA [Conversation Analysis] attempts to take an “unmotivated looking” ... without preconceived hypotheses. For both CA and ES, research questions are not taken a priori but rather emerge from the data. The goal is to

study talk in interaction in order to learn something about social practices as they take place” (Boxer and Cohen, 2004, p. 15). While initially providing an overarching query for my research, I left space for the generation of questions as the study unfolded.

### **B. Specific Data Collection Procedures**

The data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, focus group interviews, participation in Somali led community events, viewing of a documentary about resettled families from Somalia, and the collection of documents including student assessments, assignments, and articles on the Somali community. Each week during the students’ third grade year, I spent one to two mornings in the classroom observing the students and their interactions for a total of 41 observations. This occurred from September through June except during vacation weeks and periods of time when the children were engaged in statewide testing. Most of the observations were during the literacy block where reading and writing were taught. A few observations took place during math and social studies, which occurred later in the day. Some of the observations occurred during visits to the families’ homes during the study. Each time I visited the classroom, I observed the children while they were in reading and writing during the morning literacy block. I watched them on the playground and often spoke with their classroom teacher during this time to gain additional insights. Observations were written up into field notes.

Table 1: Summary of the Frequency of Observations and Interviews

<b>Data Collection Procedure</b>	<b>Type of Data Collected</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Classroom Observations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Audio Recordings</li> </ul>	41
<b>Focus Group Interviews with Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Audio Recordings &amp; Transcriptions</li> </ul>	17
<b>Interviews with Teachers, Aide and Community Members Working with Somali Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Audio Recordings &amp; Transcriptions</li> </ul>	7
<b>Visits to Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> </ul>	2
<b>Attendance at Somali Community Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> </ul>	3

Interviews are included in the data I collected. I interviewed two of the teachers who had worked with the children prior to third grade and two of the teachers who worked with them during the time period I observed the participants in the classroom. Additionally, I interviewed a teacher's aide, who worked closely with the children since their arrival at the school, the parents of two participants at their homes, a longtime Somali community member who was working with the resettled Somali population in this urban setting and a woman working as an advocate for all Somali school children and their families living in the local community.

Most significantly I conducted ongoing focus group interviews with the children during their lunch time from January through June. This became a regular event, where the four or five of us had lunch together and we got to know one-another better. The Somali aide working in the classroom was also present. I set up a tape recorder so as to be able to capture as much of the interaction as possible during these lunchtime conversations. Initially I had guiding questions that I asked the group members, but I also allowed space to let the conversations happen naturally. The conversation topics

were generated both by the researcher and students. To some degree the data I collected through these lunchtime conversations were not from a natural setting, in that the students were removed from the cafeteria, it was a group of selected students, and the setting was artificially created. In spite of the creation of this special lunch meeting, the conversations themselves were quite natural and were not formed from a preconceived script. The conversations were not directed by me, but were open-ended and allowed the students to pursue topics together as a group or separately.

Pole and Morrison note that focus group interview and group interview are frequently substituted for one another. They find that two characteristics set apart a focus group from a group interview. The first difference is that the focus group involves a “collective activity” such as a video, word prompt or photo. The second distinction according to Pole and Morrison (2003, p. 40) is that, “the core purpose of focus groups is to collect and analyse data that are primarily concerned with the *interaction* among members of the group (Kitzeinger 1994; Catteral and Maclaran 1997).” In the case of my research, the central activity taking place was eating lunch and engaging in a dialogue with classmates and teachers. The interactions were central to the data collection and analysis as they helped to highlight the views and perceptions of the children involved in the study. Through these interactions I was able to get a sense of what the participants thought and felt about particular topics and events. Through their interactions they shed light on experiences both in and outside of the classroom.

I used the initial data collected from these conversations with the participants to conduct a pilot study at this urban elementary school site. I recorded and transcribed the data collected during these lunchtime meetings and began an ethnographic analysis of the

students' interactions. This early analysis helped to shape my understanding of the data and gave me insights into the identities of the learners and how these identities were being expressed as well as how the learners were being positioned by adults working with them. [See Appendix D for the pilot study.]

Documents comprised a portion of the data collected as well. I gathered samples of the students' writing work during the year. Periodic reading assessments were also available for analysis. Articles and films about this recently resettled population, interviews with people working with the Somali community, and attendance at Somali community events all provided additional understanding of the issues faced by the Somali community.

### **C. Research Population**

In this study, four third grade students of Somali descent were the focal point of the research. The primary site of the research was in a third grade classroom in an urban elementary school in New England. The class had approximately 23 students. The majority of the students spoke English as their first language and there were several students who spoke both Spanish and English. Within this particular classroom there was a great deal of movement in and out of the class over the course of the school year. Within one academic year, nearly one-third of the class had moved and changed schools and those slots were filled with new students coming from different schools. The majority of the students in the class were approximately 8-9 years old; however, the third grade Somali students in the study were 10-11 years old at the time the data was collected because of placement decisions that were made at the time of their arrival in the school district.

The four Somali students in the study worked with a variety of teachers throughout the school day. Two of the Somali students were in the class for their homeroom, which meant they started out their day in the classroom and also had their afternoon classes of math, social studies and science in the classroom. Of these two students, one stayed in the classroom for literacy. The other student was pulled out daily for literacy support along with three other second language learners of the class. The other two Somali students in the study were in a different homeroom, to start out the day, but came to this class for literacy instruction, which occurred during the morning periods.

Additional data was gathered while visiting two students' family and home. Three of the four Somali students from this third grade settled in the United States during the past four years. They and their families are part of a resettlement program in which 13,000 Somali Bantu refugees living in refugee camps in Kenya were provided with support and documents to move to the United States. One of the four children, while of Somali descent, had been living in Saudi Arabia prior to moving to the United States. He is not from the same ethnic group as the other three but he did settle in the U.S. around the same time period and is facing similar issues around language acquisition and identity development. When the children arrived in the United States the family members knew very little, if any English and they had limited knowledge about life in the United States. The three children who are Somali Bantu and their families spoke Maay Maay, Somali and some Arabic. The parents were not literate in their first language, although some family members may have been literate in Arabic. The child who is Somali and his family spoke Arabic and Somali. All four families were Muslim.

The four children entered school without English language or literacy skills. There were two boys and two girls. The girls' names were Alia and Malika and the boys' names were Yusef and Salim. These are pseudonyms, as are all names, of interviewees, participants, teachers or people referred to within any of interviews, focus group discussions or classroom observation. The only exception is that as the researcher and a participant I included my name in the data charts and analysis.

#### **D. Instrumentation**

There is no specific research instrument that was used during this study. Instead, guiding questions were generated for the open ended interviews and used as necessary. These guiding questions for the focus groups and interviews can be found in appendices A, B and C. Observations were of a general nature and the attempt was to capture as much of the unfolding scenarios as possible. For the initial focus group interviews I prepared a short list of guiding questions. I soon found that leaving the discussion open ended was much more effective and often the conversations centered around the very topics I was interested in learning more about. A special emphasis was on capturing interactions between the learners through the use of audio tape during focus group interviews.

#### **E. Treatment of the Data**

Initially, I began the process of analysis with the data I collected for the pilot study. Data analysis can actually begin from the onset of the data collection and continue throughout the collection process as well as the writing process (Fetterman, 1998; Davies, 1999). To effectively analyze data, researchers continually reflect on the observations made, the questions asked, and patterns observed while conducting research.

To analyze the interactional data gathered through the recorded focus group meetings, I based my analysis on the microethnographic approach explained by Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto and Shuart-Faris (2005). This is the same process I used to analyze the data for the pilot study. In studying the language and literacy events of a particular population in a classroom, I found this methodology to be a helpful one. The authors describe micro-ethnography as “...a *social linguistic* or *social interactional* approach. It combines attention to how people use language and other systems of communication in constructing language and literacy events in classrooms with attention to social, cultural, and political processes” (Bloome et. al., 2005, p. xv).

My reason for using this data analysis tool was because it helped me to be close to what the participants have said about their life and at the same time allowed me to see beyond the immediate to the broader issues in the world. It helped me to reflect on how larger systems influenced the participants’ interactions and their interactions in turn influence larger systems. I frequently ask myself how can a few individuals impact these larger systems, but when I look broadly at some of the Somali community based events and the Somali advocacy groups that have sprung up around the country, I realize that in fact, even these four young children are making ripples in our society that do influence the systems that are in place. Those ripples may be felt within close proximity with their classmates, teachers, and staff members at the school, but they may also go beyond into the local community and even beyond. Sometimes it seems hard to imagine how individuals can make change, but this approach to data analysis allows one to examine more closely that push/pull effect.



My goal was to consider carefully the data and discern what was being said, what was meant, and at the same time I kept in mind that I was seeing this through my own set of lenses. While reflecting on these interactions I hoped to better understand the identities these learners shared with me, how those identities were shaped by both the larger context and the immediate context in which they found themselves and how they in turn have influenced their surrounding environment.

Micro-ethnography as described by Bloom et. al. is an approach in which the researcher examines carefully specific events and interactions, but also links them to the broader contexts and connections that the participants are using in their interactions. Bloome et al. convey that people do recognize the influence of these larger forces and contexts on their lives. In the case of this specific study and the 10-11 year old children I worked with, I questioned how much my participants, these children, see the connection between larger contexts and their lives. As I analyzed the data it is an issue that I kept in consideration. In my view, they may or may not be aware of those broader contexts that influence their interactions, especially in the case of young children.

By looking at both the micro and macro contexts we can better understand the relationship between the two (Bloom, 2005). Bloome et al. offer the metaphor of a semi-transparent mirror which brings into view both the event and the researcher and field. These authors suggest that we do not view the event as if it were something examined under a microscope. One of the challenges I faced, as a researcher, was to *not* scrutinize those small events at the expense of considering the influences of the larger landscape. It was a back and forth process of viewing; like one of the quarter telescopes at a park or

zoo that allows one to zoom in on a particular site, but also often also provides a spectacular panoramic view.

Micro-ethnography goes far beyond the number of turns at talk. Simply looking at numbers of times participants talk, the time each participant spends speaking, or numbers of times a proposed topic is taken up by the group will give us some information, but will not lead to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the interactions (Bloom et al., 2005). For example, one time while sitting in a course on Women in Development with women from all over the world, I noticed that particular students in class seemed to talk a lot. It seemed like American students tended to speak more often. I decided to start taking note of who was actually speaking in the class during this particular discussion. The data I gathered was simply a tally of the number of times participants in the course talked. Unfortunately or fortunately the course professor of this small class of 16 noticed me writing something down and my neighbor looking at what I had written. She asked me what I was doing so I shared the fact that I was simply recording who spoke during the discussion. This of course opened up what was for some in the class an unwelcome conversation about the issue. Unfortunately, in that situation I don't believe that we really went into the depth of discussion that was required to understand better the phenomena I was exploring. The data that I collected fell far short of what would have helped us to understand the dynamic that was taking place. The data didn't include how long people spoke, whether students showed non-verbal signs of participation, whether particular streams of discussion were taken up by others or dropped by the class, what the professor did to encourage or discourage participation in this classroom session, or how the students viewed participation. The data collected didn't help us to understand why

people chose to speak or not speak during that discussion and whether previous schooling experiences influenced the way they participated in class. It didn't inform us as to what was happening in other similar graduate courses with students from all over the world. Taking note of the number of times students spoke gave us some information but that information was very limited.

Micro-ethnography allows us to count those numbers, if we choose to, and that may help to further our understanding on some level, but more importantly, micro-ethnography takes us to a place where we can try to comprehend on a deeper level what is happening in that microcosm and at the same time juxtapose it against larger contexts we influence and are influenced by. It allows us to ask more questions and not simply document the number of times an event happens. By examining how broader contexts may be influencing those interactions we gain an even deeper comprehension of what those words and actions may mean. By looking at the interactions and observing who is taking up a point, validating another's comment, or contesting a point we gain a richer understanding of the events taking place.

Brian Street, (Bloome et al., 2005, p. xi) says it well when he writes,

But this demonstrates that it is not a matter of posing the "local" against the "global," the "micro" against the "macro" but of understanding the relationships between them, as meanings are built in their encounter. To do this involves moving beyond traditional micro-linguistic approaches, such as Conversation Analysis or narrowly conceived Discourse Analysis, at the same time as rejecting this outside 'determination': It involves developing theories and tools that take into account both the individual participant and of his or her social and cultural positionings and responses.

In the study I conducted I did not video tape the participants, which means that I've lost the visual cues that may be able to help to decipher meaning. Through the transcript I will not be able to know details of who looked at whom, faces that may have

been made, looks given or times that a participant may have ignored another. We do however, have a rich data base from which we can still gather a good deal of information and from which we can render a suggestion as to what happened in those events.

Selected interactions were transcribed in detail. The content of the conversations were recorded along with the prosodic elements including pauses, changes in tone, emphasis of particular words, overlap in interactions and so on. Selected interactions were then identified to analyze in more detail. I sought out interactions that relate to the participants' social identities. Interactions relating to discussions about gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, student identity, family relationships, friendships, faith, or customs were selected for deeper analysis. The content of these select interactions were then divided into message units by listening repeatedly to the recordings to determine pauses in the speech of the participants. Before and after the message units I included information about who the comment was made to since not all interactions involved all participants.

These data sets were displayed in chart form to allow me to consider several different categories of information. A column was inserted directly to the right of the message units where I included comments that helped to elucidate the interactions that occurred. At times some of the multiple possible meanings that the speaker may have intended were included since meanings are not always apparent or definitive. At other times this column was used to provide background information that helped me to recall what had led to the comment or possibly the interaction. The data displayed was then divided into episodes. The episodes were determined by the content of the conversation. Where I saw the participants interacting around a specific topic or accomplishing a

particular task, I grouped these interactions together. I then looked for logical breaks in the episodes, trying to identify when the conversation shifted to another topic or purpose.

Bloome et al. see events in a particular way, not as a fixed item, but rather something that is moving, being shaped by those involved in the event. Bloome et al. write,

If the research agenda focuses on how people use extant literacy practices to create new histories, new social relationships, or new social identities, or even how they use extant literacy practices to reproduce histories, social relationships, and social identities, then conceptualizing events as spaces where people concertedly create meaning and significance is both appropriate and useful. We define an event as a bounded series of actions and reactions that people make in response to each other at the level of face-to-face interaction. (2005, p. 6)

The events of this study are mostly the lunchtime conversations. They are a limited time that we had as a group to meet, eat, and talk. Sometimes there were questions I used to generate discussion but more often it was an open conversation that the students generated and directed.

After the data had been prepared in this way I inserted additional columns in the table to examine the following topics: Identity, Knowledge, Intertextuality and Intercontextuality, and Ideational Notations. Within the “Identity” column I pinpointed places where I felt that the speaker was identifying him/herself as a particular person or where a participant positioned another person as being a particular kind of person. I was interested in understanding better how individual participants were being viewed by others as well as exploring how they viewed themselves. The next column of “Knowledge” was a space to indicate where participants either displayed particular knowledge or skills or suggested that they had that knowledge or a particular skill, although it may not have been directly shown in the interaction. My aim at identifying

these moments was to demonstrate who was perceived as “holding knowledge,” whose knowledge was validated by other participants, and finally whose knowledge was contested by others.

The next column included “Intertextuality” and “Intercontextuality.” These two concepts had to do with references that participants made to other texts (verbal and written) and contexts. The final column, “Ideational notions,” was an attempt to see the data in relation to broader concepts and themes outside of this specific study. In other words, what did this interaction or statement by the participant mean in the larger world? What broader concepts of world view came into play in this interaction?

After repeatedly listening to the data, reflecting on possible meanings, considering what indirect references were incorporated into the conversation and what meaning this had for the participants in the larger scheme of things, I identified tentative findings. These findings were just a glimpse of the participants in a brief time period, but they were also glimpses that helped me to see who these learners were, which in turn will help me to understand how I can best assist more learners down the road.

In order to better understand the data in question, it is critical that I provided a detailed context of the interaction being analyzed. A thick description (Geertz, 1994) helped to illuminate what was occurring in the interaction. Knowing what happened earlier and after aids the reader in coming to some kind of understanding as to the nature of the interaction. However it is important to note that the full context can never be conveyed as it is impossible to capture (Bloome et al., 2005, p.184).

The meanings derived from the analysis of events are open for interpretation. There is not one meaning. Participants were continually negotiating the meaning and as

an outsider I made an attempt to get at the meaning, but I am always mindful of the fact that my interpretation of the event may not be the same as the interpretation of others involved in the event. Even though we all experienced the event, our interpretations may vary. Bloome writes,

Utterances then, among other linguistic behaviors, are acts that are part of a series of actions and reactions. The meaning of an utterance or other language act derives not from the content of its words but rather from its interplay with what went before and what will come later. Its meaning, or even the kind of act it is, cannot be determined outside of the ongoing event. Furthermore, because any utterance is not only a response but also a refraction of preceding language acts (a revision of the meaning of other actions), the meaning of an utterance varies with the point in the ongoing conversation at which it is considered. Meaning is not stable, even when an utterance is considered in context. There are limits on the certainty that people in an event can have about what things mean, what the event is about, and about who they are (Bloome, 1993); never mind limits on the certainty that researchers can have (cf. Heap, 1980). (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 8)

Document analysis was included in the study. I collected several writing samples from the students' third grade work folder. I also collected reading assessment documentation conducted by the classroom teacher. These assessments were used to track students' progress in reading. Monthly tests that the students took to develop their literacy and test-taking skills and to prepare the students for statewide testing were also used in the document analysis. Articles and documentary films were reviewed and used to provide additional background information.

In order to verify my findings, I have used triangulation. Triangulation involves examining data to see if conclusions drawn are supported by alternative sources (Fetterman, 1998). For example researchers may verify if an insight that the teacher has regarding a student's progress is confirmed through assessments and assignments independent of the teacher's comment. Through the use of field notes, interviews and

focus groups I have checked to see if the insights I have about the data are reflected in more than one place in the data.

#### **F. Limitations of the Study**

As I with any study, there are limitations. In this study I set out to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which four Somali students use language to express their identity and the ways in which their home culture and the school culture influence the development of their identity. Through the use of a micro-ethnographic approach I examined their use of language, the ways in which they asserted their viewpoint, the ways the school influences the development of their identity, and the ways in which their home culture is maintained and expressed.

This study had a very small sample of students. I observed and worked with just four Somali students and their classroom aide. Halfway through the study one of the students moved to a different school in the district so she was able to participate in only one of the weekly lunch time meetings we held. The core of the data drawn upon was from those focus group interviews. The data collected and subsequent analysis allowed me to examine the issues the children were facing and by honing in on the specific and by stepping back to consider the broader issues contained within the discussion, I was able to reflect on what I learned from my interactions with the students and the broader message we can take as educators so as to strengthen our work in the classroom.

Within this study I was not able to meet with all of the parents of the students. I did not get their perspective of their child's education, identity, or experiences in the school. Language was a barrier to gathering information from the parents.



The number of students I worked with was small. I chose to work with one class and grade level rather than all of the Somali students in the school and across grade levels. This allowed me to get to know these particular students very well in a relatively short time; however it also meant that my participant numbers were very small. Occasionally non-Somali students in the classroom participated in the lunches which changed the dynamic of the group. It did provide some opportunities to see how meanings were negotiated when there were misunderstandings. I found it interesting that class members and participants saw the lunches as a special time and there were many children who wanted to participate in the lunches. Because the class was very diverse it would have been interesting to involve the entire class in the study and analyze more carefully the cross cultural interactions between the students.

The study is limited to a small group of Somali children. It cannot speak to the multitude of language groups and immigrant learners we have in our classrooms. While we can draw broad suggestions about education and caveats to consider in the education process, it does not answer all the questions we have about identity, how it develops, and how it's expressed in the classroom.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES**

In this chapter I will focus on the site and participants of the study. I will begin with an explanation of how I became aware of these particular four Somali students, the issues they were facing in school, and my emerging interest in identity, culture, and language. Following this, I will provide a brief description of the school, their classroom, and the literacy program at the school. I will then offer a detailed profile of each of the four Somali students, their language arts teacher, a Somali aide in the classroom, and myself. The chapter will end with an explanation of how I decided on the particular path of analysis I chose.

#### **A. Gaining Entrance to the Site**

I learned of the classroom where I conducted the study, through a colleague, Kelly Gray (a pseudonym, as are all references to teachers, students, staff or school site). She told me about how much she enjoyed working with a group of Somali children during the previous year at Hamilton Elementary School. Kelly described some of the challenges and cultural issues the children faced in the American school. The majority of the Somali children she worked with had resettled in an urban area in New England from a refugee camp in Kenya a couple of years earlier. I mentioned my interest in doing research with second language learners and the prior work I had done in Guinea, West Africa with refugee teachers and students. We had a connection during our discussion about our mutual interest in issues that refugees resettling in the United States face. Kelly said that she was sure the teacher who was teaching the four Somali children, Mrs. Morris, would be more than willing to welcome me to the classroom to do a study of the

children's experiences, if I was interested. After I contacted Mrs. Morris, the teacher at Hamilton who was working with the Somali learners, I found she truly did welcome me to her classroom and was more than happy to have me observe and work with the children.

After gaining permission from the parents of the four children to do the research, I began this ethnographic study. The first couple of months I visited the classroom 1-2 times each week for two to three hours in the morning during the students' literacy block. I observed, took notes, talked to the children's teachers and worked here and there with both the Somali children and the rest of the class. During this time I came to see how the classroom was run, the typical schedule for the day followed, the curriculum being taught, the individual needs of some of the students, the social interactions of the children, their varied skills in reading and writing, and the tone of this particular school.

Even though I gained a great deal of information and insights through these observations, the true entrance to this study came after I had spent several months observing and assisting in the classroom. In January the students were working on a writing project in which they were learning interview skills. As a class they interviewed a third grade teacher in the school that they didn't normally work with and wrote a biography of her based on the information they had gleaned from the interview. During this mini-unit they focused on developing interview questions, asking the questions through an interview format, and using the information gathered to write the biography.

When I first saw the lesson on interviewing, I thought, "What a stroke of luck!" I had not yet conducted individual interviews of the children and at this point in the year I sensed that I had enough of a relationship to begin this process. Following the interview

of the teacher, I felt that this could be a wonderful opportunity for me to approach the students about interviewing them, since they had just learned about this skill first hand from the interviewer's perspective. Since they were focusing so intently on interview skills, I said to Mrs. Morris, the classroom teacher, that this would be a great time for me to interview the students and learn more about them as individuals. She agreed and we discussed the arrangements.

I was concerned about interviewing the Somali students during their classroom time when they might miss important academic content, so I suggested to the teacher that I meet with the students over lunch. Mrs. Morris thought that this would be easy to arrange and suggested that we meet in the classroom rather than in the cafeteria for lunch so that we would have a quiet place to converse. Mrs. Morris also asked Mrs. Nadif, the para-professional who supported the Somali children's learning, to be in the classroom during the interviews.

Even though I had worked with the students individually in the class, and they had seen me in the classroom for many weeks, I thought for the first interview or lunch meeting I would meet with all four of them rather than meeting with them individually. I didn't want them to feel uncomfortable or feel like they were on the spot by meeting with just me. I thought with all four students present they may feel more at ease. I planned that after this initial group interview I would meet with the students on an individual basis. It turned out that the children *loved* having lunch together and talking together. Immediately after our first group interview they asked if we could meet for lunch each time I came to the school. What started out to be an interview, turned into a focus group that met on a regular basis. The students thoroughly enjoyed the focus group and so did

I. Gaining entrance to the site was less about getting permission from the school district, classroom teacher and parents, and more about building a relationship with the students and creating a safe space where they felt comfortable and free to share candidly their stories and reflections with the focus group.

Through the lunch time interactions, I began to get a clearer understanding of the children's interests, home life, thoughts, and identities. They spoke of school incidents, events on their bus rides, their family, lunch, MCAS tests, their views, and more. The discussions spanned a wide variety of topics. The question then became how to analyze the data I was gathering.

For the pilot study (see Appendix D), I took a short excerpt of the data I had begun collecting from the focus group interviews over lunch and used a micro-ethnographic approach for the analysis. What I learned in the process and the insights I gained about working with second language learners really surprised me. I had taken an excerpt in which one of the students, Yusef, was described as a quiet, reticent student by the teachers and myself. After examining a brief 67 second audio-clip and doing the micro-ethnographic analysis, I came to a different conclusion about this learner. (See Table 13: "I Know What I Know" for the transcription of the interaction.) Following the analysis, I saw him more as a child who spoke up when he had a strong belief and who was tenacious at sharing his perspective and evidence for his belief even when challenged by adults. The brief interaction could have easily been overlooked, but by probing into the statements he made while another conversation was going on simultaneously, I began to see that he was not as quiet and shy as I had initially perceived. Rather, he was a student who was persistent, who shared his ideas and challenged teachers appropriately.

I came to realize that through the micro-ethnographic analysis, I would be able to examine the data and reflect on seemingly insignificant interactions that would in fact yield a profound understanding of these particular children and help me in considering some of the broader issues of working with second language learners.

Through the use of the micro-ethnographic analysis I have taken a closer look at the specific interactions and interplay amongst these participants, the children in their class, the teachers in their lives and how these exchanges relate to the broader notions of identity, culture and language. Bhatia (2007) emphasizes that identity appears differently in different circumstances. Our cultural identity shifts depending on our cultural framework and the situation we find ourselves in. In this study, I look at how the children's expression of identity sometimes bumps up against fellow participants' preconceived notions of their identity. By understanding acculturation as a fluid and dynamic process, rather than the acquisition of culture as a product (Bhatia & Ram, 2004), we can reflect on how these students communicate in this small group and in the process bridge their culture, language, and identity within these interactions. Through these brief moments in time, taken from these focus group interviews, the reader will be able to learn from a close examination of the children's interactions, who they are as learners and the way in which they individually navigate to express their identity and share a bit of themselves with this audience. By delving into the way in which we as educators can sometimes position our students as having a particular characteristic, behavior pattern or identity, we may be able to check our assumptions and rather ask ourselves whether there are some aspects of our students' identities that we may be overlooking or misunderstanding. Through the analyses of these select interactions, it is

my hope that by listening carefully to these learners' words, we can deepen our understanding of some of the issues we as educators might bear in mind as we endeavor to understand the individual second language learners we work with and as we hone our skills in teaching.

### **B. Research Site – The School**

The research site was an elementary school in an urban, New England setting, which I will call Hamilton Elementary in this study. This city has welcomed a large number of Somali families who were resettled through a government resettlement program. Many families moved to the United States between 2000 and 2005. Most of the families arrived from a refugee camp in Kenya, which was described in an earlier chapter.

Hamilton Elementary School during the year of the data collection had approximately 600 students, of which 18% school wide spoke English as a second language. Of the 600 students, nearly 11% were identified as having Limited English Proficiency. Slightly more than 77% of the students were considered low-income.

As one approaches Hamilton Elementary School it appears to be a typical elementary school. There's a fairly new playground structure with places to climb, slides, and a thick rubber surface to help protect children if they fall. A large open playground with some grass and a lot of dirt where the grass has been worn away is right next to the playground structure. Large trees border the playground area. There is no fence around the school or playground and the space feels open and free. Across the quiet residential streets one can find neat one-family average-sized houses with well

groomed yards. The nearby neighborhood appears to have families with a middle income average.

The original school building was constructed 80-90 years ago and there is a recent addition. The renovated classrooms have a great deal of natural light and are a pleasant physical space to learn. The new glass doors and windows at the entrance to the school provide a sense of openness; however, the front door is secured.

On my first visit to the school I walked around the building and tried pulling on multiple locked doors without success. Eventually I was buzzed in and learned about an inconspicuous doorbell behind a wire cage to the right of the door. There were no signs regarding the doorbell and it made me wonder how parents unfamiliar with the school and such security systems would figure out how to gain access to the school. I was surprised that this information was not posted clearly and in multiple languages for anyone unfamiliar with the building.

Once I got beyond the locked door, I did notice immediately there were three signs posted welcoming parents. One was in English, one in Spanish and the third in Somali. At the time I was surprised and delighted to see that they had signs in all three languages since these were the predominant languages spoken by children in the school.

The school and district administrators were clearly serious about security at this school. While I was in the office, I noticed that the receptionist had a monitor that showed who was at the front door so she could check before letting anyone into the building. I signed in by writing my name on a visitor's badge while in the office and noticed that a carbon copy was left for the office to have as a record.



The hallways showed evidence of pride, encouragement and relationship building between teachers and students. There were brightly decorated bulletin boards with pictures of all the teachers and staff taken with their family on their summer holidays. Each newly painted student locker had a decorative nametag. The halls were clean and free of jackets, boots or stray papers. A huge beautiful mural celebrating the city was at the entrance to the new section of the building. The mural included pictures of characters from books written by famous authors from the city, sports players from the local teams, images of Puerto Rico representing the connection that many children have to the island and many other illustrations that demonstrate a connection to this urban environment. The mural is clearly meant to send a message to the students that many people in the community have achieved great success and they too can be a member of that influential group of leaders.

I noticed as we moved down the hall that even small alcoves were converted into learning areas by using partitions. Signs posted everywhere reminded students that learning was taking place and to move quietly through the halls. Famous quotes were painted on the walls to inspire these young students. Each hallway had a street sign, such as Perseverance Avenue, selected to motivate the children. Anyone walking through the school immediately gets the sense that serious learning is taking place in this school.

### **C. Research Site – The Classroom**

The primary site of the research is a third grade classroom. The classroom was spacious and had been divided to create different learning areas. There was a meeting

area, a computer section, several small group work tables, a library, and desks arranged in groups of 4-5.

The class had approximately 23 students. Over the course of the academic year the composition of the class changed considerably as students moved to other schools and new students moved in. The majority of the students in the class are approximately 8-9 years old, however, the third grade students in the study are 10-11 years old. Two of the third grade Somali students are in this class for their homeroom. The other two students in the study are in different homerooms, but come to this class for literacy instruction, which takes place for nearly the entire morning. Most of the students in the class speak English fluently; however, there are about four students who leave the classroom for English language support. There are several second language learners in the classroom who speak Russian, Spanish or Somali as a first language. The teacher is a Caucasian teacher who speaks English as her first language. This is her third year of teaching.

The school has four classes of third grade students. For the morning literacy block approximately 12 students from this class go to another third grade classroom for their lessons and about 10 students come into the class for literacy instruction. From 9:30 until 10:30 the students focus on reading. From 10:30-11:30 the students focus on writing. The teacher most often has the students engage in a large group reading activity at the front of the classroom on a carpet. Following the lesson the students go back to their desk or find a quiet place to read independently. During the independent reading she calls up each of the three smaller groups to a reading table. During this small group activity she usually has the students read and practice the skill that she had just taught in the large group. The students rotate through the instructional small groups and

independent reading, spending two-thirds of the time reading and one-third in the small group. At the end of the students' independent reading they are asked to write a reading response about the story they just read.

During the writing lesson the teacher again usually begins with a large group lesson where the students are asked to focus on a particular writing skill. Following the lesson the students are asked to go back to their desks to work on the skill through a writing task, such as writing a report or a paragraph. The students later come up to the carpet with their partner and share their work with their peer editor.

Following writing, all third grade students go back to their homeroom. If the weather is not too cold or rainy, the students go outside for a 15 minute recess, after which they go to lunch in the cafeteria. Following lunch the students have math, social studies and science in their homerooms.

The classroom was a very pleasant environment to learn in. This classroom was ideal for conducting the study as three of the four children spent their entire morning working with the teacher on Language Arts. This included reading, writing, spelling and vocabulary development. One of the four children was pulled out to an English Language Classroom for his language arts work, but he spent his afternoons in this classroom as it was his homeroom. As a result I was able to observe all four children at various points during the day.

#### **D. Literacy and Language Arts Program at Hamilton Elementary School**

An important aspect of this classroom and school is the literacy program that was in place. In the previous several years the school had taken on the workshop model of education for reading, writing, and language arts. Hamilton Elementary School was one

of a few schools in the district participating in the “Cornerstone Literacy Initiative.” On the school web page the definition of Cornerstone literacy is, “to read, write, to think critically, to reason, to analyze and evaluate information, to communicate effectively in a variety of forms and to inquire systematically into any important manner.”<sup>1</sup> Several of the reading specialists had specific training in this model and were focused on working with teachers to incorporate this model into their instruction. The school and district placed emphasis on this model of instruction and during the year data was collected for this study they continued to expand the program. This meant that on a regular basis, teachers and program support staff came into the classroom to observe the classroom teacher’s literacy lessons.

Knowing that the Cornerstone Literacy initiative was taking place is important for several reasons. It demonstrates the forward thinking of the administration and staff of the school. The entire teaching staff at Hamilton, was using the Cornerstone Literacy model and with that came similar goals and language that flowed throughout the school. There was an emphasis on all classroom teachers refining their skills in using these techniques. Throughout the year there was ongoing training and frequent observations so that professional development was continual. Teachers met weekly as a team for each grade level and worked collaboratively on planning lessons, discussing issues they faced in instruction and in sharing resources. The school was clearly committed to enhancing their literacy instruction through this model. The classroom in which my study takes place had many observers throughout the year, so both the students and the teacher were used to working and learning while five or six observers were in the classroom. The classroom teacher being observed received feedback following her lesson from the

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<sup>1</sup> The link to the website is not provided to preserve the anonymity of the school and participants.

program support staff which provided her with additional information so that she could continue to improve her practice. She welcomed the feedback and took advantage of the opportunity to improve her practice. This was a classroom not only focused on students' learning, but also on the professional development of the staff.

### **E. Participant Profiles**

There are four main participants in this study. As mentioned earlier these four participants, originally from Somalia, are students in third grade at an urban elementary school in New England. Each of these four students has settled in the United States during the three years prior to data collection. They and their families are part of a resettlement program in which 13,000 Somali refugees living in refugee camps in Kenya were provided with support and documents to be able to move to the United States. When they arrived in the United States the family members knew very little, if any English and they had limited knowledge about life in the United States. The parents and children speak Maay, Somali and some Arabic. The parents are not literate in their first language (L1), although they may be literate in Arabic. The families are Muslim.

The four children entered school without English language or literacy skills. There are two boys and two girls. The girls' names are Alia and Malika. The boys' names are Salim and Yusef. (These are pseudonyms as are all references to people or places at this research site.)

#### **1. Alia**

Alia and her family were living at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya before they were relocated to the United States through the resettlement program in 2005. She

arrived here with her parents and at least four siblings. Alia is the youngest of her siblings. Alia's mother tongue is Maay Maay. She also speaks Somali and English.

Alia had been in Hamilton Elementary School since September of 2005. She had originally been placed in a kindergarten class, even though she was eight years old at the time. According to Kelly Gray, her teacher for first and second grade, the kindergarten teachers were having difficulty with her. Kelly said, "And she [the principal] said they're really having problems with her. They can't get her to sit down. They can't get her to talk. She won't do anything" (K. Gray, personal communication, 2008). The principal asked Mrs. Kelly Gray, who was teaching first grade at the time, to take Alia into her classroom, because of Alia's age and the difficulty she was having in the kindergarten class. For the first few weeks Alia had difficulties in the first grade classroom as well. Kelly explained, "...she came in and we had a very tough power struggle for about a month. She was very, gosh what's the word? Just obstinate! Like she wasn't going to follow my directions" (K. Gray, personal communication, 2008). After several weeks Alia adjusted to the new environment and began to get involved in the classroom. Part of the issue may have been how overwhelming it was for Alia to listen to a language, English, that she didn't understand. The mental demand must have been great, especially without someone to serve as a translator. Kelly described the change over time in Alia. She said, "And finally, it just kind of like... it felt like it happened... like almost magically. Like finally she was just coming to the rug with the kids, and she was just like... participating more. And it was like... wow! And she... became very attached to me" (K.Gray, personal communication, 2008).

As would be expected Alia began in Mrs. Gray's class with very little knowledge of letters, corresponding sounds, or English. Mrs. Gray described her entry skills and how quickly she learned, "When she came in she didn't know all of her letters or letter sounds. She didn't know much English for that matter. But she picked it up very quickly. She actually started to pick up some Spanish as well because the class at that time was primarily Spanish speaking children and I think the apartment that she lived in had lots of Spanish speaking residents, so she would hear it a lot" (K.Gray, personal communication, 2008). In another conversation Kelly spoke about the challenge Alia and some of the other Somali children faced because as they were learning the English language they were using Spanish words and were not sure about which words were actually Spanish or English.

Mrs. Gray raised concerns about Alia's reading. According to Kelly, Alia seemed to lack the confidence to read. She described how Alia would read a word or passage and go back to read it again because she was surprised that she had actually read it. This affected Alia's fluency, but she has made progress over the three years she's been in Hamilton. Mrs. Gray also spoke of the way in which her reading comprehension and decoding skills would alternate between great and not so good. Kelly said, "It was like all of a sudden the world of decoding was open to her. But then the comprehension started to fall apart. It was it was almost like like she had excellent listening comprehension and poor reading skills. And then all of a sudden like her decoding skills soared and her reading comprehension plummeted. And it was almost like it was like a seesaw effect" (K. Gray, personal communication, 2008).

Alia made progress and moved on to second grade where she had the chance to continue on with the same teacher. Kelly describes the way in which Alia blossomed into a reader and when the decoding and comprehension seemed to come together for her. She said, “Yeah, she was doing a lot of the repeating toward the end of first grade. And in the beginning of second grade, and then all of a sudden she just...she was like I can do it! You know, I don’t have to keep going back and and surprising myself because it’s not a surprise anymore. Like, I’m a reader!” (K.Gray, personal communication, 2008).

At the time of data collection Alia was in a third grade classroom and was eleven years old. She was reading on an early second grade level, and was continuing to make progress. Alia was with Mrs. Morris. Mrs. Gray had a close working relationship with Mrs. Morris and continued to get updates about Alia’s progress. Mrs. Gray still had some concerns about Alia’s reading in third grade because she wasn’t reading beyond simple pattern text with one line of print and strong picture support. Mrs. Gray felt that this was more an issue of confidence than an issue of skills. Mrs. Gray said she was still concerned because Alia wasn’t on grade level, but said she’s a lot higher than when she came in. Kelly kept in contact with Alia’s third grade teacher and they talked about activities that Alia could do with Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide in the third grade classroom, while the other children were doing independent reading.

Near the beginning of May of third grade Alia was given one of the periodic DRS reading assessment tests to see what level she was reading at. Alia was extremely proud of her progress in reading, as was the classroom teacher, Mrs. Morris. As shown in the following dialogue, Alia and Mrs. Morris are very excited that she has passed from level 20 to a level 24 in reading.



Table 2: Alia's Reading Test

Line	Speaker	Speaker's Statements
1	Mrs. Morris	So basically that's one two three mistakes, which means you have a 98, which means, you passed level 24 almost. You could get tested for the next level. So I think you're reading at this level now. That you can read and understand this by yourself. Right? Good job! That's awesome isn't it? Don't you think that's awesome? I think it's great. You're such a hard worker! [Alia begins counting to herself] What? What are you doing?
2	Alia	counting...
3	Mrs. Morris	counting what? To where?
4	Alia	from 20 to 24.
5	Mrs. Morris	from 20-24...four levels. What level were you when you came in here this year?
6	Alia	14?
7	Mrs. Morris	how far have you gotten?
8	Alia	ten
9	Mrs. Morris	ahhh...oh my goodness. You should feel very proud of yourself right now! And it's because you're choosing books that are on your level and you're practicing, practicing, practicing. And I know it's not always that fun. But you're doing a really good job. High five. This is definitely what Mrs. Gray and Ms. Canio are going to hear about for sure.
10	Alia	mmhmm.
11	Mrs. Morris	thank you
12	Alia	mmhmmm [laughter by Mrs. Nadif and Mrs. Morris]

There is an aide in the classroom who speaks Somali, Mrs. Nailah Nadif, and helps Alia with three focus areas: improving sight word recognition, building word families, and practicing reading on her grade level. These focused skills really seemed to help Alia with her reading. At the end of May she took another DRS reading assessment test. The teacher found that she had moved up to a level 28. After Alia had summarized the story and read a passage from it, Mrs. Morris commented, "Excellent Alia! My goodness! There are a few words here. I'm so amazed with you. You're SO amazing! " Mrs. Morris went on to tell her about a few of her mistakes and self-corrections. She

goes on to say, “You fixed this one, which I thought was impressive. You said, ‘curse.’ Right? ‘A curse,’ but then you fixed it. You said ‘oh, of course you are.’ Right? That’s what good readers do. They go back and they fix it when it doesn’t make sense. You did an excellent job! 28 lady!” (Observation, May 30, 2008). Mrs. Morris gave her a high five and said, “Good work. Keep it up okay. You’ll just keep getting better.” Alia responded, “Mhmm” and clearly she was very happy with her progress.

Several teachers mentioned that Alia can sometimes be moody, and refuse to do her work. Kelly Gray said she sometimes sees Alia in the hallway being reprimanded by a teacher and she can see the “attitude” emanating from Alia. On several occasions I heard from Alia’s third grade classroom teacher that Alia was having behavioral problems in the class. On one occasion Alia’s third grade teacher, Mrs. Morris, had to have Alia’s mother come in to discuss the attitude and uncooperativeness from Alia. At one point Alia got sent down to the office for a problem she was having in the classroom. Even though the incident was minor, Alia was suspended because of the accumulation of reports to the office about her behavior. By the end of the year, Alia’s behavior had seemed to be better. There were fewer reports of problems. For the most part when I observed, I found Alia to be cooperative and engaged in the tasks set forth by the teacher. When I asked her what subjects she likes to learn about she said she enjoys gym, music and computers, but doesn’t like science.

Alia continued to have a strong connection with Mrs. Gray and often spoke to her at school about her academics as well as her behavior. Mrs. Gray sometimes took Alia and a small group of Somali children on outings, such as attending movies or going

bowling, in the city. Often times it was the first opportunity the children had to participate in some of these activities.

## **2. Malika**

Malika and her family moved from the Kakuma Refugee Camp to the United States through the refugee resettlement program around the same time as Alia in 2005. She lives in an apartment with her father, mother and seven siblings. Her youngest sibling was born mid-way through the school year that this study took place. Malika is the second oldest in this family unit. According to Mrs. Gray, as the oldest girl, Malika is responsible for a lot of the cleaning and childcare in the house, and as a result is not able to get outside to play, which Malika finds frustrating. Malika explained to Mrs. Gray that she's training her younger siblings to help with the housework so she can get outside to play too (K. Gray, interview, December 6, 2007). As is the practice in some Muslim families, Malika's father has a second wife and children who are living in a different apartment in another part of the city.

When Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide in the classroom, and I visited Malika's home to meet her mother, Mrs. Nadif explained to me that she felt Malika's mother was suffering from depression. At the visit Mrs. Nadif encouraged Malika's mother to consider using birth control and not having any more children. Malika's mother did not speak English and spent much of her time staying at home with the young children. Malika had told Mrs. Kelly that she did not want to grow up to be like her mom, staying at home. Malika said she wanted to have a career. When I spoke to Malika one day about what she wanted to be when she grew up, she said that she would like to be a doctor, teacher and scientist. She said she wasn't sure which one she would choose. I

told her that depending on the route she took, she could actually combine all three professions.

Malika is a student who arrived at Hamilton Elementary School in November of 2005, shortly after Alia. When Malika began at Hamilton Elementary School, she had been placed in third grade, but the principal again asked Kelly Gray if she would do some assessments to see if first grade would be a better fit for her. Mrs. Gray explained in an interview how that decision came to pass. She said,

So, basically what happened was, her brother was in first grade ...and the principal asked me if I would you know, take a look at Malika and do some assessments with her and see if she would be appropriate like skill appropriate for first grade. She [the principal] didn't really want to put her in second, there were some issues going on in second grade. So, I worked with her [Malika] for one morning. And she definitely was first grade appropriate. She was a little older than most of the first graders. But I just, it was part of like, I just love these kids so much. I was like, yes, I'll take her and it was like is this the right thing to do for her academically? But I think it was. (K. Gray, interview, December 6, 2007)

The passion with which Mrs. Gray described how Malika came to be in her classroom spoke to the care and concern that she demonstrated for Malika and the other Somali learners. Her interest in helping these learners to succeed academically and socially was apparent. Following the assessments Malika joined Mrs. Gray's first grade class and stayed with her for second grade, as did Alia. Malika is older than most third graders and during third grade was 10 years old and turned 11 mid-way through the academic year.

Mrs. Gray explained that Malika joined the school with, "little English, no letter identification, no letter-sound association" (K. Gray, interview, December 6, 2007). She described how she planned lessons that focused on "building language through lots of language experience." She gave the example of bringing in apples, looking at, feeling

and talking about the apples. Then the students would write about the apples. Mrs. Gray described a multitude of hands on activities around topics such as pumpkins and gourds she did with Malika and the rest of the class to help them develop language and literacy skills.

Malika has thrived in Hamilton Elementary School. Malika is a smart and determined third grader. Clearly the foundation Mrs. Gray helped her develop in first and second grade, has helped Malika to succeed. Through observing Malika I came to realize that she is focused and had a strong sense of what she wants to accomplish. Malika had Mrs. Morris for the entire morning for the literacy block. Her homeroom teacher for math, social studies and science was a different third grade teacher. Malika is reading on grade level and is progressing well in school. Her third grade literacy teacher, Mrs. Morris explains,

With Malika and Salim what we're working on... is making sure that they are understanding what they're reading and making sure they're able to respond to literature at the third grade level. They're doing really well. I mean, we're taking a lot of practice tests as far as comprehension and responding, they can talk about it really well. But I think in the written form, it takes a little more. It takes a lot more, obviously. (S. Morris, interview, December 6, 2007)

Malika is fairly quiet with her peers in the class, but does respond frequently to the teacher's questions. Mrs. Morris spoke about the challenge Malika sometimes faces in responding and the strategies she uses to help Malika to voice her ideas. Mrs. Morris says,

Malika does raise her hand a lot and then she doesn't say anything. A few times I've ... repeated the question, and I know she has the answer, but it just takes her a little bit longer. So in terms of answering questions orally and talking I do a lot of partners with them so they can talk with somebody before they answer, which I think helps build their confidence or reinforces if they were talking about something that was on topic. (S. Morris, interview, December 6, 2007)

Malika is almost always engaged in activities in the classroom and works hard on her reading and writing. When it's time for independent reading she uses the entire time to read various books. It's rare to see her walking around or talking to other students instead of focusing on the task at hand. When asked what subjects she likes to study in school Malika responded that she likes all of them.

She is close friends and cousins with Alia, but they occasionally have conflicts. Malika is well behaved in class and the teacher rarely, if ever, needs to correct her behavior. She has a close relationship with Alia as well as with other students in the class. Alia and Malika, because of their family relationship, see one-another outside of school hours as well.

Mid-way through the year Malika had to transfer schools. Her father had decided to move to be closer to his second wife who lived in another section of town. As a result, Malika began going to a different school in February. Alia was particularly sad to see her go. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Morris were disappointed that she had to leave because she'd been so successful at Hamilton Elementary and they wanted to see her continue to progress. In the following weeks, Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Gray heard back from Malika that she really disliked the new school. She found it difficult to make friends, found the culture of the school less friendly, and she was having difficulty in the classroom she was placed in. The new school was able to have Malika change classrooms because of the challenge she was facing in her new classroom. At one point late in the year Malika and her father stopped by Mrs. Morris' classroom to visit. All of the students were thrilled to see Malika again.

Since much of the data used in this study is from the lunchtime focus groups that we held from January to June, there were few opportunities to study interactions between students that included Malika. However, I feel it is important to include Malika in this study because she was included for nearly half the year in the observations and a significant part of these children's discussions revolved around moving or anticipating a move at any time.

### **3. Salim**

Salim arrived in the United States from Kakuma Refugee Camp in 2005. He lives with his mother, step-father, three brothers, and three sisters. He is the second oldest in his family and his youngest sister was born in spring 2008. His mother speaks English and was active in a school committee during the 2006-2007 school year. He speaks Maay Maay, which is his mother-tongue, Somali, and English. Salim just turned eleven in December of his third grade year.

Salim was placed in second grade at Hamilton Elementary School the first year he was in the United States. He had to repeat second grade and did so with Kelly Gray. Malika and Alia were two of his classmates. Salim is also in Mrs. Morris' classroom for the literacy block, while his homeroom is with another teacher in Hamilton Elementary School.

Salim is a bit of a character. He is an agreeable boy, but easily distracted. It's difficult for him to maintain attention, especially during independent work time and he takes a fair amount of time to get settled and begin a task. Often during the independent reading time he is engaged in conversation with others, wandering around, or paging through books. Once he gets involved in a book he will read independently. He is

reading almost on grade level. He is quite creative in his writing, adding interesting phrases here and there to gain the attention of the reader. Salim often checks in with the teacher. He seems to be more motivated when he can share his writing with the teacher. He displays a great deal of pride when he has the opportunity to share his work.

Salim is very socialable. He frequently engages in conversations with other students and his Somali classmates know that about him. During one of our lunchtime conversations two of the Somali students, Alia and Yusef, were discussing the extent of Salim's loquaciousness.

Table 3: Salim Positioned as Talkative

Line	Speaker	
1	Yusef	But Salim on the bus, Salim on the bus, keeps on talking. He doesn't talk about my words, but he talks a lot.
2	Alia	Yeah
3	Yusef	He likes to talk. His favorite thing to do is talking.
4	Alia	Yeah
5	Salim	Oh, it dropped. [referring to food falling]
6	Alia	What is on this bread?
7	Mrs. Kosha	Flour
8	Yusef	One time when I was getting off of the bus, he was keep on talking and the kid was sleeping.
9	Mrs. Kosha, Yusef & Alia	[Laughter]
10	Salim	Can you believe that? I was quiet.
11	Mrs. Kosha	You put somebody to sleep? Talking to them?
12	Salim	Nah
13	Alia	Yeah. He talks too much. He's a talky talky...
14	Salim	So are you.
15	Alia	No I'm not a talky, talky. I don't talk that much like you do.
16	Salim	Yeah.

The students, Yusef and Alia, are clear about the extent of Salim's chattiness. According to them, Salim talks all the time, so much so, that he even put a boy to sleep while talking to him on the bus. Or perhaps the boy just fell asleep, but Salim kept right



on talking, not noticing that the boy was sleeping. Salim protests mildly to ask if I can believe that. A bit later when Alia describes him as “talky talky,” he doesn’t deny it, but instead says that Alia is also talkative. He seems to be aware of his propensity toward conversation.

Surprisingly, Salim is not shy about engaging others in conversation in spite of the fact that he frequently stutters. Often while reading aloud in a group or responding to a question, he stutters. Once, while he was reading notes to his fellow group members, he stuttered so much that it became difficult for him to get the information he was sharing to the other students. When I asked his classroom teacher about this, she said that she had spoken to the speech therapist in the school and the therapist made some suggestions to help him with the stuttering difficulty. According to the teacher, the therapist said that his stuttering did not require therapy outside of the classroom.

His peers were also very aware of his stuttering and Yusef made the comment, “He stutters everywhere,” when asked if Salim stutters in Somali (Focus Group Interview, May 28, 2008). During instructional time I didn’t see children making fun of Salim, but during one of our conversations Salim was disturbed by his peers’ laughter at his stuttering. Salim was describing an outing he took to a museum and in the middle of his story Alia and Yusef were laughing. Salim said, “See, they’re making fun of me” (Focus Group Interview, May 28, 2008). It took several reminders to get the children to stop laughing so that Salim could finish his account of the outing he took. Fortunately, Salim does not let either the other children’s laughter or his stuttering stop him from participating in conversations or the learning taking place in the classroom. However, it’s something that he struggles with. When I asked Salim at one point what he found

challenging in school, Yusef answered, “talking,” and Alia said, “He has trouble talking you know. He goes like ch...ch... ch...” before Salim could even respond to the question. Salim followed with, “Alia’s right” (Focus Group Interview, May 28, 2008). So while it doesn’t appear to stop Salim from learning and participating, it has potential to impact his participation in the classroom if he continues to stutter and if his peers continue to laugh at his speech.

Salim spoke about the subjects he enjoys learning including math, science, gym, math tutoring, computers and music (Focus Group Interview, January 10, 2008). Salim has some difficulty with math and receives additional assistance. He spoke about tutoring help that he gets at home from “Homework Teachers.” I asked him if he goes somewhere to get tutoring and he responded, “No, they come to my house and help me with my homework. And they sometimes do a birthday thing and bring presents for us.” As Salim described it, the Homework Helpers are college students from a nearby school, who help them with homework, take them on outings in the community and do special things for them on birthdays and holidays. Salim also has shown interest in higher education. When we spoke one day about the university I attend and how large it is he said, “I want to go to that one” (Focus Group Interview, June 5, 2008). While he still has many years of schooling left before he makes that decision, his comment shows that he is aware of the idea of higher education and perhaps his interactions with the Homework Teachers, who are college students, have helped him to be more familiar with the idea of post-secondary education.

Salim did not get in trouble while I was observing in the classroom. The most common problem he had was that he was slow to start his independent work, however

otherwise he did not disturb the classroom or behave disrespectfully. Sometimes Salim had difficulty on the bus with some of the other children. One day he narrated a story about how a boy had tried to choke him on the bus. In a very emotional voice and close to tears Salim said, “He almost made me kill me,” (Focus Group Interview, March 12, 2008) meaning the boy had really hurt him and clearly the other boy had scared Salim. Salim said he told the bus driver that he hadn’t started the fight, the other boy did, and he said he didn’t even fight him. Mrs. Nadif and I gave Salim advice about how to avoid the boy or other children who are bullying. However, it raises questions about how children’s safety can be ensured on the bus where there is only one adult present to drive, observe children’s behavior, and intervene when problems occur.

#### **4. Yusef**

The fourth student in this study is Yusef. Yusef is Somali and is not part of the same minority group, Somali Bantu, as is Salim, Malika, and Alia. Before arriving in the United States he lived in Saudi Arabia. He speaks Somali, Arabic and English. He is eleven years old and in the third grade. Yusef lives with his mother and father.

Yusef began his schooling in the U.S. in another elementary school in this same urban district. His family moved him to Hamilton Elementary School in January of 2007. According to his previous teacher, Kelly Gray, the first school he attended was not meeting his academic needs. When he arrived at Hamilton Elementary in January he was not much higher academically than when Alia, Malika and Salim had first started school. He was placed in Mrs. Gray’s second grade classroom. Mrs. Gray worked intensively with him on language development and introductory reading skills.

While in third grade he was pulled out to the English Language Learners class for the language arts block. This group had about four third graders who worked with a specialist in English language learning. Yusef is very hard working and doesn't give up. He was very shy initially in class, but Mrs. Gray said that one day, he dropped the shyness and just began talking. He likes to play and seems to be a very happy child. On the playground he interacts with lots of different children through large group activities such as football.

When Yusef was asked what he liked about school, he responded, "Reading, writing, social studies, science, music, computers" (Focus Group Interview, January 31, 2008). When asked if there was anything he doesn't like about school, Yusef paused for several seconds, thought about it, and replied, "Children that are not behaving." Throughout the year I never heard of a time that Yusef was in trouble with the teacher or another student. He seemed to get along with the other children both in the classroom and during recess. Yusef appeared quiet and calm almost always. He interacted and was friendly, but also focused during instructional time. His peers tended to agree with this but said that his behavior on the bus was not always good.

Near the end of the school year Yusef was taking a reading test with his ELL teacher to determine his reading level at that point in the year. She explained that at the end of second grade he was at a level 4. In October of third grade he went up to a level 8 and in January he was at level 10 (L. Brown, Interview, May 28, 2008). While I was observing him in May his teacher tested him for level 12 and found that he did very well, so she said they would go up another level to 14 to test him at that level. He passed level 14 and on the following day she continued to test him and discovered that he was actually

able to read at level 20, which is on average with the end of second grade. While he wasn't quite reading on grade level yet, he had clearly made significant progress over the course of the year. When I inquired about his reading at home Yusef said that he did read a lot at home.

## **F. Teachers and Researcher Profiles**

### **1. Teacher – Mrs. Sadie Morris**

In this third grade classroom there were several adults working with children either in the classroom or in another learning space in the school. The classroom teacher was Mrs. Morris. As the classroom teacher, she was responsible for planning the learning activities of the class and for keeping in contact with the specialists working with children in her class to be aware of the individual needs of each of the learners. She was in her third year of teaching at the school and had graduated from an education program at a nearby university. While she only had two years experience, she exuded confidence and knowledge about both the content of her lessons as well as the methodology being used. She seemed open to learning new ideas and was in the process of learning how to do reading and writing workshops with the children.

Mrs. Morris had a unique living and learning experience as a child. She lived for much of her youth in East and Southern Africa, where her parents served as missionaries during her formative years. Her mother home schooled her and her sister while also working out of the home in an outside organization. This experience had a great impact on Mrs. Morris' perspective and world views. She was very interested in creating learning opportunities for all children. While she hadn't lived in Somalia, she had an

understanding of the variety of ways in which culture and language influence our interactions in the world.

## **2. Teacher – Mrs. Nailah Nadif**

A second adult working in the classroom was Mrs. Nailah Nadif. She was one of the aides who spent 90% of her time in this third grade classroom. She worked primarily with the Somali students but also worked with other students in the classroom, as directed by Mrs. Morris. One of the points that came up during an interview with Mrs. Morris is that she was not used to having a full time aide in the classroom and was unsure of how she could incorporate Mrs. Nadif into the classroom. Initially she thought that Mrs. Nadif was only supposed to help with translating for the Somali students, but through discussions with the principal, Mrs. Morris learned that she was able to ask Mrs. Nadif to also work with other students in the classroom on whatever was needed. As the year progressed Mrs. Nadif could be found listening to students read, helping to lead small groups, working with individuals on writing assignments, and helping to keep students focused on the learning at hand.

It seemed that both Mrs. Nadif and Mrs. Morris were in the process of negotiating their working relationship. Early on in the year I would see Mrs. Nadif reading a novel on her own, while Mrs. Morris was teaching. Mrs. Nadif did not appear to be paying attention to what was happening in the classroom, although she may have been keeping one ear tuned to the lesson. At the time, it appeared to be a waste of a great resource to me, yet it did send a message to all the students of the classroom of the importance and pleasure of reading. When I spoke to Mrs. Nadif about working in the classroom she seemed to want to do more and be more involved. She spoke about the previous year in

which she worked intensely with the children and enjoyed being more involved in their learning. The impression I had was that she felt under-utilized but that she didn't want to step on Mrs. Morris' toes. My impression was that Mrs. Nadif was reading the novel because she felt that there wasn't a way for her to be involved with the students. When the issue arose during an interview with Mrs. Morris, I got the sense that she didn't want to ask Mrs. Nadif to do activities with the children that were outside her job description and that she was unsure of how much she could ask of Mrs. Nadif. Clearly it was a concern for Mrs. Morris because she spoke of having raised the issue with the principal and come to the realization that Mrs. Nadif could take on a greater role in the classroom.

Mrs. Nadif had lived in the United States for about ten years. She had previously lived in Canada and had resettled to a New England state with her family. She identified herself as being Somali, not Somali Bantu and coming from Somalia. Mrs. Nadif spoke about her childhood and upbringing. She mentioned the importance her mother played in her life. Her mother had encouraged her to do well in school and had provided multiple learning opportunities in addition to her learning through the formal education system. Mrs. Nadif identified herself as Muslim and said she had attended a Koranic school for a brief period to study the Koran. She said that it was common for parents to send their children for one year to learn the prayers and religion, but that she had not been deeply interested in it at that time. Mrs. Nadif spoke several languages including English, Somali and Maay Maay.

Mrs. Nadif had a close and positive relationship with the children. They respected her and she took their success in school very seriously. At one point I asked

her what goals and dreams she had for the four Somali children she worked with. She spoke with genuine concern, when she said,

My dream for them would be to say reach for the sky. I would love them to work hard, get a better education than their parents; go to the universities. I want them to be good. As much as I want for my kids; I feel sometimes I'm their mother too. I want them to have better life than their parents' family. (N. Nadif, interview, March 26, 2008)

Mrs. Nadif occasionally spoke of the value she placed on education. She mentioned the efforts she made for her own children and the way in which she encouraged them to do their best. Her mother's emphasis on education and sacrifice for Mrs. Nadif's success as a child is something that impacted her strongly and came through in her own interactions with the children she worked with.

On a visit to a parent's home I found that Mrs. Nadif knew the families well. She had many conversations with the parents, in person and on the phone. She kept in contact with the families and communicated messages that the classroom teacher was unable to convey. When we visited one particular family, Mrs. Nadif shared her views on having children. This particular family had about seven children and the mother was expected any time to have her eighth child. Mrs. Nadif had heard that the mother may be depressed. She encouraged the mother to not have more children because of the stress it would place on her and the family. She spoke about how it could be difficult to keep having babies. Mrs. Nadif was clearly more than just an aide to the children in the classroom. She saw herself as someone who after living in the United States for several years could advise the families and try to help to make their lives easier.



### **3. Researcher Profile**

I am a novice researcher just embarking on my first formal research study. I grew up in a small rural community in Wisconsin where the predominant occupation was farming. Following high school I attended a large urban university where I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education. I then taught fifth grade in a small urban Catholic Elementary School that was very diverse. Following this experience I joined Peace Corps and for three years taught at two teacher training colleges in Cameroon, West Africa. The teacher training experience led me to a position in Guinea, West Africa, where I worked with Liberian and Sierra Leonian refugee teachers and administrators to create a curriculum and develop training workshops for more than 1100 novice and experienced elementary and high school teachers. Following my work in Guinea I returned to the United States to earn a Master's Degree in Education.

I have a deep love of learning and of reading. I believe that every child should have the opportunity to learn to read, have access to books and information. I believe that being able to read will help learners to have more options open to them as they pass through life. Understanding the ways in which learners acquire language and literacy, the ways in which they use their second language skills, and the ways in which second language and cultures influence their identity are all areas I am deeply interested in understanding better.

My interest in the Somali students' and their families' experiences originates from my work in Guinea with refugees. I met several of the people who organized the refugee schooling system in Guinea from the very beginning. Their focus was to get education to the children despite all that was happening in their country of origin. Education is a

powerful motivator. These educators and parents committed all of their energy and resources to providing education for their children, despite the disruption of war. Students in the refugee system were greatly interested in finding opportunities to study in the United States, no matter what sacrifices they had to make. This drive to seek knowledge and degrees motivated me to examine how second language and a new culture shapes the identity of learners and to reflect on the experiences of immigrant children in the process of learning language and acquiring literacy.

When I learned of the large number of Somali refugees who were being resettled in cities across America, I wondered about the impact that such a transition had on the Somali community. I am interested in understanding how these major changes in their circumstances have affected their way of life, in terms of culture and the dynamics within the family.

It is important as a researcher to locate oneself so as to better reflect on the perspective I have and the ways in which my life experiences may influence and shape the ways in which I interpret the data I collect. I am a white, middle aged, female. I am married to a Liberian who immigrated to the United States and we have three children, two of whom are just slightly younger than the participants in this study. My oldest son came here to the United States from West Africa when he was eight years old and faced some of the same challenges of the participants. He didn't know English or have basic literacy skills. His only school experience had been in refugee schools, where resources were quite limited. I observed him acquire language and literacy skills very quickly, yet also saw him struggle to find his niche in this society. His experiences in the U.S. education system and the larger society are a motivating force for me to better understand

the ways in which the four Somali children in this study navigate this somewhat unfamiliar territory.

I do not have an intimate knowledge of the Somali culture or the language. The understanding I do have has been learned through the media, conversations with fellow students and colleagues, and reading studies and documents. During this study I found that communication with families was challenging, given that I do not speak Somali and many of the Somali family members do not speak English. Along the way I am sure there were likely cultural clues that I missed because of my limited knowledge of the culture. In doing my research I have done “member checks” with participants and Somalis familiar with the Somali Bantu culture to make sure that I am not misinterpreting cultural moments. I am an outsider to the community, and as such, there may be information, events and feelings that participants were not willing to share with me.

Since the site and teachers are all completely new to me, this also has an effect on the amount and kinds of data that I collected. Some of the information I gathered, is basic information that a researcher working within the institution would have as a part of their work knowledge base and would have a deeper understanding of. With all that being said, I made my best effort to collect data that would help to shed light on the questions of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS – DATA CHARTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter I have included eleven episodes that have been selected from the data. Each of these episodes was selected because of its significance. For each of the episodes I provide some context as to what the event was about. Following the context is a list of the participants speaking in the episode and the transcription chart which includes the statements of the participants along with the columns mentioned earlier – identity, knowledge, intertextuality/intercontextuality and ideational notations. Following the interaction is a brief analysis of the data presented. In chapter six I develop a greater discussion of what we can learn from the analysis of the data from each of these episodes.

To help understand the message units and the way in which the speaker delivered the statement, I have provided a transcription key which explains each of the symbols used to indicate the prosodic features of the utterance and shows the brackets used to set apart my comments from the participant remarks.

Table 4: KEY to Transcription

Symbol	Description of use
[ ]	comments or observation by researcher providing background or description
	pause - each bar represents one second
xxx	undecipherable speech
?	question, raising intonation
!	Stated with emphasis or enthusiasm
---	within word shows an extension or elongation of the word
<i>Italics</i>	shows emphasis on those italicized words
<u>Underline</u>	shows overlapping message units
ALL CAPS	Spoken loudly

### **A. Episode 1 – “Don’t Talk About Me”**

In this event we see the focus of the conversation falls under Alia’s identity as a student and in particular the focal point is in regards to her behavior in school. In this episode we see that the focus of the conversation starts out as a discussion about the next week’s schedule for lunch meetings and turns into a discussion about Alia’s behavior. The children’s aide, Mrs. Nadif, tries to get Alia to explain why she sometimes misbehaves in the classroom. After some prompting, Alia suggests it is because she sometimes gets bored, but Alia makes a commitment to be better behaved in the future. Yusef indicates that he is aware of Alia’s misbehavior and gets admonished for his intrusive comments. Mrs. Nadif tries to explain to Alia that when a teacher is correcting her, it isn’t out of meanness or dislike, but rather an attempt to help Alia. When a specific example is referred to from the previous day, which from Mrs. Nadif’s perspective shows disrespect toward the teacher by Alia, we learn that in fact Alia was trying to remove herself from a problematic situation so as to be able to avoid more corrections from the teacher and negative interactions with a particular student. This situation again highlights the need to look deeper into why children choose particular actions and to allow space for the students to share their reasoning for their actions. Perceptions as to why a student chooses a particular action may differ between the student and teacher. Having the time and space to discuss these issues may help to create greater understanding on the part of those in authority and the students.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 5: Don't Talk About Me

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
1	Mrs. Kosha	So next week we're not gonna have lunch.		Knowledge of the schedule and plan	Reference to next week's schedule and plan	
2	Alia and Yusef	Why?				
3	Mrs. Kosha	Because, on Wednesday I'm going to meet with Mrs. N. and then on    on		Knowledge of the schedule and plan	Knowledge of the schedule and plan	
4	Alia	What are we gonna do?				
5	Mrs. Kosha	On Thursday I have a different meeting I'm going to.		Knowledge of the schedule and plan	Knowledge of the schedule and plan	
6	Alia	You're gonna meet with Mrs. N.?				
7	Mrs. Kosha	Next Wednesday.				
8	Alia	What are you gonna do?				
9	Mrs. Kosha	We're just gonna talk.		Knowledge of plan		
10	Alia	Talk about...				
11	Mrs. Kosha	We're gonna have lunch together.		Knowledge of plan		
12	Alia	Don't talk about me.		Makes connection that teachers are meeting to talk about her.		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
13	Mrs. Kosha	Okay [laughs]				
14	Yusef	Why? Have lunch in here.			Refers to usual pattern of having lunch together	
15	Mrs. Kosha	Why shouldn't we talk about you?				
16	Alia	Because it's not nice to talk about other people.		Knowledge of good manners.		Talking about others can be disrespectful
17	Mrs. Kosha	What if we're saying only good things?		Suggests that there are many positive things to discuss about students.		
18	Alia	Yeah.				
19	Mrs. Kosha	Alright [laughter]				
20	Mrs. Nadif	Why do you think we're gonna talk about <i>you</i> ?! [laughter by Mrs. Kosha.] There's him here too. And Salim.		Reminds Alia of other group members.		
21	Alia	Because I don't behave.	Identifies self as mis-behaving.			
22	Mrs. Nadif	Why not Alia?	Seeking an understanding of why Alia doesn't			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			behave.			
23	Alia	Hmmm?				
24	Mrs. Nadif	Why not?				
25	Alia	Why not? I don't know.				
26	Mrs. Nadif	Do you know the reason?				People do things for a reason, not randomly
27	Yusef	Yeah, because she do things.		Knowledge of Alia's behavioral patterns.		
28	Mrs. Nadif	Shhh...I'm talking to her.	Identifies as the authority figure and the person directing the conversation.			
29	Yusef	yayayaya				
30	Mrs. Nadif	Yusef, calm down.	Identifies as the authority figure and the person directing the conversation.			
31	Yusef	Okay		When an authority corrects you, you acknowledge the correction.		
32	Mrs. Nadif	Why Alia?    There <i>has</i> to be				People do things for a reason, not randomly
33	Yusef	I'm finished. [referring to eating.]				



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
34	Mrs. Nadif	Whatever I do, I know why I'm doing it.				People do things for a reason, not randomly
35	Alia	Why?		Seeking understanding		
36	Mrs. Nadif	So...like, I'm giving you just <u>example</u> .				
37	Yusef	<u>Is that our folder?</u> [from a distance]				
38	Mrs. Nadif	You know you you misbehaved, why?	Seeking an understanding of why Alia doesn't behave.			People do things for a reason, not randomly
39	Alia	Because I don't listen.		Knowledge of what she does incorrectly.		
40	Mrs. Nadif	Why?    Take up xx				
41	Alia	I don't feel, I don't feel like it.		Suggests it's because she doesn't want to.		
42	Mrs. Nadif	Huh? Are you bored? Either you don't like school...?		Suggests reasons for not listening.		
43	Alia	It gets boring.				
44	Mrs. Nadif	Are you acting out because you you're angry with something?		Suggests reasons for not listening.		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
45	Yusef	Yeah, she's acting out.		Confirms Alia's mis-behavior.		
46	Alia	You shut-up.				
47	Mrs. Nadif	Yusef				
48	Yusef	Yes.		Responds to the call of name.		
49	Mrs. Nadif	This is the last warning I'm giving you.	Identifies as the authority figure and the person directing the conversation.			
50	Yusef	Okay		When an authority corrects you, you acknowledge the correction.		
51	Mrs. Nadif	What do you think Alia? Are you... you don't like something at home? At school?		Suggests that Alia has reasons for not listening.		
52	Alia	I like everything I do at home.		Knows that home is not the reason.		
53	Mrs. Nadif	Then...				
54	Alia	sometimes I just don't like the stuff here.				
55	Mrs. Nadif	Huh?				
56	Alia	Sometimes I just don't like here.				
57	Mrs.	It's not		Knowledge of		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
	Nadif	sometimes. Lately I notice it's like everyday.		the frequency of the mis-behavior.		
58	Alia	Hmm?				
59	Mrs. Nadif	Lately, it's everyday.				
60	Alia	I didn't do nothing today.		Knowledge of today's behavior.		
61	Mrs. Nadif	Not today, but before.		Knowledge of behavior on previous days.		
62	Alia	Yeah,   from now on I'm gonna behave.	Makes a commitment to be well behaved in future.			
63	Mrs. Nadif	Do you think what the teacher tells you Alia is that bad, she is mean or she does bad thing to you?		Knowledge that students sometimes equate correction with meanness.		
64	Alia	Hmmm?				
65	Mrs. Nadif	Can you tell her in another way what I'm saying? [laughter] [directed to Mrs. Kosha]		Recognizes that perhaps if it's explained in another way Alia will understand it better.		
66	Mrs. Kosha	She's asking that, if the teacher tells you to stop, like when I say, "Alia, stop doing that." Do	Re-interpret to increase understanding.			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		you think that the teacher is being mean to you because she's telling you to stop something?				
67	Alia	Yeah?		Unsure of her belief that the teacher is being mean.		
68	Mrs. Nadif	Because what I notice lately is you get mad when the teacher tells you to do something. Like the gym teacher when yesterday he told you "Alia, quiet" and you didn't listen and then he told you "go and sit at your desk." You moved your desk from all the other kids. That was disrespect. Why? Why do you think you did that? What was the reason?     Huh?		Knowledge of a specific example of when Alia seemed to disrespect a teacher.	Refers to an event from the previous day in which Alia was corrected and appeared to disrespect the gym teacher.	People do things for a reason, not randomly .

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
69	Alia	It was Melissa. She was bothering me.			Refers to the event from the previous day.	
70	Mrs. Kosha	Melissa was bothering you?				
71	Alia	Yes				
72	Mrs. Kosha	So you tried to move from her?				
73	Alia	Yeah				
74	Mrs. Kosha	So you... were you looking for a way to not get in more trouble so you moved yourself away?	Re-interpreter.			Children do actions that are sometimes interpreted as disrespect, when in fact they are looking for a way out of a situation.
75	Alia	Yes, so he got xxx				
76	Mrs. Nadif	Or were you angry with gym teacher?				
77	Alia	I was mad at Melissa.				
78	Mrs. Nadif	Huh?				
79	Alia	I was mad at Melissa.				
80	Mrs. Kosha	Mad at Melissa. So I think she	Re-interpreter, instructor	Teachers and adults may ask children to		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		was trying to remove herself from the situation. But if somebody asks you to stop doing something, a teacher asks you to stop doing something, it doesn't mean that... that's a that's a...it can be a good thing in the sense that they're trying to teach you what's the right thing to do.	regarding teacher's intention when they are correcting children.	stop behaviors, but are trying to help children in the process.		
81	Mrs. Nadif	Mmhmm... [agreeing with Mrs. Kosha.] it doesn't mean like the teacher doesn't like you.		Correction does not equal dislike.		
82	Mrs. Kosha	yeah				
83	Mrs. Nadif	It's like the teacher wants you to listen to her so she can teach you better.	Instructor	Why teachers want children to listen.		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		Because the more you listen to what the teacher says, <u>the more you can understand.</u>				
84	Yusef	<u>The more you can</u> <u>ahahah</u>	Listener	Awareness of what Mrs. Nadif is trying to teach.		
85	Mrs. Nadif	And same thing with me too.		Acknowledges that she is not different from Alia or that she is like the teacher who may correct Alia, but is trying to help her.		Adults follow the same guide-lines as children in some cases. E.g. the need to listen.
86	Yusef	Me?				
87	Alia	Yes you!				
88		Mrs. Morris enters and asks question about transition to next class.				

This episode begins with Mrs. Kosha explaining that she will not be able to have lunch with the students the following week since she has a meeting scheduled with Mrs. Nadif and another meeting planned for the second day she is at the school. Yusef suggests that Mrs. Kosha and Mrs. Nadif still meet and have lunch with the students, demonstrating that he finds these lunches together enjoyable. Alia is curious about what Mrs. Nadif and Mrs. Kosha will meet about. When Mrs. Kosha says that they are just

meeting to talk, Alia's mind immediately jumps to the fact that they will talk about her. In line 12 Alia says, "Don't talk about me." Mrs. Kosha asks Alia why they shouldn't talk about her and she says in line 16, "Because it's not nice to talk about other people." Mrs. Kosha asks if it's okay for them to talk about her if they only say good things, to which Alia responds, "Okay." When Mrs. Nadif asks Alia why she thinks we'll talk about her Alia responds, "Because I don't behave." (Line 21)

The conversation then transitions to Mrs. Nadif asking Alia to explain why she doesn't behave. Alia is unable to say why she doesn't behave in school. Mrs. Nadif offers her possible reasons including problems at home, boredom at school and anger. She explains that people do things for a reason and that Alia must have a reason for misbehaving. Alia then says that school gets boring, but she then makes a commitment to change her behavior and says in line 62, "Yeah, from now on I'm gonna behave." The teacher then gives an example of her misbehavior with the gym teacher on the previous day, when he told Alia to be quiet; she didn't listen so he asked her to go back to her desk. Alia then moved her desk to the other side of the room. Mrs. Nadif found the action of picking up her desk and moving it to be very disrespectful to the gym teacher. However, we learn from Alia that she had moved her desk not because of being angry with the gym teacher for telling her to be quiet, but because the student next to her, Melissa, was bothering her and Alia didn't want to get in more trouble. What Mrs. Nadif viewed as disrespect toward the gym teacher was in fact Alia trying to make a better choice so that she didn't get in more trouble.

Both Mrs. Kosha and Mrs. Nadif take this opportunity to speak with Alia about the fact that when teachers are correcting students it's not because they are mean or



dislike students, but because they are trying to teach the students something. Mrs. Nadif explains that by listening to the teacher Alia will be able to understand more in the classroom. At the end of the conversation we see that Yusef has been listening to the interaction and in fact seems to know this lesson as he starts to repeat in sync with the teacher in line 84, “the more you can understand.” Throughout we see that Alia finds his comments to be intrusive.

Both Mrs. Nadif and Yusef position Alia as misbehaving more than usual, and Alia accepts this assessment, at least for earlier times in the year, but not necessarily in recent days or on this particular day. Alia also makes a commitment to change her behavior in the future. She does not see her position as a disobedient child as an identity that is stable or unchangeable. Alia recognizes that she has control over this and sees it as an issue that is a school issue, not a home issue. Through the review of a specific incident involving the gym teacher we learn that what Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide, first viewed as disrespect toward the gym teacher was actually a situation where Alia was attempting to make a choice to avoid getting in deeper trouble, by moving away from a student who was bothering her. We are reminded here by Visweswaran’s insights about identity that, “identities are multiple, contradictory, partial and strategic” (as cited in Bhatia, 2007, p. 69). Alia was trying to make a choice that would move her toward a different identity than a student misbehaving.

We also see through this episode that both adults in this situation see this discussion as an opportunity to help Alia understand why the adults say and do the things they do, that everyone, including Alia, has a reason for their behavior, and that teachers are trying to help Alia by correcting behavior not be mean to her. Through this

interaction there were several moments where both Mrs. Nadif and Alia used terms or sounds such as “Hmmm?” or “Huh?” to indicate that they didn’t understand the other person. Either they hadn’t heard or the message wasn’t clear. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Kosha was asked to re-explain some of what was said to Alia and also had the opportunity to explain from Alia’s perspective what had happened on the previous day, giving Mrs. Nadif a new understanding of that day’s events and Alia’s reasons for her behavior.

### **B. Episode 2 - “I Just Behave!”**

In this very brief excerpt the students discuss their own behavior and behavior they had just witnessed while lined up to get their lunch. Just before eating lunch they had been standing in line waiting to pick up their trays, when a girl from another class started yelling at her teacher. The girl’s teacher was having the class line up to go back to their classroom when the girl responded with a barrage of comments toward the teacher. The group of students were from a special needs class; some students were physically challenged while others were developmentally delayed. When the student responded to her teacher in this manner I was surprised that her teacher hadn’t taken a stronger action, such as removing her from the class or taking her to the principal’s office, but as I learned from Alia and Yusef, this was typical behavior for this particular student. After witnessing this interaction it gave us the opportunity to speak about behavior and how Yusef in particular views his behavior.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 6: “I just behave!”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
1	Yusef	<u>Hel</u> ---lo!!! [Said very loudly interrupting Alia. In an elongated fashion while leaning over the table trying to get closer to the recorder.]	Yusef – member of the group, comfortable with group members. Making his presence known... identity as a person here who matters.	Yusef knows if he doesn't speak up his voice may not be heard. Yusef knows that if he keeps quiet the tape recorder won't capture him or his essence. He may or may not be aware of the perception of the intonational pattern of the “hello” greeting he used. The intonation of the “hel-lo” can convey sarcasm or a strong sense of, “you aren't listening to me, I'm saying hello”.		Words said with a particular intonation can carry specific meanings that the new language learners may be unaware of.
2	Mrs.	[Laughter by Mrs.	Mrs.	Through		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	Kosha]	Kosha comfortable with group members	laughter Mrs. Kosha recognizes that Yusef is not being sarcastic.		
3	Mrs. Kosha	[directed toward Yusef.] You want to hear yourself today? You want to listen to yourself? [laughter by Mrs. Kosha] okay		Mrs. Kosha takes Yusef's hello as a way of wanting to be heard on the recording.		
4	Alia	[whispering to Mrs. Kosha] Cause xxx he's not here.			Reference perhaps to another group member who is not present today.	
5	Yusef	That's why.				
6	Mrs. Kosha	You're usually so <i>quiet Yusef</i> .	Mrs. Kosha positions Yusef as quiet, quite unlike his entrance on this occasion.	Mrs. Kosha shows that she is familiar with Yusef's pattern of behavior in this setting.	Referencing past interactions where Yusef is quieter and more reserved.	
7	Alia or Yusef	[loud burp by one of the two students overlapping with above comment]		There were no comments or laughter by any of the children or teachers to indicate that it was		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				intentional or seen as a disruption to the interaction.		
8	Mrs. Kosha	[Whispering, xxxx] We hardly hear your voice. [said softly and lyrically]	Mrs. Kosha reinforcing the positioning of Yusef as quiet.		Mrs. Kosha references past interactions by the use of “hardly,” which is indicating the usual pattern of interaction by Yusef.	
9	Mrs. Nadif	Yeah, I know.     [to Mrs. Kosha, said quietly in background]	Mrs. Nadif affirms that Yusef is usually quiet.			
10	Mrs. Kosha	When we were downstairs there was a girl who was really misbehaving. And he was asking about that. [directed to Alia.] Did you hear the girl who was    talking rudely to her teacher?		Embedded in this question is the idea that if the students respond affirmatively that they saw the girl, then they are also forced to accept that she was talking rudely.	Reference to incident with the girl misbehaving when we were waiting to get lunches.	The idea that students are expected to speak to those in authority, including teachers, in a particular manner, one which shows

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
						respect.
11	Alia	yeah				
12	Mrs. Kosha	yeah?				
13	Mrs. Kosha	What did you think about that?		Mrs. Kosha knows that the children may have developed a feeling and opinion about the way in which the girl behaved.		When we see people's behavior in a public venue, we form opinions and judgments about whether the actions are acceptable or not.
14	Yusef	She always like that.	Perhaps Yusef is alluding to the fact that the girl is like that, in contrast to himself.	Yusef has knowledge of the typical behavior of this girl.	Yusef references past behaviors on the part of the girl that he's witnessed.	
15	Alia	She's like that.    She's she's always like that.	Alia confirms Yusef's statement. Alia also suggests a contrast of the girl's behavior as compared	Alia and Yusef are the source of knowledge concerning this girl's behavior.	Alia also references the girl's past behavior.	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			to her own.			
16	Mrs. Kosha	[directed to Alia and Mrs. Nadif.] I think she has a special learning need so maybe that's part of what was happening. That's what I was explaining to Yusef.	Mrs. Kosha positions the girl as being unique and having special learning and social needs.	Mrs. Kosha suggests that she has some knowledge of special needs.	Drawing on previous experiences with children with disabilities	Notions of what is typical behavior and what falls outside the realm of typical behavior
17	Alia	Yeah, she doesn't like listening.		Alia indicates that she knows this girl's behavior patterns and has seen her not listening on multiple occasions.	Alia references past experiences of seeing the girl's behavior.	
18	Mrs. Kosha	But what do you guys think... besides that girl, don't   you know think about that, but What do you think about behavior    in the classroom like with teachers and children?		Mrs. Kosha knows that the children have opinions. Mrs. Kosha knows that the children have been seeing behaviors in their own classroom that are acceptable and not acceptable.		There are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in classrooms. Children see this on a daily basis.
19	Alia	Don't know.		Alia doesn't claim to		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				have knowledge about behavior in the classroom. It could be she hasn't understood the question or isn't able to talk about it in this general abstract manner.		
20	Yusef	Good				
21	Mrs. Kosha	Good? What, what do you mean good?				
22	Alia or Yusef	xxx				
23	Mrs. Kosha	Like, are you well behaved in class? Yusef?				
24	Yusef	mhmm...	Yusef identifies himself as being "well- behaved"	Yusef as the source of knowledge		
25	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah? Why is, do you have any idea why that is?				
26	Yusef	mmhmm...I just behave.		Yusef knows that his behavior is good.	Refer- ences past behaviors as good by the suggestion that his good behavior	



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
					is ongoing.	
27	Mrs. Kosha	You like to behave?				
28	Yusef	mmm mmm [negative shaking head no.] I just behave! [a little exasperated.]	Yusef asserts again that he is well-behaved.	Yusef as the source of knowledge		
29	Mrs. Kosha	It's just the way you are.   [Mrs. Kosha chuckling.] Yeah.				

Initially in this interaction Yusef enters the classroom with a great deal of energy and exuberance and says “Hello” loudly into the tape player. He appears to be looking to call attention to himself or to announce his presence. He seems to want to be heard on the recorder. According to the interaction it seems that this kind of behavior is unusual for Yusef. We see that I position Yusef as being someone who is usually quiet and that today his behavior is atypical in that he came in and loudly interrupted the conversation Alia and I were having. When I recognize this unusual behavior, it is confirmed by Mrs. Nadif, who is sitting in the background, who agrees that Yusef is usually quiet and that we hardly hear his voice (Lines 6 and 8).

Alia, Yusef and I briefly speak about the interaction we witnessed with the girl in the lunch line. Both Alia and Yusef comment that the way the girl spoke to teachers is typical for her and that she is just that way. In their words, “She she always like that” (lines 14 & 15). We then transition to speaking about Yusef’s behavior. When I ask him about his behavior, Yusef acknowledges that he is well behaved in school. When asked about why it is he behaves, he says, “I just behave” (line 26). When probed further if it’s

because he likes to behave he says no, and responds with exasperation, “I just behave” (line 28). I then take that to be that he behaves because it’s just a part of who he is and say, “It’s just the way you are” (line 29). From there the conversation went off onto a different topic.

This is a very brief interaction, but it gives us insight into how Yusef views his own behavior and how he is viewed by his teachers. He seems to view his behavior as being a part of his make up. It’s not that he enjoys behaving, but it is who he *is*. It is a part of him. He seems to know himself and has a sense of himself as following the expectations in the school. In the same way that he described the girl from the special needs class as always being “like that,” he also views himself as simply having a particular identity as a well behaved child in class. In his view it is not because he wants to or likes to, but because it is his way of being.

How does this help us to understand Yusef and how he is viewed? We can see through this brief interaction that his teachers see him as being reserved and quiet. He also sees himself as being well behaved and sees it as a part of who he is and not something he is striving to do or something that he enjoys. It simply is a part of who is as a student.

In episode F, which occurred on the same day, shortly after the one above, we learn more about Yusef. As mentioned above, both I and the aide, Mrs. Nadif, position Yusef as being quiet and reserved. I state specifically, “We hardly hear your voice” (Line 8). In episode F, “I Know What I Know,” I will present evidence which highlights that Yusef is not afraid to assert his viewpoint, when he has a case to make. He is not hesitant to challenge the teacher’s statement, when he believes her to be mistaken. While

we position him as quiet and reserved, you will see another side of Yusef that shows his persistence. In this next episode you will hear from the children about what they identify as easy and difficult and how roles may change in some families as a result.

### **C. Episode 3 - “The Hardest Thing is Learning English”**

In this excerpt I ask the group about what is the hardest thing for them since they arrived in the United States. Alia immediately responds that learning English has been the hardest thing since arriving. Salim denies that anything has been hard and instead says it’s only been happy. When asked to say more he says that hitting his older brother who’s in fifth grade has made him happy. I suggest that it’s not a happy thing, and he reasserts that it is happy for him. Alia dismisses his comment by suggesting that his example is not from school, which she may think I am asking for. When I refocus the question to ask for something that’s the hardest or easiest, Yusef goes back to Alia’s initial point, that of learning language. He suggests that for him speaking English is the easiest, and then says, “Since I came here I didn’t even know not even one word.” He goes on to say that he knew two words out of thousands, in a sense speaking to how much English he has learned over the past few years. When the group is prompted further to speak more about how it has been learning English, Alia explains how her mother still does not speak English and finds it difficult to say large words. Alia says, “My Mom, oh my god. It’s for... it’s, my Mom, it’s hard for her to say even a big word in English. She only knows ‘Outside...’ [said in a sing song voice]” What is most intriguing in her comments is that Alia speaks about how she sometimes gives her mother lessons in English. Roles reverse in the family and Alia becomes the one instructing her mother about English. Alia then goes on to narrate a story where the classroom teacher,

Mrs. Morris, called to report on the fact that Alia had a great day at school. In previous weeks Alia had been having behaviorial problems in the class. Mrs. Morris planned to call to share the good news and speak with Alia to have her translate so her Mom could understand. However, the teacher called later than expected and Alia was already playing “outside”, the one word Alia said her Mom knew. Mrs. Morris then told Alia’s Mom that Alia had done well in school. The mother later told Alia about the call and said that she was proud of Alia. It is interesting to note that the mother, though her English is limited was able to understand enough from the teacher to get this message. At the end of this segment, when I suggested that recently Alia was having more “good days” she indicated that she was still getting in trouble, but “not that much.”

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 7: “The Hardest Thing is Learning English”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
30	Mrs. Kosha	So one of the questions I wanted to ask you guys is what has been the hardest thing since you moved here, since you moved to the United States?		Transitions can be difficult.	Reference to time spent in U.S.	Living in a new country can prove challenging.
31	Alia	To learn English.	Identifies as being a new language learner at			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			some point			
32	Salim	People... I only have a lot of happy things.		Claims no difficulties		
33	Mrs. Kosha	Okay, what are the happy things?				
34	Salim	Hitting my brother. [mumbled]	Identifies as a powerful sibling.	Claims hitting as a happy event	Refers to interaction with brother.	Conflict occurs between siblings; sometimes resulting in physical fights.
35	Mrs. Kosha	Pardon?				
36	Salim	Hitting my brother.	Identifies as a powerful sibling.	Claims hitting as a happy event	Refers to interaction with brother.	
37	Mrs. Kosha	<u>Hitting your brother is not a happy thing.</u>		Dismisses hitting as a happy thing.		
38	Alia	<u>Not in school</u>		Dismisses claim because it is out of school context.		
39	Salim	Fifth grader.	Identifies as a younger brother.			
40	Mrs. Kosha	That's not happy...		Again denies that hitting is a happy thing.		
41	Alia	M., Oh my god.				
42	Salim	It is for me.	Identifies being able to hit an	Reasserts that it's happy for		Sibling rivalry and

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			older brother as pleasing.	him.		conflict
43	Mrs. Kosha	No, what's <i>really</i> been hardest? What's been hardest or what's been easiest?		Dismisses hitting as an unwelcome response to what is easiest or hardest.		
44	Alia	Easiest...				
45	Mrs. Kosha	Alia said English is hardest				
46	Alia	<u>Yeah, whenever I come here, oh my god.</u>		Confirms that she feels learning English was difficult.		
47	Yusef	<u>Talking is the easiest</u>		Suggests that speaking English is easier than perhaps writing or reading it.		
48	Mrs. Kosha	Talking is the easiest?				
49	Salim	Oh yeah		Confirms that speaking is easiest.		
50	Mrs. Kosha	What did you say Alia? I missed it.				
51	Alia	What did I say?				
52	Yusef	Since I came here <u>I didn't even know not even one word.</u>	Identifies his knowledge of English as very limited on arrival in		Refers to arrival in the United States.	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			U.S.			
53	Salim	<u>You said that...</u>				
54	Mrs. Kosha	You didn't even know one word of English?				
55	Yusef	Actually two, I knew two.		Reiterates know-ledge of English as limited to 2 words upon arrival in U.S.		
56	Mrs. Kosha	So how has it been learning English?				
57	Yusef	<u>I'm talking...two words - it's thousands</u> xxx [unclear]				
58	Alia	<u>My Mom, oh my god.</u> <u>It's for...</u> <u>It's my Mom</u> it's hard for her to say even a big word in English.	Identifies as coming from a family where Mom's know-ledge of English is limited.			Parents know-ledge of the new language may lag behind that of children.
59	Mrs. Kosha	For your mom?				
60	Alia	Yeah				
61	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah				
62	Alia	She only knows "Outside..." [singing and drawn out] [Laughter] Sometimes I give her lessons. Sometime, not all the time. Yeah, she learned her b-c-d and stuff like that. She knows her b-c-d.	Alia identifies as a daughter who listens to her mother's orders. She identifies	Alia claims to have more knowledge in English than her mother.	Refers to times she teaches her mother English.	The roles of children sometimes change as they add to their know-ledge

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			as a teacher to her Mom. Identifies her mother as a learner.			base in a particular area.
63	Mrs. Kosha	Okay				
64	Alia	...but she doesn't know how to talk.				
65	Mrs. Kosha	Is she learning to read? English?				
66	Alia	No				
67	Alia	Last time Mrs. Morris called my house, called her. [sing song voice]			Refers to phone call from teacher.	
68	Mrs. Kosha	and talked to her?				
69	Alia	Yeah about a <i>good</i> report!			Refers to a report about her behavior that was positive.	Often teachers call to report negative events about the student.
70	Mrs. Kosha	Oh, that's great! What did... what happened? Was that last week? Or this week?				
71	Yusef	Let me guess. Your Mom...you had to answer it for her.		Putting together the information that he had about Alia's mother English ability, he suggests		



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				that Alia had to answer the phone.		
72	Alia	Mmhmm[no] I didn't. Mrs. Morris said, when you get home, Mrs. Morris ... remember last time, ah me and Em; when we had that...Where's my straw? When we had the good day in class, remember? She said that she's going to tell our parents that we had a good day in the school. So she said that what time did you get home so I could answer it and tell my mom that I had a good day in school. In school, so she was too late to call then I went outside to play with my friend and then she called and then my mom answered it and then Mrs. Morris said, "Where's Alia?" And then my Mom said that "She's outside".			Refers to conversation with Mrs. Morris and to a previous situation when she and a friend had a good day.	
73	Mrs. Kosha	Ahh... Good [laughter]			Refers to Mom's use of "outside" the one English word Alia said	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
					earlier her Mom knew and worked perfectly in this context.	
74	Alia	And then she said, “Bye,” She said, “I just wanted to say that Alia had a good day in school today.”				
75	Mrs. Kosha	So your Mom told you that?				
76	Alia	Mhmm [affirmative]				
77	Mrs. Kosha	Your Mom, so your mom understood a lot!				Importance of teachers being able to communicate with parents.
78	Salim	Wow				
79	Mrs. Kosha	That’s great! What did your mom say to you?				
80	Alia	That your teacher called and said that you had a good day in school; she said I’m proud of you.	Identifies mother as being proud.			Parental pride at child’s success.
81	Mrs. Kosha	Ahh... that’s great!				
82	Salim	Wow.				
83	Mrs. Kosha	It looks like you’ve been having a lot of good days lately.	Identifies Alia as being well-behaved.			
84	Alia	Not that much.	Denies being			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
			complete- ly well- behaved.			
85	Salim	yeah.				
86	Mrs. Kosha	No? You've been getting in trouble?	Questions whether Alia has been mis- behaving.			
87	Alia	Not that much. Now, today yeah.	Identifies as not mis- behaving, but not behaving perfectly.			
88	Mrs. Kosha	You did?				
89	Salim	This one...				
90	Mrs. Kosha	Can you eat a little more macaroni and cheese? Some fruit? Eat some healthy stuff.				

Through this interaction we see the children reflecting on what has been difficult and easy since they've moved to the United States. Language is at the forefront of their thoughts as being both easy and difficult. Alia stated that learning English was difficult and Yusef said that speaking English was easy. He didn't mention what he thought about reading and writing. He also acknowledged how far he had come from the day he arrived when he only knew one to two words of English. Yusef identifies as an English language learner who has made great strides. He recalls that he only knew one to two words of English upon his arrival in the States, but now finds it easy to speak English.

Alia alludes to how far she has come in learning English in that she now knows enough English to be able to sometimes give her mother lessons in English. We learn that Alia's mother knows her "b-c-d's" but doesn't speak English. We do not know the extent of her literacy in Arabic or Somali. Alia explained how she is the one to translate information from the teacher when the teacher calls the house so that her mother can understand what the teacher is saying. While she identifies her mother as being unable to speak English, she also narrates a story about how her mother was able to understand the basic idea of what the teacher said when she called. Her mother then told Alia about the teacher's report of how Alia had a good day at school. Alia identifies as both an English language learner and someone who is teaching her mother English. Through the narration of Alia's story we also learn that Alia has some behavioral issues in school and has good and bad days, to the point of necessitating contact between the home and school. She characterizes herself as still having problems at school with her behavior, but also as having good days.

Salim did not share any issues about speaking English as being difficult or easy, but rather he alluded to the family dynamics he is experiencing. He starts out his response to the question about what has been difficult with "people" as if to say something about someone or a group of people has been difficult, but then changes course to say he only has "happy things". When prompted to tell more about what is happy or easy for him, he said that hitting his older brother made him happy. While in this particular episode he does not elaborate, it seems that there is some sibling rivalry or conflict that Salim is dealing with. Through his statement and reiteration of the fact that he finds it gives him joy to hit his older brother, one can imagine that perhaps Salim is

feeling a sense of power or strength over his older and possibly stronger brother. For him this may be a sense of accomplishment and perhaps it is a place he is feeling that he can exert his control. Salim identifies as being a younger brother who is trying to exert a sense of power and control. He says that nothing has been difficult for him, but it seems that under the surface he is wrestling with issues in his relationship with his brother.

Through this brief interaction we learn that in some of the families there can be role reversals, as the children's English language skills may exceed that of their parents. The children become the translators for their parents when teachers call home. We also see that the three children in this episode recognize the extent to which their language skills have grown over the past few years. Yusef and Alia in particular remember how little English they knew and how much they've learned in the time they've been here.

#### **D. Episode 4 - "Duh! and Other Choice Words"**

In this section I explore the use of slang and swear words by some of the Somali children. In these four excerpts we see the use of terms such as "Duh!" and "frickin'" being used by the children. It appears that they know the meaning and use of the words, but appearances can be deceiving. Through this exploration of the use of slang and swear words several questions are raised about what is learned by the children in school, through interactions with peers and at home.

In the first excerpt, "Duh! A lot!" Alia use the phrase, "Duh!" to emphasize how much Salim stutters in conversation. She seems to use it correctly and meaningfully in the context of the conversation.

The second excerpt, "Are those swear words?" occurs on another day. We hear Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide, admonishing Alia for repeating a swear word that Alia had

heard earlier. A discussion ensues about repeating swear words and words that sound like swear words. During this interaction, Yusef asks repeatedly whether a particular word is a swear. Near the end of the exchange, when Yusef says he doesn't know what the word disrespect means, Salim calls Yusef a "faker" and it is mistaken by Alia as the use of a swear word against Yusef.

In the third excerpt, which happens minutes after the second excerpt, Alia is telling the group about the computer teacher and how he is going to bring in a paper in Somali. She uses the term, "frickin'" to describe his laptops and she is again cautioned. Yusef explains her behavior saying that she "forgets about words and uses it again." When I ask her whether she'll be able to read the Somali words she says, "Duh, I'm Somali!"

The final excerpt is taken from the following day when we had a discussion about inventions and glasses. When I tell Alia that she's lucky she doesn't have to wear glasses she responds with "Duh!" At this point, realizing that I've heard her use this term on multiple occasions and that she may not understand the power of the word, I ask her if she knows the what "Duh!" means when she says it. Yusef responds, "She doesn't know, but she says it." I then explain to her what "Duh!" means and the significance and power of the word. She apologizes and we move on.

These four excerpts can help us to see how second language learners can appear to be using and understanding words correctly and in context, but actually not be aware of the power and nuance of particular terms. This is especially true of slang and swears which are often learned "on the streets" or with peers. The learner uses them correctly but may not be fully aware of whom to use them with or the emotion and power they may

evoke in recipients. At the same time, parents who are unfamiliar with the L2 may hear the words, hear other children using them and may not also be aware of the significance or nuanced meaning of the terms. While some parents might not ever allow a child to use a comparable word or sentiment in their L1, they do not have the information to be able to guide their children in the use or disuse of particular terms. To compound the matter, teachers aren't likely to teach swear words or slang in a school setting.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 8: "Duh! A lot"

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
91	Mrs. Kosha	Do you know why you stutter?	Positions Salim as a stutterer.			Awareness of self.
92	Salim	No		Unaware of cause of stuttering.		
93	Mrs. Kosha	No? Do you stutter in Somali?			Refers to L1	
94	Alia	Duh! A lot.	Positions Salim as a stutterer.	Aware of the meaning of "duh". Aware of the extent of Salim's stuttering.		Use of slang.
95	Mrs. Kosha	You do too?				
96	Yusef	He stutters everywhere.	Identifies as stutterer.	Aware of extent of Salim's	Refers to other places	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			Knows Salim outside of school.	stuttering.	Salim stutters.	
97	Mrs. Kosha	I mean in every language?		Trying to clarify when he stutters.	Refers to other languages Salim speaks.	
98	Alia Yusef	Yeah.		Responds for Salim. Aware of frequency of Salim's stuttering.		
99	Mrs. Kosha	Oh you do? So sometimes it's because of, is it nervousness sometimes?		Responds to Salim, although it is Alia and Yusef speaking for Salim. Seeks information.		

In this segment I was questioning Salim about his stuttering. In this particular portion, Salim doesn't get the chance to respond other than to say, "No" in response to a question about whether he knows why he stutters. When I asked him if he stutters in Somali, Alia responds, "Duh! A lot!" (Line 4) She seems to use the expression, "Duh!" with the correct meaning. She is trying to express the idea of "of course he stutters in Somali" and then emphasizes that he does it "A lot!" (Line 4) Yusef confirms this by commenting, "He stutters everywhere." (Line 6) I then question whether he stutters in every language and Alia and Yusef both say, "Yeah." (Line 8) Although throughout this brief exchange I continue to direct the questions at Salim, he doesn't have the chance to answer as Alia and Yusef respond quickly. They demonstrate knowledge of his extensive



stuttering when he speaks in different languages and different places. Perhaps because his stuttering is so common and the children are so familiar with his challenge that Alia is expecting that I would also know that, hence the use of “Duh!”

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 9: “Are Those Swear Words?”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
1	Alia	He said it to me.			Refers to an earlier incident where a student said a swear word to her.	Responsibility for actions.
2	Mrs. Nadif	No, you’re learning bad words from the streets.			Refers to slang and swear words used.	Certain words can not use in school.
3	Alia	Me?				
4	Mrs. Nadif	Which is really...				
5	Yusef	Bad.		Understands Mrs. Nadif’s comment and fills in her thought.		
6	Mrs. Nadif	I’m so disappointed in you.	Mrs. Nadif holds high expecta-			People hold expectations for one-

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			tions for learners.			another. Certain standards are expected.
7	Alia	Me?				
8	Yusef	She's				
9	Mrs. Nadif	Both of you. Where did you learn this? I don't think you learned from school. Did you learn bad words from school?			Refers to where words were learned.	"Negative" concepts or words aren't taught at school.
10	Yusef Salim Alia	No				
11	Salim	Yusef always says that on the bus.		Knowledge of Yusef's language use.	Refers to bus behavior.	Bus rides have own set of rules.
12	Alia	Yeah		Confirms Yusef's language use on bus.		
13	Mrs. Nadif	You don't have to use it.				There's choice in words we use.
14	Mrs. Kosha	Alia, if somebody uses that word				
15	Mrs. Nadif	You don't use it.				
16	Mrs. Kosha	toward you, don't repeat the word. You can tell the adult that's with you that they swore at you.				Substitutions are made for

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		But to repeat the word is not good, okay? And sometimes people use words to <i>sound</i> like that word. Don't use those either. Do you know what I mean?				swear words which are not used in certain settings
17	Yusef	I don't get it.		Seeks more information.		
18	Mrs. Nadif	It's their problem if they're using it, but not xxx				
19	Mrs. Kosha	You don't want to, you don't want to repeat those swear words. It can get you in a lot of trouble.		Explains why not to use swear words.		Using some words in the wrong context can get one in trouble.
20	Yusef	Are those swear words?		Seeks more information.		Swear words.
21	Mrs. Kosha	And it's very disrespectful.				Use of certain words has to do with respect.
22	Mrs. Kosha	Hmm?				
23	Mrs. Nadif	Even you.				
24	Yusef	Are those swear words?		Again seeks more information.	Refers to words Alia said.	Swear words.
25	Mrs. Kosha	The word that Alia and uh said? Yes.				
26	Yusef	I don't get what swear words are.		Seeks more information about swear words, even		Swear words.

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				though he has been using them on bus.		
27	Mrs. Nadif	Bad words.				
28	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah,				
29	Alia	Yeah				
30	Mrs. Kosha	They're words that are used to insult people.		Explains swear words again.		
31	Yusef or Salim?	You did?				
32	Mrs. Kosha	No, I said those words, swear words, are words that are used to insult people. You know what insult means?		Further explains.		People use words for different reasons.
33	Yusef Alia	No, no				
34	Salim	Talk about people				
35	Mrs. Kosha	To insult, to talk about people in a negative way, to make people feel bad.		Further explains.		
36	Mrs. Nadif	Eat! You don't like it? And put your feet down. That's disrespectful.				Respect is demonstrated in many ways.
37	Yusef	What is disrespect?		Seeks more information.		
38	Mrs. Kosha	What is disrespect?				
39	Alia	You don't even know?				
40	Mrs. Kosha	I think you know.		Doubts Yusef's		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				claim.		
41	Alia	I know, right?		Doubts Yusef's claim.		
42	Salim	He fakes.		Doubts Yusef's claim.	Refers to previous contexts.	Honesty or truthfulness.
43	Alia	I know.		Confirms Salim's comment.		
44	Salim	Faker.				
45	Alia	Uhh [gasps] See?		Misunderstands Salim. Thinks he swore.		
46	Salim	I said faker.				
47	Mrs. Kosha	No he was saying that he's faking.		Explains that he did not swear.		
48	Yusef	You're just trying to make me in trouble.				
49	Alia	Yeah.				
50	Mrs. Kosha	Alia, don't put your foot on the chair, okay?				

In this excerpt, the conversation had already begun before the recorder was turned on. In explaining to Mrs. Nadif a situation where another student had said a swear word to her, Alia used the actual swear word. Mrs. Nadif was not happy that Alia had repeated the word. Mrs. Nadif told Alia how disappointed she was in her and that such language is from the streets, which is not appropriate in school. Mrs. Nadif said she didn't think the children had learned it from school and she emphasized that they should not use such words. I also explained to Alia that when she is trying to tell an adult about someone

swearing, she shouldn't use the actual word, just identify it as a swear word. I cautioned her about not using words that *sound* like swear words either.

Yusef didn't understand what swear words were, so Mrs. Nadif and I explained that they were bad words and words that insult others. He and Alia said they didn't understand the meaning of insult, so I then explained that term. When Mrs. Nadif told Alia to put her foot down off the chair because it was disrespectful, Yusef then asked what disrespectful meant. I was surprised that Yusef didn't know the meaning of the term and suggested that Yusef really did know the meaning of disrespectful. Alia and Salim agreed with me. Salim said that Yusef was faking it and that he was a "faker," which Alia misunderstood. She thought that Salim was swearing at Yusef. I explained that Salim was not swearing, but rather saying that Yusef was faking it and the misunderstanding was then resolved.

In this episode we can see that the adults present are informing the students about the way in which they may hear inappropriate language such as swear words being used and they are cautioned not to repeat those words. From the children's experience we learn that while they use the language, (e.g. Yusef using swear words on the bus), they are not sure about the meaning or impact of the words. When they are told that such words are insults to people, they don't know the meaning of insult. When a student is told an action is disrespectful, Yusef says he is unclear about the meaning of that word. Everyone around the table in that moment questions whether Yusef really doesn't know the meaning of disrespect. In listening and relistening to the recording multiple times, I now believe that Yusef was being genuine. I believe he likely had an inkling of what respect and disrespect meant, but yet, I believe he was truly seeking clarification.

One of the questions this episodes raises is that the children are hearing all sorts of language around them. How do second language learners get the meaning of swear words and slang? Do they have people around them who know the meaning and power of these words? When or if the students use these words at home, are parents aware of their meaning and do they discourage the children's use of such language? Children may see the impact that using such words has with other children and attempt to emulate their peers, without fully understanding the power of their words. Even in the discussion about the use of swear words we see that the word faker, used to describe one of the children is misconstrued because of the similarity in pronunciation of a commonly used swear word. Who instructs students in such language, especially when the parents do not speak English and may not know the meaning, use, power and consequence of swear words and slang in English?

In the next segment, which takes place just a few minutes later we hear Alia using pseudo-swear words, for lack of a better term. Just after having been cautioned about the use of swear words or similar sounding words that are used to replace the swear words, we hear Alia use the term, "frickin'" in describing her computer teacher's laptop computers. A bit later when asked if she can read Somali she uses the term "Duh!" to emphasize the fact that of course she can read Somali, after all, she is Somali!

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 10: “Duh! I’m Somali”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
51	Yusef	She has a friend. A friend, who’s a teacher. [laughter] He brings laptops. [laughter]		Knowledge of Alia’s relationship with teacher.	Refers to computer teacher.	Friendship. Teacher /student relationships
52	Mrs. Kosha	What are you talking about?		Seeks information.		
53	Salim	Mr. Frank				
54	Alia	Yeah				
55	Yusef	She said, “Oh my God!” He said, “Don’t say that. Say, ‘Oh my Allah’”. [laughter]	Identity as a Muslim.		Refers to interaction with computer teacher.	Humor; substituting words to fit another culture.
56	Alia	He called my Mom for no reason.			Refers to call home.	Teacher’s call home when students mis-behave.
57	Mrs. Kosha	Is he a teacher here?		Seeks information.		
58	Alia	Yes				
59	Mrs. Kosha	What does he teach?		Seeks information.		
60	Salim Yusef	Computers, laptops.		Knowledge of teacher’s role in school.		
61	Salim	And then laptops for team time.			Refers to activity.	
62	Alia	Yeah. His frickin’ laptop don’t frickin’ work.		Use of slang.	Refers to an earlier class.	Use of words that sound like swear words.



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
63	Mrs. Kosha	Don't use that word!	Monitor			
64	Salim	Woowww				
65	Yusef	She forgets about words and she uses it again. What is that word?		Knowledge of Alia's use of language.	Refers to Alia's language use.	
66	Mrs. Kosha	Sometimes people get in the habit of using a word.				Habits and patterns of language use.
67	Alia	Yeah				
68	Mrs. Kosha	You have to break the habit.				Habits are meant to be broken.
69	Yusef	Why xxx				
70	Mrs. Kosha	So he teaches computers?		Seeks information.		
71	Alia	Yeah . You want to see him?				
72	Mrs. Kosha	No				
73	Alia	He's gonna bring a piece of paper to read in Somali. [Laughter]			Refers to teacher's earlier statement future event.	Articles and papers are mostly in English
74	Mrs. Kosha	He's going to bring <i>you</i> a piece of paper to read in Somali?		Seeks clarification.		
75	Alia	No!				
76	Salim	No! Himself!				
77	Alia	Right. He gave us paper of Somali.			Refers to earlier interaction with teacher.	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
78	Mrs. Nadif	He did?				
79	Alia	In English.				
80	Mrs. Nadif	The computer teacher?				
81	Alia	Yes, Mr. Frank.				
82	Mrs. Kosha	Could you read it? Could you read the Somali words?				Read- ing L1
83	Alia	Duh! I'm Somali, I could.	Reader of Somali			Slang words.
84	Mrs. Kosha	Well does Somali				
85	Mrs. Nadif	There are some people who can't.				
86	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, the				
87	Salim	Yeah, Like me.	Non- reader in Somali.			
88	Mrs. Kosha	I mean it could be written in a different script too.				Lang- uages may use different symbols
89	Alia	Wrong wrong wrong.				
90	Mrs. Kosha	Is Somali written with the English, the abc alphabet?		Seeks information.		
91	Mrs. Nadif	Yeah.				
92	Mrs. Kosha	Abc?				
93	Salim	Mhmm				
94	Salim	People don't know how to say it, but she do.	Positions Alia as a reader of Somali.		Refers to Alia's skill.	
95	Alia	I got a big job for you.				
96	Yusef	What?				
97	Alia	How do you say abcd in afgambi?				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
98	Mrs. Nadif	Afgambi?				
99	Yusef	[recites the alphabet in Afgambi]				

This particular excerpt I find interesting and at the same time confusing. I remember at the time of the actual conversation not understanding what the children were trying to say and attempting unsuccessfully to get a better handle on what it was they were communicating. Even as I reread this transcript now, I am still unsure of what they were saying regarding their computer teacher and him bringing in a paper in Somali or about Somalia.

This segment begins by Yusef pointing out that Alia has a friend who is a teacher. There is laughter about that, but from the outset I am an outsider in terms of understanding the connection they reference. We learn through Yusef that Mr. Frank tells Alia, and possibly other children, that rather than saying “Oh my God,” they should say, “Oh my Allah.” From what the children were repeating it sounded as if it was something that the teacher was joking about with them. As I heard, it I remember wondering how their parents and religious leaders might feel about the children repeating that phrase. We learn that Alia says Mr. Frank has called her home, for what she describes as, “no reason.” (Line 56) Yusef and Salim state that he teaches computers and laptops. That prompts Alia to remark, “Yeah. His frickin’ laptop don’t frickin’ work.” (Line 62) I admonish her to not use the word “frickin’”, the same issue we had discussed earlier during lunch. Yusef responds, “She forgets about words and she uses it again. What is that word?” (Line 65) I speak about using certain words can be a habit and the need for trying to break that habit.

The conversation goes back to Mr. Frank and the fact that he is planning to bring in a piece of paper in Somali. Alia states, “He’s gonna bring a piece of paper to read in Somali.” When I seek clarification asking, “He’s going to bring *you* a piece of paper to read in Somali?” (Line 74) The children clarify and emphasize that Mr. Frank will do the reading. Then they further explain that he already brought in a paper of Somali that was in English. It’s clear from my next statement that even though Alia said it was in English I’m still thinking that it’s in the Somali language. I ask in Line 82, “Could you read it? Could you read the Somali words?” Alia responds, “Duh! I’m Somali, I could.” (Line 83) Mrs. Nadif helps me out by commenting that there are some people that couldn’t read Somali and Salim says, “Like me.”

I try to explain my confusion by saying, Somali could be written in a different script and then I ask whether it’s written with the English script and Alia replies that it’s written in English.

In the end, even when I listen to and re-examine what was said I am left with questions. The article that the teacher is to bring in to class seems to be written with the English script but it could be in English or Somali. There is also a possibility that the article is in English but about Somalia. In spite of all the questions and discussion, the issue never becomes clear to me, however it is clear to the children.

What stands out to me in this episode is the use of slang when Alia uses the term “frickin’” and “Duh!” She uses both correctly in context. While I am surprised at her use of the word “frickin’,” especially after we had spoken earlier about not using words that sound like swear words, I can stand back and realize that I never gave her any examples of words that sound like swear words and are used to replace them in certain

contexts. She knows how to use the slang words, but does she understand the power of the word? We don't know from the interaction if she realizes that it is used in place of a swear word. Mrs. Nadif doesn't make any comment about her using the word. Mrs. Nadif does hear other parts of the conversation, because she makes comments and asks questions at various points. Is Mrs. Nadif aware of this particular word and its use? Again, as a teacher, we can question how and when these words should be taught. Do we teach second language learners swear and slang words so they know the power and use of the words or so they can avoid them? What about when parents and even aides may not know particular words that can get children in trouble for using them? What role do schools play in shaping the way in which students express themselves? For me, these interactions have raised more questions than they've answered.

In the final episode below, which takes place the following day, Alia again uses the slang term, "Duh!" At this point I stop and explain to her what "Duh!" means, as I understand it.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 11: "She doesn't know, but she says it."

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
1	Mrs. Kosha	So Yusef, in your class did you do the, did you do the ahhh.			Refers to research project.	
2	Alia	Yup! They did.				
3	Mrs.	...the invention too?				Creation

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	What was your invention?				of ideas.
4	Yusef	Huh?				
5	Salim ?	Owl?		Aware of Yusef's research.		Animals hold certain characteristics; differs within cultures.
6	Yusef	Yeah				
7	Mrs. Kosha	What invention did you do? You used, you made an owl? What does the owl do?		Seeking information about research project.		
8	Yusef	Umm...it could see at night time.				
9	Mrs. Kosha	Uh-huh				
10	Yusef	And I drew a big picture of it.			Refers to project	Use of art to conceptualize.
11	Salim	Wwwhat's your invention?				
12	Yusef	And put on that paper that you can feel, like a glass				
13	Mrs. Kosha	Mhmm				
14	Yusef	Not sticky, it can go like that, I put it in my eye.				
15	Mrs. Kosha	Mmhmm				
16	Yusef	Then -				
17	Alia	Eyeglasses?				
18	Yusef	No				
19	Alia	What are you talking about then?		Seeks information.		
20	Mrs. Kosha	To make the vision good?		Suggests why.		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
21	Salim	Contacts. Eye contacts.		Suggests another idea.		
22	Yusef	At night, to see at night.				
23	Mrs. Kosha	Mhmm...Night gogg... like night vision goggles?		Suggests use.		
24	Yusef	What is a goggle?		Seeking information		Tools and inventions for tasks.
25	Mrs. Kosha	A google is umm				
26	Salim	A swimming thing.				
27	Mrs. Kosha	You can see people use it for swimming. They cover their eyes.				
28	Alia	Yeah, I know that!				
29	Mrs. Kosha	It makes a seal so water and air can't get in. Or sometimes people use it to protect...				
30	Yusef	Why do people have big glasses? Their eyes go like this...the <i>whole</i> place.		Seeking information.	Refers to seeing glasses.	
31	Mrs. Kosha	When it makes their eye look big?				
32	Yusef	Not not like yours. <u>It goes like this</u>			Refers to seeing glasses.	
33	Mrs. Kosha	<u>Yeah, but glasses like mine</u> , but then they make the eye look very big?		Seeking clarification.		
34	Yusef	Yeah				
35	Mrs. Kosha	That's because they can't see close. They can't see, like if they				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		put this crayon here and they want to see the color they can't see it if it's close. They have to move it far away. Those glasses help them to see better so they can put something right here and they can still read it.				
36	Yusef	But they have big glasses.				
37	Mrs. Kosha	It's call farsighted				
38	Yusef	One glasses is this much. This much, one eye.			Refers to seeing glasses.	
39	Mrs. Kosha	You mean how big, you mean how big this part is?		Seeking clarification.		
40	Alia	Yeah				
41	Yusef	Yeah, yeah				
42	Mrs. Kosha	It just depends on the style. Some people have that style of glass.				Preferences of individuals; styles.
43	Yusef	They look <i>so</i> big! They go like this.				
44	Alia	I hate glasses.				Dislike for glasses.
45	Yusef	When they close it...				
46	Alia	Why do people wear glasses?		Seeking information.		
47	Mrs. Kosha	Because they can't see.				Differing abilities.
48	Salim	They have problems on their eyes.				
49	Mrs. Kosha	You're lucky you don't have to wear				



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		glasses.				
50	Alia	Duh!				Use of slang.
51	Mrs. Kosha	Do you know what “duh” means when you say it like that?		Seeking information.		Using slang.
52	Yusef	She doesn’t know, but she says it.		Answering for Alia.		
53	Mrs. Kosha	You have to be careful how you say things because when you say “Duh,” it means you’re saying to the person, “You’re stupid.” Basically you’re saying, “Duh,” like “You didn’t know that? Duh!”		Explaining meaning and force of “Duh”		Use of slang.
54	Alia	Sorry				
55	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, I know you didn’t mean that. So when you said that				
56	Salim	She’s smiling.				
57	Mrs. Kosha	You have to be careful what you repeat. You might hear somebody say something but, that’s what that means.				Appropriate language.
58	Yusef	Number one, finish folder work and pass in. [begins reading assignment from chalkboard, which is at a distance.]				

In this episode we began by discussing a project the children were doing on animal adaptations. The children had read about various animal adaptations and how particular animal traits were used to invent certain products. The children had selected an

animal and used it to invent a product. I had asked Yusef if his reading group had done the same activity as Salim and Alia's. Salim or Alia responded for him that he had. I then asked about what he had invented and he spoke about using the owl and making goggles for it that would help people to see at night. The conversation also went into the idea of glasses, why people need them and being farsighted. When I mentioned that Alia was lucky she didn't have to wear glasses she responded, "Duh!" (Line 50) At that point I asked Alia if she knew what "Duh!" means. Yusef responded for her and said she doesn't know what it means, but she uses it. I then explained to her what "Duh!" means by saying, "You have to be careful how you say things because when you say 'Duh,' it means you're saying to the person, 'You're stupid.' Basically you're saying, 'Duh, like You didn't know that? Duh!'" (Line 53) She apologized and I said that I realized she didn't mean that, but she needs to be careful about repeating what she hears other people say.

Throughout the year Salim had used the word, "hate" in conversation. From the beginning Mrs. Nadif and I had admonished him and asked him to phrase his comments differently. We asked that he not use such a strong word and instead say that he "disliked," rather than "hated." By the end of the year the children were quite aware of this and they would catch themselves saying hate, and quickly switch to another word which was less powerful. I have no doubt that if Alia was reminded periodically about not saying, "Duh!" she would also get out of this habit. This raises many questions.

Who determines whether children in school use "Duh!" or "hate" or "frickin'" or other terms? How are second language learners taught the "inappropriate" words and how do they learn the power of their words? Who determines where the line is drawn in

terms of what words are considered okay and which words are not? Are second language learners always aware of the strength of the terms they use and how do we help them to understand those nuances? Do we assume that because they use some of these terms in the “correct context” with the correct usage, that they also understand the power of these expressions? When do students have the opportunity to explore the use of these words; does it come up in the classroom? Do teachers teach about these slang words? Is it brushed aside because of discomfort by teachers? This is an issue for further consideration.

The way in which Alia used “frickin’” and “Duh!” would suggest she knew the meaning of the words, but the fact that she used them in the presence of two adults in a school environment also leads me to believe that she wasn’t fully aware of the power of the terms. Bloome et al. write about the fact that because of cross cultural differences, second language learners may engage in activities in unanticipated ways. Bloome suggests that, “How we teachers interpret the unexpected behaviors of students may be crucial to a student’s educational opportunities” (2005, p. 32). In listening to these students’ use of language I believe it is critical that teachers and staff recognize that second language learners may appear to use terms and slang correctly, but they may not fully appreciate the strength and nuanced meaning of the words they choose. So while they are selecting particular expressions, it may not be the word or phrase they would choose if they had a full understanding of the term or phrase. Our response to an inappropriate term can be a simple, “Don’t say that!” or it could be an opportunity to actually teach the learner the meaning and context in which such a term or expression

may be used. These include actually teaching students about terms they may not use in the classroom, but that they're likely to hear on the playground or in the neighborhood.

Bloome refers to the “discourse of schooling” and describes it as “...ways of using language, ways of interacting with others. Values, goals, and resources that promulgate the culture of schooling” (2005, p. 53). Some examples he provides include, “raising one’s hand to get a turn at talk; sitting at one’s desk quietly; responding to the teacher’s questions as opposed to asking questions;” etc. The interactions above demonstrate the way in which this culture of schooling is encouraged with these learners. Certain terms are to be used, e.g. dislike versus hate, swear words or similar sounding words aren’t to be used in the classroom and feet are not to be put up on chairs. These are some of the ways, the culture of schooling is upheld in this classroom. Bloome et al. write, “Thus, the stakes for understanding and describing classroom literacy practices go beyond the classroom itself and open up key dimensions of cultural ideology, social identity, and nationalism ... and how literacy practices get played out, adapted, resisted, or transformed in classroom events” (2005, p. 54).

By correcting students’ language, expecting certain terms to be used/not used (e.g. dislike/hate, duh, frickin’) we were engaged in the process of teaching the discourse of schooling, of expecting particular terms and ways of behaving that constituted conformity. We were explaining or establishing what was expected and what was considered okay within school and within society. Initially I felt when I reviewed the data and Bloome’s description of the discourse of schooling I felt that perhaps I was not doing the right thing by discouraging children from using, for example, hate rather than dislike. Somehow this was not right and limiting, yet when I reflect further on it, I have

come to believe that it is a part of their education. Teaching the discourse of schooling is a part of the curriculum, though it may be hidden.

The children need to be able to conform to what society expects, or they may lose out in the long run. As a society, we set certain expectations; people who fall outside that realm sometimes are not able to achieve what they would be able to if they follow the norms of expected behavior. Is this oppressive? Is this limiting? It may be in some ways, but part of schooling is to teach children to conform to the expectations of society. Some would call it civility, mores, boundaries, or self-discipline.

As a parent, I would say that I do feel it's important to establish limits around the kind of language that is used in school. I set boundaries for my children. From the time they were little I set clear expectations about the kind of language we use in "our house." Other kids may be able to say "shut up," "you're a dork," or other such demeaning statements, but in our home I restricted their use of particular terms. Even by calling it demeaning I've set a particular value on the use of those terms. Other parents may not feel there is a problem with such terms and may not call them demeaning. That is part of the choice we all make in educating and setting boundaries for our children.

In families where the parents are second language speakers/learners they may not know the nuanced meaning of particular terms and slang. In a sense there is not a choice that they are making as to whether they allow such language, because they may not be familiar with the meaning and significance such terms can convey. This is the dilemma of what teachers face. Should we also be talking to parents about the language of school and slang and helping them to be able to guide their children in the decisions they make

about what kinds of words to choose to use? Where does the teaching end? How do we engage L2 parents in this discussion? How far does school and society reach?

### **E. Episode 5 - “He Has Trouble Talking You Know”**

In this episode Salim is asked what is most difficult for him. Before he can even answer Yusef and Alia respond for him that his stuttering is very difficult. Salim agrees with them. Alia give examples of his stuttering and explains that he stutters even in Somali. When Salim asks if he gets help to deal with his stuttering he says no. He’s asked if he uses breathing strategies and again Alia demonstrates this, but Salim says no. Salim does say that he would like to get help from the speech therapist to deal with his stuttering. He is then asked about whether his mother is aware of it and he says yes, because he was born that way. Through this episode we can begin to examine how second language learners and their families access special education services.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 12: “He Has Trouble Talking You Know”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
100	Mrs. Kosha	So Salim, what’s been easy for you and what’s been hard since coming to the United States?			Goes back to a topic that had been started earlier in the conversation, but that Salim had not responded to.	In any transition some aspects will be challenging and some will be easy.
101	Salim	Oh, [deep breath] eh				
102	Yusef	talking				
103	Salim	The hard part...				
104	Alia	Yeah.				
105	Salim	Shhut up [said very low]				
106	Alia	He he has trouble talking you know		Alia is familiar with Salim’s stuttering.		
107	Mrs. Kosha	Let him finish.				
108	Alia	He go like ch, ch, ch... [laughter]		Alia explains what happens		
109	Salim	Alia’s right.	Identifies as someone who has trouble talking, as a stutterer.	Salim accepts Alia’s explanation.		
110	Mrs. Kosha	What?				
111	Alia	Did you see that?		Alia points out how her explanation		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				was confirmed.		
112	Mrs. Kosha	You like to talk? So the easy part has been talking?		Mrs. Kosha missed Alia's point, perhaps from hearing Yusef earlier in the conversation say that talking was easiest.		
113	Salim	No, hard part		Salim counters her understanding.		
114	Mrs. Kosha	Why is it hard?				
115	Salim	<u>Like Alia said</u>		Salim leaves it to Alia to explain.		
116	Alia	<u>Yeah, because stopping</u> in the middle. He go like cah,cah,cah		Alia explains again.		
117	Mrs. Kosha	You mean because of stuttering?				
118	Yusef	But why does he do that?		Yusef seeks knowledge about stuttering.		
119	Mrs. Kosha	Stuttering, you know, sometimes, do you know why you do that Salim?				
120	Salim	What?				
121	Mrs. Kosha	Do you know, do you know why you stutter?				
122	Salim	Nah				
123	Mrs.	No? Do you stutter in		Mrs. Kosha		



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	Somali?		seeks more information about his stuttering.		
124	Alia	Duh! A lot.	In this exchange, Alia has become the spokes-person for Salim.	Alia uses the term “duh” to indicate the idea of “of course.” She also indicates knowledge of the prevalence of Salim’s stuttering.		
125	Mrs. Kosha	You do too?				
126	Yusef	He stutters everywhere.		Yusef also shows knowledge of the extent of Salim’s stuttering.		
127	Mrs. Kosha	I mean in every language?		Seeks knowledge		
128	Alia & Yusef	Yeah.		Demonstrate of Salim’s stuttering.		
129	Mrs. Kosha	Oh you do? So sometimes it’s because of ... is it nervousness sometimes?		Seeks knowledge		
130	Alia	It’s when he says my name. He goes like eh, eh, ...Alia! [laughter] Like that.		Provides another example of his stuttering.		
131	Mrs. Kosha	But don’t, don’t laugh at it. That’s ...I			References a	People who do

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		had a friend who had a stuttering problem. When I was in school I used to have a speech problem. Certain letters I didn't say well so I went to a speech teacher and she helped me.			friend's experience and her own experience to demonstrate empathy and understanding.	things differently can be the target of teasing and bullying by other kids.
132	Salim	Well, I want to go	Identifies as someone who wants to seek help for this.			Services are available in the school to support students . How do families access the services ? Who gets access?
133	Mrs. Kosha	Are you going to go to a speech teacher?		Seeks knowledge.		
134	Alia	Can I have my dessert?				
135	Salim	I hope so		Seeks help with the issue.		
136	Alia	Now?				
137	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah you did a good job. You ate something, much more than I thought you would eat. So...				
138	Alia	Are you going to eat this? Mmm, I love				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		my cake.				
139	Mrs. Kosha	Did Mrs. Nadif talk to your Mom about it? The stuttering?		Seeks knowledge.		
140	Salim	My mom alrrrready <u>knows about it.</u>				
141	Mrs. Kosha	<u>Your mom knows</u> about it? Yeah.				
142	Salim	I was born like that.	Identifies as someone who's had difficulty with stuttering throughout his life.			
143	Alia	Yeah.				
144	Mrs. Kosha	You always stuttered?				
145	Mrs. Kosha	Did the speech therapist talk to you about some things you can do to help you to not stutter?		Seeks knowledge.		
146	Salim	I didn't go there.				
147	Alia	Not talk too much [said genuinely]		Alia offers Salim advice.		Our friends offer advice. Close friends know both what hurts us, and also how to help.
148	Mrs. Kosha	Mrs. Morris had told me that she talked to		Offers information	Refers to a conversati	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		you about relaxing, and taking a deep breath		that the teacher had shared.	on she'd had with teacher about the issue.	
149	Salim	Oh yeah				
150	Mrs. Kosha	Before you, ... do you do those things?				
151	Salim	Nah [said definitively]				
152	Alia	[laughs]				
153	Mrs. Kosha	Maybe, try them, because that might help. I was talking to a friend of mine about <u>stuttering and she said..</u>				
154	Alia	<u>Before you talk you go</u> [she breathes in and out].		Alia demonstrates her knowledge of taking a deep breath to relax before speaking.		
155	Mrs. Kosha	There are some things that you can <u>try and see if it will help</u>				
156	Alia	<u>Try, say something.</u> [she takes another deep breath and laughs] Say her name, Mrs. ...tch...		Seeks to teach Salim how to take deep breaths before speaking.		
157	Mrs. Kosha	Kosha				
158	Alia	Kosha				
159	Salim	Mrs. Tosha [something spilled] <u>you just made me it.</u> [Alia laughs]				
160	Mrs.	<u>Focus on eating Go</u>				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	get a, go get a brown paper towel.				
161	Alia	[laughs]				

In this episode I go back to the same question I had raised earlier in the session with Salim; “What’s been easy for you and what’s been hard since coming to the United States?” (Line 1) The first time round he had said he doesn’t have any difficulty, other than with people, such as his brother. During this later interaction, we learn that one of Salim’s greatest challenges has to do with his stuttering. In fact, during this exchange Alia becomes his spokesperson and responds to most of the questions I ask. Salim does respond to some questions, but she demonstrates that she is familiar with Salim’s stuttering. During this interaction Salim stutters on multiple occasions. Often I and Alia either finish his sentences or answer for him. Salim indicates he is interested in getting help with his stuttering and would like to go to the speech therapist.

In this interchange we see how much the students know about one another. Alia is aware of the extent of Salim’s stuttering and frequently laughs at it, but at the same time she tries to offer assistance by making suggestions and demonstrating what he should do so that he doesn’t stutter. She is not mean spirited about laughing at his stuttering, but it raises concerns about the amount of teasing he may get from others who are not his friends. Salim, Alia and Yusef all let me know that Salim stutters in all the languages he speaks. Salim acknowledges that his mother is aware of his stuttering, when he says, “I was born like that” (line 43) and line 41, “My Mom already knows about it.”

In an earlier conversation with the classroom teacher I learned that the speech therapist didn’t think his stuttering was bad enough to warrant an IEP for it and she

offered suggestions for how Salim could overcome his stuttering, which she shared with the teacher. The teacher shared these ideas with Salim as well, but clearly he wasn't using or fully aware of all her suggestions. Part of the issue raised during the conversation I had with the teacher is that the speech therapist has a full schedule and can't accommodate another student. This raised a series of questions for me.

Clearly Salim's mother is aware of his stuttering issue, but is she aware of the school's obligation to assist him with the disability? How do parents find out about what services are available if they are not familiar with the system? How do parents advocate for their children if they are unaware of what services are available and required by law? If the school district has limited funds and is unable or unwilling to serve all student needs, what recourse does a parent have?

In this interaction we see the challenge that all of the students recognize for Salim, but what is less clear is how such concerns are addressed if the school is unable to address the concerns. It raises questions for us as educators about what our obligation is to the families we work with. On a personal note, my son has a learning disability. One of the teachers suggested that I have him tested and mentioned that usually insurance will cover such exams. I spent six months trying to find a pediatrician that could do the required testing and got the "run around" in the process. I then learned that once I wrote a note to the school requesting testing that the school was obligated by law to do the tests. I grew up in this country and went through the schools here. I studied education and am familiar with many of the processes. I speak English and have no difficulty communicating my concerns. It still took six months for me to find this out, because as one teacher friend mentioned to me, teachers are sometimes told not to mention there is

testing available by the district because of the cost involved to the district. I raise this issue because if it is this challenging for me to get the testing process started, what is it like for an immigrant family who doesn't speak the language, does not know the laws and is unfamiliar with the process?

#### **F. Episode 6 - "I Know What I Know"**

In this episode we see another side of Yusef. Earlier we heard how Yusef is positioned as being quiet and reserved. When Yusef learns that the music teacher was absent he was sure there would be a substitute, as usual. Instead, Mrs. Nadif was to substitute for the music teacher during the class' music lesson. Mrs. Nadif and Mrs. Morris had made this arrangement earlier in the day, without having yet informed the students. Yusef believed that they were to have a substitute music teacher as they had on a previous day. If you listen carefully you will see how at each turn Yusef tries to provide evidence for his viewpoint that there *is* a substitute, not Mrs. Nadif, for music. When he finds that Mrs. Nadif does not accept his view, he brings it to his teacher, Mrs. Morris. It is only when he is provided with a piece of the whole puzzle, that he fully understands the situation and accepts the fact that Mrs. Nadif is to be the substitute for music. While Yusef is stating his case for why he believes there will be a substitute for music, Alia is trying to figure out when she can take me to see her math teacher and how the fact that Mrs. Nadif as her substitute music teacher will be great, because she'll get to watch a movie.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

- Mrs. Morris (classroom teacher)

Table 13: “I Know What I Know”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
1	Alia	Are we [Alia refers to Mrs. Kosha and herself] gonna go see Ms. Matthews [the math teacher]?			Referring to a discussion Alia and I had earlier about seeing the math teacher to get information about a project they had done in class.	
2	Mrs. Kosha	Oh yeah, well   you guys are not, Mrs.   ah   Mrs. Nadif do you still go for the lunch duty then, since you’re doing music?		Mrs. Kosha seeks knowledge about the schedule and where Mrs. Nadif will be since she is now substituting for music, which happens after lunch.		The student s need to have adult supervision at all times, therefore Mrs. Kosha must be sure that an adult will be in the room with Yusef if she and Alia leave.



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
3	Mrs. Nadif	No I'm not xxx				
4	Mrs. Kosha	Okay so				
5	Mrs. Nadif	xxx				
6	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, yeah right. So umm				
7	Mrs. Nadif	I'll be staying here		Mrs. Nadif has knowledge of the schedule and how the changes will affect her respon- sibilities.		
8	Mrs. Kosha	[to Alia] So maybe what you can do is take me down <u>bef...</u>		Mrs. Nadif will be able to stay with Yusef.		
9	Yusef	<u>We're not staying here</u>		Yusef claims to have knowledge about the schedule and where they'll be going after lunch. He states that they will not be staying in the classroom.		
10	Mrs. Kosha	<u>before</u>				
11	Yusef	We're going <u>downstairs</u> .		Yusef again states his knowledge about the		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				schedule.		
12	Mrs. Nadif	<u>Why?</u>				
13	Mrs. Kosha	<u>You're not, no, you don't have</u> music today. She's absent.		Mrs. Kosha claims to have knowledge about their music schedule and where they will be.		
14	Mrs. Nadif	I'm your music teacher. [directed to children]	Mrs. Nadif identifies as their music teacher.	Mrs. Nadif supports Mrs. Kosha's claim and explains that she will be their music teacher.		Even though a teacher for a subject is absent, arrangements must be made for the children to learn during that session .
15	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah [laughter]				
16	Yusef	I saw yesterday a a teacher. Not, not, not Mrs. Lewis.		Yusef doesn't accept this claim and rather provides evidence of a teacher who was in the music		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				room on the previous day.		
17	Alia	[directed to Mrs. Nadif] <u>What are we, what are we gonna to do?</u>		Alia easily accepts the fact that Mrs. Nadif will be teaching them for music and wants to find out what they will be doing.		
18	Mrs. Nadif	[Directed to Alia] We're going to watch a show.		Mrs. Nadif has knowledge of the curriculum for music that day.		
19	Yusef	[not clear who he is directing his comments to.] That old teacher that we had.		Yusef still believes that they will be having a different substitute and suggests it's a teacher that they had before.		
20	Alia	[Directed to Mrs. Nadif] What kind of show?		Alia has moved on and seeks more knowledge about the music class.		
21	Mrs. Nadif	A movie		Mrs. Nadif indicates she has		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				knowledge about the plan.		
22	Yusef	The <i>Black</i> teacher Was in there.		Yusef continues to provide evidence for who was substituting on the previous day. He describes her.		
23	Alia	We're gonna watch a movie! Wooooo [Excited voice, almost giddy]		Alia continues to ignore Yusef's belief that a different substitute will be teaching class.		Movies as educational and fun.
24	Yusef	Miss, [calling loudly across the room, to the classroom teacher who's eating lunch at her desk and working] <i>Miss</i> [calling more loudly to the classroom teacher]		Yusef seeks out a response from the classroom teacher, since Mrs. Nadif cannot confirm his belief.		
25	Mrs. Morris	What? [in a high voice calling back to Yusef]				
26	Yusef	The black teacher?		He continues to seek information about whether the		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				substitute from the previous day will be teaching them.		
27	Mrs. Nadif	She's not here.		Mrs. Kosha tries to provide him information about her.		
28	Yusef	I didn't know her name. I saw her yesterday in Mrs. in Mrs. Brown's class. She was teaching...		Yusef continues to assert his viewpoint and provide evidence that he saw the substitute yesterday in the music room.		
29	Mrs. Morris	<u>The substitute?</u>				
30	Mrs. Nadif	<u>The substitute. Yeah</u>				
31	Yusef	Yeah				
32	Mrs. Morris	Yeah, I guess they couldn't get a substitute today.		Mrs. Morris provides an explanation of why there isn't a substitute.		
33	Yusef	Why?		Yusef seeks more information.		
34	Mrs. Morris	I don't know [high voice] Sometimes they just    <u>Can't get anybody</u>				
35	Yusef	<u>We had a substitute    last time   And it was the <i>same</i> as that lady</u>		Yusef provides more		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				evidence for why he believes there's a substitute that they'd had earlier.		
36	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, but maybe she's teaching at another school today.		Mrs. Kosha provides a reason for why the school may not have been able to get that substitute.		
37	Alia	[directed to Mrs. Morris] Are you going?				
38	Yusef	Oh xxx		Yusef, seems to put the pieces of the puzzle together as to why that music substitute is not in the school today, finally accepting that Mrs. Nadif will be the music substitute.		

How does this help us to understand Yusef and students in general? While the adults who have been working with Yusef for an extended period of time position him as being quiet and reticent, we see that given a safe space and the opportunity, he voiced very clearly and assertively his opinion about who would be teaching music that day. He

was not afraid to challenge the aide, Mrs. Nadif, or the classroom teacher, Mrs. Morris. He was not quiet about his views. It is important to take note of the way in which he used his reasoning skills, relied on his past experiences, and explained his beliefs. While each time he suggested that there was a specific substitute teacher coming for music, other than Mrs. Nadif, he was refuted. He persisted in his assertion and provided a description and evidence that he felt supported his stance, even though he was being told by three adults in the room that Mrs. Nadif would be the teacher. Eventually, he accepted the fact that there wouldn't be a substitute. Whether he was right or wrong doesn't matter here, but what is significant is that he continued to assert his beliefs and felt comfortable enough with all of the people present to contradict them. He felt strong enough in his convictions and his language skills to make his point. So while these same teachers have positioned him as being someone quiet and in the background, when we listen closely to the interaction we see that he actually is someone who is quite persistent and comfortable in challenging authority figures in a positive way. Yusef has a strong enough of a relationship with adults in the class to challenge their statements and the adults do not see his persistent challenge as a threat. They continue to try to help him understand why the substitute music teacher will not be teaching today. Yusef demonstrates strength and confidence in his knowledge of the patterns that occur in a school day. He recognizes what usually happens when a teacher is absent. Yusef relies on the evidence of having seen the substitute teacher just the previous day. He tests his assumptions with each of the different teachers to get agreement with his strongly held belief. Eventually Yusef accepts what the teachers have to say and is convinced, although it's not within what he has usually experienced. It seems that when he has the

final piece of the puzzle, that the teacher is probably substituting at a different school and that's why she couldn't be present, that we hear him accept this fact with an "oh." He then drops his cause and is able to move on.

In contradiction, we see his classmate, Alia, immediately accept the fact and move onto what the substance of the music lesson will be. She accepts immediately that Mrs. Nadif will be the substitute and is more interested in the fact that they will get to see a movie for the class, which for her will be enjoyable.

It's useful to reflect on why a student who is viewed as very quiet and reticent, in this case strongly asserts and voices his views. Why is it that he was so persistent and vocal with his beliefs here? Is it because he so strongly believed in his viewpoint? Is it because he had a safe space where he could voice his concerns and his voice could be heard? Is it because he had an audience that was listening to him and he could engage with the adults because he was not being overlooked or mowed down by other students in the class. Understanding the dynamics of what took place can help us educators make sure we are creating spaces where the generally quieter or more reticent students have an opportunity to engage in dialogue and share their viewpoint without being shut down immediately. This brief but interesting episode gives us deeper insight into who Yusef is as a learner and what may be beneficial to him in the classroom environment.

### **G. Episode 7 – “The Wedding Story”**

Many of the excerpts from the lunchtime conversations can fall under multiple categories of the social identities mentioned earlier. In this event we can see issues that fall under cultural identity, gender identity and family identity roles.



During this particular lunch time conversation, Alia shared a story about an event she had witnessed over the previous weekend. During the middle of lunch she had said, “Miss, I have a story,” but I had continued the conversation I was having with another student and hadn’t acknowledged her statement. Once I had finished the conversation I was in with the other student, I forgot to go back to her and ask her what her story was about. Just as we were about to finish lunch she again said, “Miss, I have a story,” and as a group we were able to hear about the event she witnessed over the weekend. While the story she told us about a wedding she had attended was coming entirely from her perspective, it was telling in many ways.

Through this event, I was able to see how expectations for marriage and following protocol are still in place for the particular family involved, although the family is living in the United States and not Somalia. It is apparent that there can be serious consequences for overlooking these protocols and that the lessons taught are not only for the unfortunate person who breaks the protocol, but are made public, for all to witness and potentially learn from. Additionally, we see from the students’ response to the wedding story that they feel something is amiss with the behavior displayed by particular family members. One more intriguing aspect of the story is what it means to “be *in* a wedding” and how the conversants may not even be aware that they are talking about two different concepts.

In this story, Alia tells us about a wedding she attended. The wedding was disrupted by the brother of the bride, who in the middle of the wedding pulls his sister outside and hits her for dancing with the groom. According to Alia, the bride had not gotten permission from the family to marry the man and the brother of the bride seemed

to be responsible for making sure the woman did not marry unless the family had approved.

Later in the conversation we hear a fellow student asking Alia about whether she was “in” the wedding to which she replies that she was. When the student asks what she “was” in the wedding, Alia seems confused and says that she was there, as if to say, what more is there? Alia seems to be unaware of the traditional American marriage customs and roles such as flower girl or bridesmaid.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Emma
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 14: Telling the Wedding Story

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
1	Alia	I got a story. [Said in a sing-song voice]	Alia is a story teller	Positions self as someone who has information that the rest of the group doesn't know.	Referencing a previous event	Information can be conveyed through story telling or event recall.
2	Mrs. Kosha	What's the story?	Acknowledging that Alia has a story to tell. Self as listener.			
3	Alia	ah..that ...I xxxx				
4	Salim	Alia's ugly...[unclear/un	Disrupting the story			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
		sure if said ugly] he laughs. [Disruptive behavior is not acknowledged by the group.]				
5	Alia	On Friday, I went to Maine. When I...Saturday Saturday night I went to a wedding. When I went to go to the wedding...				References concept of wedding .
6	Salim	SO BORING [In a sing-song voice and loud. In spite of being louder and more intrusive the repeated attempt at disruption is not acknowledged by group members. Alia continues to hold the floor.]	Disrupting the story	Knowledge of the use of the word “boring” to dismiss a person’s actions/ words.		
7	Alia	something really, really, really [said with rising intonation] sad happened.	Empathetic to the person involved in the incident.			
8	Yusef	What?	Positions self as listener acknowledges Alia as story teller.			
9	Mrs. Kosha	What happened?	Listener			
10	Alia	The <i>girl</i> that was getting <i>married</i> .	Positions self as		Reference to	Concept of

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
		You know like there's like there's two - - - -...	knowing what happens in a marriage and suggests that others in the group know too.		the wedding she attended.	marriage and a process that people are familiar with (you know how there's two...)
11	Yusef	xxxx [Somali ?]laughter	Suggests...			
12	Alia	Uh-uh Xxx [Somali ?] laughter	Denies this suggestion.			
13	Mrs. Kosha	shh. [toward disruption to story]	Positions self as monitor to focus students on Alia and bring the story back to the forefront.			
14	Alia	Brother came, because she was dancing with her... the one she was getting married to. So her brother didn't want for her to dance with any...[laughter... ] he took her outside and <i>smacked</i> her.. [Children all start laughing hard including Alia.]	Identity as a graphic story teller with something astounding and surprising to share.		Refer-ence to common actions at a wedding including dancing.	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
15	Mrs. Kosha	That's not funny, That's not funny! [Said with more emphasis]	Plays role of monitor of appropriate behavior.			References appropriate response to story.
16	Alia	That boy is crazy!		Knowledge of what is appropriate or acceptable .		References what is usual and unusual behavior at a wedding. Falls in realm of unusual.
17	Mrs. Kosha	But why did he, he hit her?	Listener and questioner; trying to understand why brother would hit sister at a wedding.			
18	Alia	Yeah. Bow!				
19	Mrs. Kosha	Because he didn't want her to dance? Was she supposed to dance with her husband?	Learner, still trying to understand why a brother would hit his sister at her wedding.	Suggesting possible reasons for why the brother may have hit her. Questioning what may have been inappropriate		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
				behavior in this culture. Questioning if bride did something culturally inappropriate to receive such a response.		
20	Alia	Yes. [unsure which question she was responding to, but likely the second one.]				
21	Yusef	Yeah. That boy is crazy!		Confirms Alia's suggestion that the boy is out of line from what is appropriate.		
22	Salim	He took her out. And then he...	Listener and reteller of story. No longer boring. Engaged listener. Still trying to take the floor, but unsuccessful as it's clearly Alia's story.			
23	Alia	But somebody started going over	Retakes story telling			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
		there...	role.			
24	Mrs. Kosha	Did somebody help her?	Questioner		Refer-ences what happens in a situation where someone is attacked.	
25	Alia	Yeah, she was crying.[very sad voice; empathetic]	Empathizer			
26	Mrs. Kosha	Maybe her family helped her?			Refer-encing who may help her.	
27	Alia	Yeah, they didn't want...				
28	Emma	Alia, were you in the wedding?	Interrupts to question Alia about her role.			Refer-ences that in wed-dings some people have particu-lar roles and are "in" the wed-ding, having a greater role than just an observer .
29	Mrs.	Just wait, let her	Refocusing		Stories	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	finish.	on Alia finishing what she was saying and completing the whole story.		have endings.	
30	Alia	They didn't wanted the, like, the, anyways they didn't want the wedding. They didn't even say yes or no. So they just cut into the wedding. Her brother didn't want the wedding so he just took her outside and <i>smacked</i> her.	Identifies self as a witness to an assault.	Knowledge of the family's interests. Reiterates reason for the brother's assault on his sister. Suggests that there was a way for the family to permit or forbid to the wedding without handling the event in this way.		References what families usually do in weddings. They "didn't even say yes or no" which is unusual. The notion of how one refuses a marriage proposal or how one gets acceptance from a family for a marriage proposal. There are acceptable ways that marriage interests are handled between families. Marriage



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
						is between families, not individuals. Marriage protocols hold true, even though country of residence has changed.
31	Mrs. Kosha	ohh...hmm...	listener			
32	Emma	Alia, were you in the wedding?	Questioner	Suggests a knowledge of familiarity with common western wedding practices. Some people have particular roles in wedding ceremonies and receptions .	Reference to roles in the wedding.	
33	Alia	Yeah.				
34	Emma	What were you?	Questioner, seeking specific role Alia played.			
35	Alia	watching [rising intonation]		Attending a wedding and		There are specific

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
				watching is being a part of the wedding. Shows unfamiliarity with specific roles at “western” weddings.		roles that people play in weddings.
36	Yusef	I want to know what were they doing.	Possibly questions what the brother or family was doing and why they did it.		References the incident described .	
37	Salim	Yeah, was it like this...ha, ha, ha...	Attempts to take on retelling the incident and questions what happened.		References the incident described .	
38	Mrs. Nadif	The kids are here.	Monitors the actions of students	Knowledge of schedule and appropriate behavior		References appropriate behavior when the class is present. Hints at or signals expectations for behavior
39	Mrs. Kosha	okay, shhh..sit down at your chair. Thank you.	Monitors behavior of students	References expected	References future	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
		I will see you guys tomorrow.		behavior; demonstrates knowledge of schedule	meetings.	
40	Mrs. Kosha	(To Mrs. Nadif) That's interesting.				
41	Mrs. Nadif	What was that?				
42	Mrs. Kosha	So she said she went to a wedding. And the brother.. she didn't say yes or no, but the girl was dancing, with...				
43	Mrs. Nadif	with the husband?				
44	Mrs. Kosha	her husband to be. And then the brother took her, the girl, outside and smacked her... and hit her. And then they're going to still continue or start the wedding all over again another time. So apparently the family hadn't agreed to the marriage.				
45	Mrs. Nadif	Ohh--				

During this interaction, Alia positions herself as a storyteller, as someone with something important to say. She begins by announcing that she has a story (line 1). The

researcher acknowledges her role as story teller and asks her about the story she has to tell. One of the group members, Salim, makes an attempt to disrupt, change or overtake the story by calling Alia ugly and by saying that the story she was telling was boring. He was unable to sway Alia or the other members from the story she had to tell.

Alia narrates the story about the wedding of two Somalis that she attended the previous weekend in Maine. As she explains it, the bride and groom were dancing when the bride's brother took his sister outside and hit her (line 14 and 30). The group members' response to the initial statement was laughter. It's unclear why they laughed, whether it was a result of nervousness, discomfort, surprise or the way in which Alia described it. The researcher attempts to stop the laughter by stating that it's not funny. An attempt is made on the part of the researcher to understand why the bride was hit; was the action taken because the bride did something inappropriate or for another reason. Alia explains that the family hadn't agreed to the wedding, so the brother was interrupting the wedding. Alia demonstrates empathy for the bride through her tone of voice and words, "Yeah, she was crying. [Very sad voice; empathetic]" (line 25). Alia calls the brother "crazy" (line 16) thereby suggesting that his behavior was out of line and inappropriate. She indicates that although the family had not agreed to the wedding, they could have said yes or no earlier, rather than handling it the way it was by the brother. In line 30 she says, "They didn't wanted the, like, the, anyways they didn't want the wedding. They didn't even say yes or no. So they just cut into the wedding. "

One of the group members asks Alia if she was "in" the wedding. Alia responds that she was, but when asked what role she played she responds that she watched. It appears that she is perhaps unfamiliar with "western" roles, such as flower girl, in a

wedding or considers watching the wedding as being a participant and being “in” the wedding. The interaction comes to a close when the rest of the class comes to the classroom for the next lesson.

From this interaction there are several points that help us to understand the children involved. Firstly, Alia, had this story to tell earlier during the lunch hour. The first time she was denied the chance to tell the story. However, she persisted and before the lunch ended she again emphasized that she had a story to share. This is in a sense the heart of this dissertation. Each of these children have stories to tell – their personal stories, their experiences, their understanding of the world and the role they have in it. Providing time and space for them to tell their stories and share their perspectives is an essential aspect of the educational process. It is educational for all involved, including fellow Somali students, peers, and teachers.

Alia positioned herself as a storyteller and the rest of the group acknowledged that role. She and the group saw Alia as having something valuable to share and although there was some resistance by one member initially, it became evident that he also was involved and interested in the story.

We also see that events with the Somali community are an important and influential part of these children’s lives. Alia’s family traveled a fair distance to attend the wedding in order to participate. It took an effort to get to the wedding, and clearly it was an important event in their lives to make such an effort. The actions of the brother became a learning point for all who witnessed or heard about it. At the same time the children found that the brother’s behavior was unacceptable. Yusef and Alia referred to him as crazy, indicating that what he had done was out of the usual response to such a

situation. It's also important to note that it was a brother who did this, not the bride's mother, father or other family member. It leaves us to wonder what their response was to the wedding, to the bride's actions and to the brother's actions.

This event leaves some unanswered questions including, what made the children laugh when Alia described how the girl got hit? Were they laughing because of the way she described it, because it seemed like a cartoon to them, because of nervousness or discomfort with her getting hit or some other reason? This story demonstrates the way in which Alia is experiencing these two cultures. She brings this story from her experiences in the Somali community. Alia is interested in sharing the events she witnessed, at the same time she seems disturbed by the way in which the brother of the bride and the family handled the situation. In the Somali community it may have been acceptable to halt the wedding abruptly, until the family could come to an agreement, but Alia expresses her dissatisfaction with the way in which it was handled.

#### **H. Episode 8 - "Do You Know Me?"**

At the end of this day's lunch, Mrs. Nadif and I were busy talking about plans for an end of the year picnic or get together with the children. It was one of the last days that we would be meeting for lunch, so the children were familiar with the tape recorder, the routine and me. While Mrs. Nadif and I were planning, the children were eating the rest of their lunch, engaging in their own conversation and getting silly. Mrs. Nadif and I didn't pay much attention to them at the time. Within the students' conversation there are two statements that are said that I find fascinating. I don't know the full meaning or context of what was said, but each of the statements stand out. The first statement which stands out is when Alia says, "I hate myself." The comment comes as a surprise. It's not

clear why Alia says this, but perhaps it is because one of the children, Yusef seems to be teasing her about the way she was drinking her juice or opening a package on her tray. The reason for such a strong statement is not obvious. Nonetheless, it is there and it is clearly said.

The second comment that stands out is when Yusef very politely asks about a piece of the recorder, wondering what the microphone is. After being told it is the part that captures the voice he speaks very loudly and slowly into the recorder and is somewhat silly. He then proceeds to give his full name very formally yet still with a silly high pitched voice as if he's speaking to an audience. Yusef then says, "Do you know me? Because I know you!" The other children find this very amusing, while the two adults seem to be unaware of the conversation and are engaged in their own discussion. I have opted to not include the adults' chat as I believe it takes away from the ongoing conversation that the children are having and does not add helpful information.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 15: "Do You Know Me?"

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
162	Students	[laughter]				
163	Yusef	This is that idiot face. Like this. It's not going to open easily. [Showing how Alia was opening one of the packages or a	Playing the part of a jokester and imitator.	Observed Alia and imitates how she opened a package.	References how Alia opened her package	Humor is sometimes at the ex-

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		juice box from lunch.]			or juice.	pense of others' feelings.
164	Alia	That's what I did!				
165	Yusef	No you were eating it. You were doing this! Mm ah mmm... you swallowed it. [laughter]	Playing the part of a jokester and imitator.			
166	Alia	Can we...				
167		[more laughter]				
168	Salim	What?				
169	Alia	Oh yeah. [laughter]				
170	Yusef	Wha..tt?				
171	Salim	Oh Yusef! Can you ...				
172	Yusef	Nah ah				
173	Alia	He likes the xxx [box?].		Perhaps Alia is trying to get back at Yusef for his imitation of her.		When an individual is the target of someone's joke, he/she may try to even the score.
174	Yusef	Nah ah, see? [laughter]				
175	Salim	I like xxx				
176	Alia	I hate myself				Teasing by peers can cause some



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
						children to direct anger toward self.
177	Yusef	Okay, what about this? What about this? [Laughter]	Yusef again plays the jokester.			
178	Salim	No one's up there.				
179	Alia	I don't know.				
180	Yusef	Excuse me, what is this? [directed at adults, points to the microphone on the tape-recorder]		Unaware of the part of the tape-recorder.		
181	Alia	Radio				
182	Yusef	I think that's going like that. oh, oh				
183	Mrs. Kosha	That's getting the voice. That's getting the voice				
184	Yusef	HELLL-OOO [very loudly] [laughter] MY – NAME - IS – YUSEF - ABDOU - HASSAN. [high squeaky voice, loudly, slowly and clearly] DO YOU KNOW ME? BECAUSE I KNOW YOU!	Again jokes around about the recorder.	Knows that someone will be listening to the tape. Wants to speak loudly and clearly for the person to understand him. It's not clear if he knows who will be listening, Mrs. Kosha or someone else.		Members of minority and majority groups experience the world differently. Often we hear how minority groups need to be

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
						able to operate and know how both their minority group and the majority group function, in order to survive .
185	Students	[Laughter]				
186	Salim	Don't answer				

As I listened over and over to this tape and considered what lessons I could glean from these two statements, I came to realize that the source of Alia's strong statement saying, "I hate myself," (line 15) was likely prompted by Yusef's teasing of Alia about the way in which she was drinking her beverage at lunch. He mimicked the way she opened the package and consumed the beverage. While Alia tried to get a comment back at Yusef about him liking the juice box, it was an unsuccessful attempt. When Salim said he liked something, I was unable to make out what he said. Alia's response was to say that she hated herself. Usually Alia is seen as having a tough exterior and not letting comments or actions get to her, but in this case, she appears to have felt the sting of Yusef's barb.

We also see in Yusef a side of him that is not usually apparent. As mentioned earlier, Yusef is viewed as quiet, reticent, respectful and in the background. In this episode Yusef is very vocal and leading the conversation. As each segment of the conversation ends he starts it up again, usually by poking fun and being silly. He seems to be in a very happy mood and is making many jokes, at which the other children continually laugh.

At the very end of this episode, Yusef asks about a piece of the tape recorder and learns that it is where the voice is captured for the recording. He then speaks directly into the microphone in a very slow, clear and loud voice. Yusef introduces himself to whoever the listener might be by providing his full name, “Yusef Abdou Hassan” (line 23). He ends by saying, “Do you know me? Because I know you!” This statement struck me so strongly because of the way in which Yusef was so clear about pronouncing his name so that anyone could understand it. Much of the previous conversation with the other children had been difficult to transcribe because it was bits and pieces, but this particular comment was loud and clear. He introduced himself and wanted to make sure that the listener knew exactly who he is. The final comment also raises many questions both about what he might have meant by those comments, what was going through his head and by considering what the statements might mean as we consider how these Somali immigrant children, members of a minority group negotiate the world they live in. We can consider that perhaps Yusef wants to be recognized, acknowledged or known to the person listening on the other end of the recorder. Perhaps he knows it’s me that will be listening and he is asking if I know him and letting me know that he also knows me. If we step back and consider this statement from a larger perspective, it is striking to think

that Yusef, a 12 year old immigrant boy from Somalia, has really struck a chord about the dynamics of what happens in the United States in regard to the relationships and understanding that takes place between minority and majority groups. It is often said that individuals who are from the current majority can survive and operate in this country without really knowing or understanding what life is like for a person who identifies as a member of a minority group. Many in the majority expect everyone to know and follow the unspoken rules that permeate the way in which we function in this society. At the surface Yusef's statement may seem inconsequential, but in fact when we think about it more deeply, he's making an important statement, whether intentional or not, about what is expected of immigrant children. They are learning to operate in multiple worlds with rules and expectations that are sometimes apparent and other times very subtle.

### **I. Episode 9 - "They're Really Americans Now!"**

During this study one of the issues I reflected on was how the children's identity as a Muslim was reflected in their day to day life. The girls both wore hijab, a scarf that covers the hair. Malika often wore pants and long sleeved shirts. Alia tended to wear several layers. If she wore a dress or skirt she always also wore pants underneath and she often wore long sleeve shirts or a light jacket. Through the girls' dress we could see a clear reflection of their Muslim identity. I never heard any comments or teasing about their style of attire by any other children in the school while I was there. However, while at a presentation and discussion of the Somali experience in this same urban community, one of the mothers who also lived in this city spoke of the way in which her daughter was repeatedly bullied at the school bus stop about her hijab. The boys wore jeans or slacks along with a t-shirt or polo shirt, which was part of the school uniform. For the boys

there was not a particular style of dress that was required in terms of their Muslim identity. In fact, the Somali aide I spoke with said that in Somalia the boys dressed in an American style, with jeans and t-shirts being the norm.

One of the ways in which the children's Muslim identity was reflected in day to day life was through the meals that were served by the school for lunch. All four of the children ate the school lunch. In this next section, there are three separate episodes. In the first episode we see the children raising a question about a turkey hot dog and they identify themselves as Muslim. In the second episode Salim inquires whether the beans have pork and then they move into a conversation about their favorite foods, which leads Mrs. Nadif to identify them as, "really Americans now!" In the final episode it is what is not said that raises a point. During this brief excerpt, Alia was reading a passage about Benjamin Franklin when she came across the word, "minister." When the teacher explains the meaning of the term "minister" she makes a connection to priests and pastors, but not to imams. It prompts one to consider whether at times Islam is overlooked or avoided in the classroom, rather than used to help children to make connections to unfamiliar content.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N – Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 16: Turkey Hotdogs – “I Didn’t Know What it Was”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
187	Salim	Alia, are you going to eat your hot dog?				
188	Alia	Maybe				
189	Salim	Awww...				
190	Mrs. Kosha	Have you ever tried a turkey hot dog?				
191	Alia	Hmm?				
192	Mrs. Kosha	Have you ever tried a turkey hot dog?				
193	Alia	I only tried it once when I came, first came first to this school. I didn’t know what it was.			Reference s first time trying turkey hot dog.	
194	Mrs. Kosha	Laughter. Yeah the turkey hotdogs are made with turkey, so that’s a meat that...you’re Muslim, right? [Alia nods her head.] Yeah, that you can eat. Are you guys all Muslim? Are you both Muslim?	Alia identifies as Muslim.	Seeking information		Some religion s have restric-tions on types of foods that can be eaten.
195	Salim	I forgot my straw...awww...				
196	Mrs. Kosha	Do you have an extra? [to the other kids] No? Well you can drink it without a straw.				
197	Mrs. Kosha	Yusef are you Muslim too? [Nods head] And Salim? [Nods head] Yeah?	Boys identify as Muslim	Seeking information		
198	Alia	And Malika is too.	Alia identifies Malika as Muslim.			
199	Mrs. Kosha	And Malika is too.		Offers knowledge		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				of Malika's identity.		

Table 17: They're Really Americans Now

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
200	Salim	Is this pork beans?		Seeking information		
201	Mrs. Kosha	Those are beans. I don't know if there's pork in there. It doesn't...if there's pork you'll see little bits of pork. It looks like just beans.				Some religion s have restric- tions on types of foods that can be eaten.
202	Yusef	That looks li...ke beans.				
203	Alia	I don't eat these.				
204	Mrs. Kosha	You don't like beans? [shakes head] Really?				
205	Yusef	Oh-oh				
206	Mrs. Kosha	What do you like? What's your favorite food? What's your favorite food?		Seeking information		
207	Alia	A hamburger...				Particu- lar foods are often associat ed with a certain regions.
208	Mrs. Kosha	Oh really...[laughter]				
209	Alia	And pizza.				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
210	Mrs. Kosha	And pizza? [laughter]				
211	Salim	Everyone llllikes pizza.				
212	Mrs. Nadif	I'd say that they're really Americans now.	Mrs. Nadif positions the children as really being American because of their food prefer- ences.	Has knowledge of what behaviors or attitudes constitute being "American" or having "American" values.		There are certain "mark- ers" we often use to identify some- one as being "Amer- ican" or not.
213	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah. [laughter] Typical response.		Suggests she is familiar with children's responses.		
214	Yusef	Cheese pizza				
215	Mrs. Kosha	And what's your favorite Yusef.?				
216	Yusef	Cheese pizza?				
217	Mrs. Kosha	Cheese Pizza?				
218	Alia	Me too. We can't eat pepperoni.		Has knowledge of what foods she is restricted from eating.		
219	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, it has pork. Yeah.				
220	Salim	Cheese pizza				
221	Mrs. Kosha	Cheese pizza?				
222	Alia	And Malika	Again, identifies Malika's			



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			likes in her absence.			
223	Yusef	Cheese pizza. Everybody likes pizza.				

Participants:

- Mrs. Morris
- Alia

Table 18: Minister, Priest, Pastor, but No Imam

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
224	Alia	Benjamin Benjamin Franklin's father hoped that Benjamin that the tenth and youngest son would grow up to be an mi-mis- mini- minister.				
225	Mrs. Morris	Do you know what a minister is?		Seeking knowledge about the term minister.		
226	Alia	No..		Acknowledges she doesn't know the term.		
227	Mrs. Morris	It's sort of like a person who is in the church, in the church, like church services, like a a priest or a pastor, right? Where he'll be a minister.		Explains the term as a leader in the church.	References similar terms to minister within the Christian church.	Spiritual leaders are found within many religions
228	Alia	Benjamin also had lots of ideas when he				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
		was still a young boy				

What does it mean to be American? How do children raised within a multicultural society negotiate those cultures and particular aspects of their identity? How do we help children bridge the possible gap in knowledge across religions? In this case the children identify as Muslim and as such they do not eat pork. Sprinkled throughout the lunchtime conversation are questions and comments about what can be eaten and what can't be eaten. The children on several occasions raise a question about when something contains pork or not. It raises a question about the choices available to the children who have restrictions on their diet. When the conversation turns to what their favorite foods are they mention hamburgers and especially pizza. Pizza seems to be the favorite of everyone. Again, they point out that they don't eat pepperoni pizza, but they do like cheese pizza. Mrs. Nadif, familiar with the American culture, notes that their preference for pizza demonstrates that they are "really Americans now!" It sparks the question, what does it mean to be American and how do immigrant children enter into that "club?" What are the ways in which they are welcomed in and what are the ways in which they are shut out? Who grants the pass? Who are the gatekeepers and how do they let people in or keep them out?

The issue of their identity as Muslim didn't seem to stand out in the classroom, other than through what they could or could not eat at lunch time. When Alia was reading the passage about Benjamin Franklin and came across the unfamiliar term, minister, the teacher explained a minister as, "It's sort of like a person who is in the church, in the church, like church services, like a a priest or a pastor, right? Where he'll

be a minister.” What struck me about this interaction was what was missing in terms of helping this learner to grasp the concept of minister. I wondered whether Alia was any more familiar with the terms priest or pastor, but I’m certain she would have understood the connection to an Imam. While of course, an Imam isn’t a leader in a church, he is a leader in a Mosque and it is a connection she would have been able to make very easily. We don’t know if she understood the concept of minister, because they immediately moved onto the rest of the passage, but I felt that in this interaction we see the potential for overlooking ways to help children connect information with concepts they already have. It is a small example, but it stands out for me, because it is an example of what we may be missing when we work with children from a different culture or religion than ourselves. How do we as educators use the information we have to help children understand terms and concepts in ways that they can relate to?

This particular teacher had lived in southern Africa for several years while her parents were missionaries there. She was familiar with many cultures and sensitive to the specific needs of these learners. She was a great teacher. Is it lack of awareness, that causes us to use the examples we’re used to or familiar with, and overlook other potential reference points? I wonder what it would look like to “normalize” Islam in the classroom in terms of putting in those examples, that help the rest of the class to learn about the religion, it’s leaders, the terms associated with it, as is done with Christianity, instead of Islam being a “foreign” concept, politically charged and either being referenced with the term terrorism or being ignored entirely. How do we, as educators, take advantage of these learning opportunities for all of the children?

**J. Episode 10 - “Behavioral Issues” & “We Can’t Like Anybody Until You’re 15!”**

On this particular day, one of their classmates, Emma, has joined them for our lunchtime conversation in the classroom. In this episode the children are discussing behavior on the bus, which they identify as horrible. Alia takes one particular bus while Yusef and Salim take another. They all have something to say about the bad behavior by children riding the bus. Examples of bad behavior they identify includes stepping on chairs, jumping up, throwing papers, and kissing. Alia explains that in her family no one can like another person until they’re 15 years old. Yusef does not seem interested in those points, but is trying desperately to get across that Salim and his brother are stealing food from the cafeteria and eating it on the bus. Although no one takes up his line of discussion until the end of this segment, he persists in getting his message across.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Emma (classmate of children)
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N – Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 19: “We Can’t Like Anybody Until You’re 15!”

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
229	Salim	We have nnnew kids in our bus. Only fffor the morning, not afternoon.	Identifies as some-one familiar with the bus and riders.	Knowledge of the different children on his bus.	Refer-ences his usual bus ride.	
230	Emma	Our bus is bad.		Knowledge		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				of norms on bus.		
231	Salim	Your bus is bad? Mine is terrible.		Knowledge of bus norms.		
232	Yusef	Will you give me your bus? Will you drop it? The bus goes like this... [demonstrates movement of bus]				Yours may be bad, but let me tell you about mine.
233	Alia	Miss, please, they didn't used to have camera right? Kids got really really bad, now we have camera.		Kids didn't used to behave so badly on busses.		Use of cameras to monitor behavior. Cameras everywhere.
234	Salim	Yeah		Confirms this.		
235	Mrs. Kosha	You have cameras on your bus?		Seeks confirmation		
236	Alia	Yeah, it stinks.				
237	Mrs. Kosha	Are the children misbehaving on your busses?		Seeks information. Must be a reason for cameras.		Children need to be monitored. Bus driver can't do it.
238	Salim	Yeah.				
239	Alia	Yeah, they step on the chairs, jump up, throw papers.		Knowledge of the types of misbehavior occurring on bus.	Refers to past events witnessed on bus.	
240	Salim	Ssso does our bus.		Confirms similar misbehavior		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				on his bus.		
241	Emma	There was a boy on the bus that kissed another boy.			References specific incident on bus.	
242	Salim & Alia	Eewww...awwwww		Signify inappropriate behavior.		
243	Salim	That's gay.				Use of language to denigrate. Upmanship.
244	Emma	I know.		Affirms Salim's comment.		
245	Mrs. Kosha	Don't say that.				
246	Salim	That's crazy.		Knowledge of inappropriate behavior		
247	Alia	That's not good.		Knowledge of inappropriate behavior		
248	Mrs. Kosha	I mean, is it good to kiss anybody when you're in elementary school?				Societies have norms around what is appropriate at a particular age.
249	Emma	No.				
250	Mrs.	No? I don't think so				

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
	Kosha	either, whether it's a boy or a girl.				
251	Alia	And you're never supposed to like <i>anybody</i> until you're grown up.		Knowledge of her family's cultural norms.		Dating is acceptable at a certain age.
252	Salim	Yeah grown up.		Confirms cultural norm.		
253	Alia	That's what we say.	Identifies within a specific group that holds these beliefs.			
254	Yusef	Two days ago.		Attempts to switch topic.		
255	Mrs. Kosha	So does it stay in your family, is that what your mom says?		Seeks information		
256	Yusef	Miss		Attempts to get attention.		
257	Alia	We can't like anybody until you're 15.	Again identifies as being a part of her cultural group – Muslim and Somali?	Knowledge of cultural norms.		Norms around dating. Particular set as being "grown up"
258	Mrs. Kosha	Until you're 15?		Seeks confirmation.		
259	Yusef	Two days ago I saw him taking two cereals.		Goes ahead with his line of thought and	References a situation where he	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
				knowledge of an event he witnessed.	saw Salim taking extra cereal.	
260	Alia	Yeah		Confirms that it's until 15.		
261	Mrs. Kosha	That's a good idea.				
262	Yusef	He put one in his backpack and ate one.		Continues along his line of thought.	Referencing taking cereal.	
263	Alia	I'm ten.	Identifies self as ten and too young to like anybody.	Alia continues with cultural norms.		
264	Mrs. Nadif	That's not so bad.				
265	Yusef	That's what he said.		Although Yusef is getting no response, he continues.		
266	Mrs. Kosha	Five more years.				
267	Yusef	And his brother Ali, he takes cookies.		Yusef continues about taking food.		
268	Alia	Yeah		Yusef finally gets confirmation from another child.		
269	Salim	Yeah.		Second child responds to Yusef.		
270	Alia	He has six fingers he				



Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
		has an extra one over here. [laughter]				
271	Mrs. Kosha	No, Emma don't play with the chair.				
272	Yusef	One takes cereal home. One takes... one eats cookies on bus.		Yusef maintains his focus on what the brothers do.		

In this interaction Salim begins by talking about having new children on the bus. From there the children speak about the bad behavior they witness on the bus including children throwing things, jumping on seats, and kissing. Salim describes two boys kissing as gay. Alia laments the fact that they have cameras on the bus to watch their behavior. She asks about the fact that there didn't used to be cameras on busses. Alia then speaks about the fact that in her family people are not allowed to "like anybody" until they are grown-up, which she says is 15. From her expressions, we can see that she identifies with this group norm and she considers herself part of the group. She says that she is ten, letting the audience know that she is not yet old enough to like anybody or date. Yusef is on a related but different event. He is trying to get everyone's attention to describe some of the misbehaviors that he sees Salim and Salim's brother engaging in, that is, taking food from the cafeteria to eat in addition to his regular meals. He seems to indicate that the brothers are similar when he says, "One takes cereal home. One takes...one eats cookies on bus." Although for a long time no one seems to pay attention to Yusef, he eventually does get the children's attention, and they confirm what he has explained.

We can consider from this discussion what kinds of things these children identify as inappropriate behavior. Dating before being grown-up, which is said to be 15, jumping on seats and throwing objects, boys kissing and taking extra food from the cafeteria. Alia in particular seems to identify with being a part of a cultural group that says dating shouldn't occur before 15. She and the boys don't specifically say whether this is the same for boys or not and they don't indicate if they share or care about this norm. Yusef in particular is more focused on the taking of extra food. What comes across in this instance is that the negative behavior they describe here seems to be for the most part about the other children on the bus, not from themselves, with the exception of Salim and his brother eating extra food.

#### **K. Episode 11 - "I Do Get Hit"**

In this episode I begin by asking the children what they don't like about school. Yusef says he doesn't like children who are misbehaving, Salim doesn't like tests, and Alia doesn't like getting calls home because she's misbehaving. Salim suggests that Alia gets hit, which she denies. She shares how she disciplines her nephew, which includes hitting. The students then go into a discussion about a time when Salim ran away from home and got punished for it. Salim is then advised about the dangers of running away.

Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Salim
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs. Nadif (Mrs. N - Somali aide assisting in the classroom)

Table 20: "I Do Get Hit"

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
273	Mrs. Kosha	So you like everything? Is there any thing you <i>don't</i> like about school?				
274	Yusef	About school...hmm				
275	Salim	I do				
276	Yusef	Children that are not behaving?	Identify- ing as a child who behaves.			
277	Mrs. Kosha	Ahhh, I don't like that either.				
278	Salim	I do [referring to something he dislikes.]				
279	Mrs. Kosha	What?				
280	Salim	Tests. I hate, I don't like tests.			Refer- ences testing.	
281	Mrs. Kosha	Really? Anything you don't like about school? [directed to Alia]				
282	Alia	When I get in trouble. [laughter] I don't like it. Mrs. Nadif calls my Mom.	Identifies as someone who mis- behaves.			
283	Mrs. Kosha	Did you hear that?				
284	Mrs. Nadif	What did she say?				
285	Alia	When I get in trouble. I asked her what she doesn't like about school when I get in trouble then she said.				
286	Alia	Mrs. Nadif calls my Mom.			Refer- ences calls home.	
287	Mrs. Kosha	But it's good if she calls your Mom, isn't				Calls home

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		it?				negative
288	Mrs. Nadif	Because you don't listen to me. I tell her to stop it, she doesn't.	Positions Alia as a non-listener.		Refers to patterns of behavior.	Following author-ity.
289	Salim	And sshhe she she has spankings at home, I can tell.	Identifies Alia as someone who gets hit.			Ways of disciplin-ing
290	Alia	Hmm?				
291	Salim	Yyyou get hit.				
292	Alia	By who?				
293	Salim	Your Mom				
294	Alia	Na-ahh They don't hit me.	Discounts Salim's position-ing.			
295	Salim	I do I get hit by my Dad and my Mom. Simple.	Identifies as child who gets hit.			
296	Alia	[chuckles] His mom gets so mad when he gets in trouble.				
297	Mrs. Kosha	When he misbehaves?				
298	Mrs. Kosha	Do your parents get mad when you misbehave?				
299	Yusef	Yup.				
300	Alia	Not all the time.				
301	Mrs. Kosha	Not all the time.				
302	Salim	Except...xxx				
303	Mrs. Kosha	Do you misbehave at home?				
304	Yusef	No	Identifies as child who behaves.			
305	Alia	yeah	Identifies			

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
			as a child who mis- behaves.			
306	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah?				
307	Mrs. Nadif	When the school calls you get in trouble.				Calls home neg- ative
308	Alia	Hmmm				
309	Mrs. Kosha	When what?				
310	Mrs. Nadif	When I call.				
311	Mrs. Kosha	When you call? Do you get in trouble at home when you're with your brothers and sisters?				
312	Alia	Yeah, my baby brother. When ever, he always like what I touch.			Refer- ences nephew and his actions.	
313	Salim	Who?				
314	Mrs. Nadif	How old is he?				
315	Alia	Three				
316	Mrs. Nadif	Ahh				
317	Alia	He always likes what I touch.				
318	Salim	Who?				
319	Alia	I don't like him.				
320	Mrs. Kosha	And then what happens?				
321	Mrs. Nadif	Do separate things.		Offers advice.		
322	Mrs. Kosha	Your parents get upset with you because you let him touch something?				
323	Alia	And I hit him and he	Identifies		Refer-	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
		cries and I get in trouble. Hmmph.	as disciplinarian for younger nephew.		ences inter-actions with nephew.	
324	Mrs. Kosha	Oh. Well what can you do instead of hitting him because he's only three?		Tries to guide Alia to a solution.		
325	Yusef	Run away someplace.				
326	Alia	He's he's smart than three. He scratches people, he bites people.				
327	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, but instead of hitting him what can you do?		Tries to guide Alia in finding solution.		
328	Yusef	<u>Run away.</u>				
329	Salim	<u>Run away from home.</u>				
330	Mrs. Kosha	No, take the thing away from him that he's not supposed to be playing with.		Offers advice.		
331	Alia	That's what he did once cause his brother was bothering him, he ran away from home.			Reference s a time when Salim ran away.	
332	Yusef	<u>Sometimes he eats with his hand. You can't take away his hand.</u>		Persists in his idea that solution is not possible.		
333	Mrs. Kosha	Who ran away? You did? Why did you run away?		Seeks information.		
334	Salim	I don't want to talk about it.				
335	Mrs. Nadif	Don't think running away is funny Salim.				
336	Alia	He ran away and he got lost.	Positions Salim as		Refer-ences	

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
			run-away.		Salim running away.	
337	Mrs. Kosha	Oh my gosh.				
338	Alia	People had to find him.				
339	Mrs. Kosha	How did find your...how did you get back home?		Seeks information.		
340	Alia	M.'s dad.				
341	Mrs. Kosha	Found him? Where did you go?				
342	Salim	Train station.	Identifies as having run-away.			
343	Mrs. Kosha	Oh my gosh. Salim!				
344	Alia	<u>He went past</u> the Walgreens, past a store.		Has detailed knowledge of events.		
345	Salim	<u>And then</u> the principal told me never to do that again. And then when I got back home, boom, spanking from my Mom. [laughter]			Refer-ences resulting action of running away.	
346	Mrs. Kosha	But that's really dangerous to run away like that. That's not right.				
347	Alia	I know you could get bang...caught.		Offers knowledge of what could happen.		
348	Mrs. Nadif	Yeah, somebody could nab you and xx.		Confirms Alia's idea.		
349	Alia	His mom was crying.		Demonstrates		

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality & Intercontextuali ty	Ideational Notations
				knowledge of incident.		
350	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, it's scary. As a parent if one of my children ran away, I would <u>be so afraid because you don't know what would happen to them.</u>				
351	Yusef	<u>You ran away from your small brother?</u>				
352	Salim	I don't care about those.				

In this episode I had begun by asking Yusef about what he likes and dislikes. When he spoke about his dislikes, he mentioned “children misbehaving” as a dislike. Clearly he doesn’t identify as someone who misbehaves. Salim mentions his dislike of tests. Alia mentions her dislike of getting in trouble and getting calls home. The conversation then shifts to a discussion of behavior at home. Salim says that Alia must get hit at home, but Alia denies this. Salim then speaks about how he does get hit at home for misbehaving. Alia speaks about getting in trouble for hitting her three year old nephew when he touches something he’s not supposed to. She then gets in trouble for hitting him. When I asked her how else she could handle her nephew’s behavior both Yusef and Salim suggest running away. I provide an alternative of taking away the object from her nephew. Alia picks up Yusef and Salim’s train of thought and refers to a time that Salim ran away from home and got lost. He was finally found by a friend’s father and when Salim got home he was hit for running away. Both Alia and Mrs. Nadif cautioned Salim about the dangers of running away. Clearly Alia had intimate



knowledge of the event as she spoke about the way in which Salim's Mom was crying when he was gone.

Alia acknowledges that she misbehaves both at home and school and she also emphasizes that she doesn't like getting in trouble. She vehemently denies getting hit when she's in trouble, while Salim is quick to share that he gets hit by both his Mom and Dad. Yusef shares that he doesn't like getting in trouble. The issue of children dealing with corporal punishment at home is one that all teachers face when communicating concerns with parents about their children's behavior in school. It is no different in the Somali community. In this conversation we see that there are parents who use corporal punishment and those that don't. While Alia doesn't like the idea of teacher's calling home to report her negative behavior in school, the communication can be beneficial as at least her parents then have the opportunity to discuss other choices that she can make. In Salim's case a teacher may not be able to control whether a parent chooses to use corporal punishment or not. However, the teacher can provide the information about the school behavior in a way that encourages the parent to understand what is happening in school and discuss with the child what changes can be made.

On several occasions in this episode we hear advice given by Mrs. Nadif. She clearly sees her role as someone who can offer the children advice to succeed in life and school. She communicates concerns that the teachers have about the children's behavior in school. Mrs. Nadif in this brief episode cautions Salim about running away and suggests to Alia that she find separate activities from what her three year old nephew is doing to avoid the problem. Although Mrs. Nadif was not sitting around the table with us

as we conversed, she joined in the conversation and can be heard trying to guide the children through some of these events they are reporting in their lives.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS

The overarching question of this study is how do the participants use language to express their identity in school, and in what ways are the home culture and the school culture influencing the development of their identity?

The sub-questions I ask in this study are:

- How does the acquisition of a second language, school culture and experiences in school shape these learners' multiple identities?
- How do the children in this study express their multiple identities?
- Do the children's home cultures bump up against the school culture and how do the children and adults negotiate that overlap?
- Do the participants strive to maintain their home culture and if so, how is that expressed and received in the school context?
- How do the learners use language to assert themselves and their views?

My approach to answering these questions is to return to the data and the analysis of each episode and identify ways in which the interactions of the students speak to the issue being raised in the question. There are cases where one episode illuminates more than one question, so there is overlap between the questions and responses. It's worth mentioning again that the episodes used in this research are just a small portion of the interactions witnessed over the course of the academic year and that the goal in this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of these four Somali children and to probe the issues faced by second language learners and their families. The responses to these questions are not the definitive answer to the topics raised.

#### **A. Introduction to the Findings**

Episode 8 is titled, "They're really Americans now!" During this interaction the children were eating a lunch of hot dogs with a side of baked beans. The children were asking if there was pork in the beans. They then started talking about their favorite foods

including hamburgers and pizza. Mrs. Nadif made the comment, “They’re really Americans now!”

This brief interaction raised many questions for me and continually stimulates a good deal of thought and reflection about identity. Just what does it mean to be American and how are people identified as “American?” Clearly a person’s perspective will influence the answer to that question. This is a continual debate in the United States and is often raised in the pervasive political debates that frequent the cable news networks. For some, a politician not wearing a flag pin is un-American. For others being American means having the right to choose whether or not to wear a flag pin without an assumption of loyalty or disloyalty to the country. More than four years after a national election of our president, Barack Obama, we still hear people raising the question whether he was born in the United States or not. Some wonder whether he is truly an American and able to hold the highest political office in the country. We know that the people raising these questions over and over, despite all the evidence of Obama’s citizenship and place of birth, are doing so for political reasons. Yet, you can imagine how such a debate may affect the impressions of a young immigrant. If a person born and raised in this country is questioned about his identity as an American, then what about the status of an immigrant? We have many laws determining who has legal status as an American, but the social status around being an American is more illusive. When does an individual get to identify him/herself as American? Who gets to decide who is American and who isn’t? Some people question whether individuals are American based on where they were born, the way they speak, the clothes they wear, the religion they practice, the languages they speak, the rituals they practice and so on. When exactly does

one “qualify” to be identified as an American? Is it the individual’s choice, those around him/her or is it only the nation and a set of rules that determines this? Does it mean that the person has to have citizenship along with the accompanying documentation provided by the state to be identified as American? I regret to say, I don’t have the answer, but what this study does, is help us gain deeper insight into how the participants of this study view themselves and one-another.

In this particular episode the Somali aide identifies the children as “really American now!” because of their love of what is typically viewed as “American” foods. While the moment in the classroom is a light one, we can reflect on what it means to be American and in what ways different members of society expect immigrants to fit into particular ways of conforming in order to be considered American. Not only do people vary in their understanding of what it means to be a particular identity, but as Barker (2000) points out, the notion of what particular identity categories mean, changes with time and with context.

I share this reflection with you, because in examining the children’s expressions of identity and their interactions around the lunch table, I want to acknowledge that we all come to the table with our own understanding of what it means to be \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in the descriptor, e.g. Somali, American, Muslim, male, female, smart, eloquent, good at math, a trouble-maker, athletic, etc.) Was the aide saying the children are the legal definition of American? No, but she was saying they’ve picked up some of the tastes that many children in America enjoy, which is part of the path to becoming viewed as American.

I ask that as you read the interpretations of this subset of questions that you keep in mind the notion that how we identify ourselves may be different from how others

identify us and that the way we position others may be different than the way they see themselves. The notion of identity is fluid and changing from moment to moment. We are not carved in stone and our impressions of others shift from moment to moment as well. With that caveat I share with you the instances I observed that I believe shed light on the questions asked in this study.

### **B. Learner's Identities**

The first sub-question of the study is how the acquisition of a second language, school culture, and experiences in school shape these learners' multiple identities. Through the year long observations and our many conversations it was evident that each of the Somalia children claimed their own unique identities, as would be expected of any four children. Through Bhatia's writings (2007), we are reminded that even though immigrants may come from the same country, they come with a wide variety of experiences and ways of identifying. Ethnic groups are not monolithic. The children spoke of learning English, its challenges, their success with the new language, their family life, and various episodes in school. In the next three episodes the children touch on these topics and we can begin to see the ways in which they are identifying as Somalis, students and family members. We can see them using language much in the same way as native speakers, but with less understanding of the strength and impact of the words they use. We learn that to some degree the participants understand the ways in which schools work, but also require different amounts of scaffolding to understand schedule changes. Finally, through the interactions it is evident that the students have a sense of agency and persistence to be able to make their point known.

In episode 3, “English is the hardest thing”, the participants were asked to describe what the hardest thing for them since they moved to the United States was. Alia immediately said, “To learn English.” (Episode 3, Line 31) While Alia initially speaks of the difficulty she had learning English, her deep understanding of the challenge of learning a new language is evident in the description she provides of her mother’s English language skills. She describes her mother, saying, “...it’s hard for her to say even a big word in English.” (Episode 3, Line 58) Alia explains that her mother only knows the word, “outside.” She also speaks about how sometimes she gives her Mom English lessons. She indicates that her Mom knows her “b, c, d’s” but “doesn’t know how to talk.” (Episode 3, Line 64) Alia then shares a story about how the teacher had called her house to give an update to Alia’s Mom concerning her behavior in school. The teacher, Mrs. Morris, was calling to inform Alia’s Mom how well-behaved Alia had been in school. Mrs. Morris asked the Mom for Alia to translate, but her Mom responded with the one English word she knew, “outside.” Alia’s Mom understood the main point of the teacher’s message that Alia was doing well.

In the description of this event we learn from Alia that at times, roles are reversed in her family as she becomes a teacher to her mother and a translator for her teacher and mother. In Alia’s case, the idea that she was asked to translate for the teacher didn’t seem to be a problem for her mother. However, there have been other cases as reported by Finders and Lewis (1994), where immigrant parents found the idea of asking a child to translate during parent-teacher conferences a problem as it put children on an equal level as parents.

In this same episode, Salim steers away from admitting openly that anything is difficult and instead responds, “I have a lot of happy things,” (Episode 3, Line 32), as if to say that the things that are difficult are also unhappy. When probed further about what has been happy for him, he responds that hitting his older brother has been happy. This response is dismissed by both Alia and me. After analyzing this data numerous times in many ways, I came to realize that perhaps Salim was trying to indicate that the challenge he faces is his relationship with his older brother. Conceivably, he does not have the power or strength that his sibling has and when he does hit him, it makes him feel good or provides him with some sense of satisfaction. In a roundabout way, he has shared what for him is a challenge.

Yusef in this episode says, “Talking is the easiest.” (Episode 3, Line 47) Yusef describes his initial entry into the United States, “Since I came here I didn’t even know not even one word.” (Episode 3, Line 52) When questioned further he says, “Actually two, I knew two.” (Episode 3, Line 55) Yusef goes on, seemingly amazed at himself when he says, “I’m talking...two words – it’s thousands xxx.” (Episode 3, Line 57) As Yusef reflects on what he’s accomplished since arriving, he seems amazed with himself, to have come so far. He has gone from knowing only two words out of thousands, to being able to speak easily in another language. Clearly he’s very proud of his accomplishments, and with good reason.

Through this episode we can see how learning English has become a source of pride for at least two of the children. It has influenced the way that Alia interacts with her mother and the responsibilities she has as a result. She has in some sense become the navigator for her mother in helping to communicate the school messages, even when



those messages are about her directly. We learn that Alia at this moment in time was making progress toward following the teacher's expectations in the classroom.

In the Somali culture it is expected that children will show teachers and elders respect. Over the course of the year, I observed Yusef to be a child who was respectful and kind. He did not argue with teachers, talk back to adults in school or get in trouble. I did not hear about him having behavioral problems in school, other than a couple incidents the children shared that occurred on the bus. In episode 6, while Yusef does not cross the line into being disrespectful, he clearly questions what the adults are telling him and he pushes back, advocating his own point of view.

During this particular lunchtime discussion, "I Know What I Know" (Episode 6) the students were discussing music. Yusef spent a considerable amount of effort trying to persuade the group that there would be a different substitute teacher coming for music. He remained unconvinced until he was told that the substitute who usually fills in for music was probably teaching at a different school at which point he says, "Oh" and accepts what he has been told repeatedly.

The fascinating aspect of this episode is that Yusef is frequently positioned as being quiet and reticent. Rex and Shiller (2009) caution teachers to be aware of the way in which they position students. Yusef is not considered to be argumentative or disagreeable. However, during this episode he is like a shark biting onto a seal pup; he does not want to release his point of view. When he gets what is the critical piece of information for him, the fact that the substitute is likely somewhere else teaching, he is finally ready to accept what everyone has been telling him for the past five minutes. We see him being persistent, providing facts and information to persuade us, and seeking out

support for his ideas despite the fact that everyone keeps telling him he's wrong. So while he is perceived as being someone shy and quiet, we can see that when he has a point to make he will stick with it.

In this particular episode we see the way in which Yusef pushes back against this positioning and rather shows a different way of being, one that is unexpected. Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) write about the way in which identities may be ascribed and rejected. From this interaction we see how Yusef uses his understanding of the school schedule and the processes in place to make sense of the fact that his music teacher is absent. He understands the schedule and the substitution process. What he is challenged by, is when this process changes. He has difficulty understanding why Mrs. Nadif would substitute for music, because something like that has never happened before. It is only when he has a critical piece of information that he is able to make sense of it.

In episode 6, "I Know What I Know" we were discussing Salim's stuttering. I asked Salim if he stutters in Somali and Alia responded, "Duh!" as if to say, "Of course! Didn't you know that?!" We see how Alia uses the word, "duh" correctly with the correct intonation. The way in which she uses, "Duh!" makes complete sense in the exchange, but it is generally used between peers, not toward an adult in a school setting. Through the use of this term, she signals her connection with the youth culture in the United States where it is commonly used by young and adolescent children. In a later discussion, I explain to Alia that to use "Duh!" in that way is like saying, "you're stupid or unintelligent." She was surprised to hear this and apologized for using the term. Through our discussion, I learned that while she knew how to use the word, she did not know the

full power of the term and she did not understand the setting it was appropriate to use it in or with whom it was appropriate to use.

It is helpful for adults working with English language learners to consider the fact that while children may seemingly use a word or phrase correctly, they may not have the full understanding or impact of the terms they are using. They may use it because they hear their peers using it, but may miss the nuances of the effect of their word choice. While in a child's first language, the parents frequently determine and help to shape which words are acceptable for a child to use, with a second language, the parents are less able to correct children if they are not familiar with the second language. The teacher and support staff become the ones who can help students to understand the nuances of the language.

Throughout these lunchtime conversations both Mrs. Nadif and I would often advise the students about the power of words, trying to provide this guidance. With Salim for example, who had a habit of saying, "I hate..." we spoke about the strength and power of that phrase. Mrs. Nadif asked him repeatedly not to say "I hate..." and provided him with alternatives such as dislike, but it took a long time for him to stop the habit. By the end of the year, when Salim would start out saying, "I hate..." he would stop himself and change his language or Alia and Yusef would correct him.

Having Mrs. Nadif in the classroom to help support the Somali children's learning was invaluable. She was able to bridge the two cultures, understanding how to help the students hone their use of language so as to better understand how the words they choose to express themselves might come across to others. As Gee (1999) informs us, language

allows us to “be things” and to adopt particular identities. As students learn the subtleties of the language, they will be better able to fully express their identities.

Learning a second language, culture and their school experiences have shaped these children’s identities in various ways. For Yusef, learning a language has been a great source of pride and accomplishment. He is amazed at what he knew upon his arrival to the United States and how far he’s come since that day. Yusef is seen as a quiet child, yet through the observed interactions we can see that he is familiar with the usual processes and schedules in the school. He has learned to question information given by adults, appropriately challenge the teacher and advocate for himself. When the teacher says something that he thinks is wrong, he persists in a positive way to make his point heard. He doesn’t let go of his point until he understands why he might be wrong. He uses language to put forward his point of view.

Alia has experienced a role reversal at home in that she has become the teacher of English to her mother and a translator for the teacher and her mother. Alia has learned language that shows her association with the youth culture in the United States. She uses words such as “duh” in the appropriate manner and seems to understand its meaning, but we learn that she doesn’t understand the power of the word. She uses some of the swear words and slang words with people that would be considered inappropriate, e.g. with a teacher. She doesn’t seem to understand the power of these words, but as Yusef informs us, she’s used to using them.

Through one of the interactions, it is evident that Salim doesn’t feel challenged by school, but does seem to be troubled by the relationship with his brother. Salim frequently uses the words, “I hate...” to describe something that was happening in his

life. Both Mrs. Nadif and I often advised him on using alternatives, such as “I dislike...” because of the power of the term “hate.” We found that the process of unlearning to use these kinds of words or phrases took the children time and countless reminders. While parents might not allow particular phrases or expressions in the child’s first language, if they don’t speak the second language they are unable to place boundaries for the children as to what language is acceptable in particular settings.

### **C. Expression of Multiple Identities**

In the previous discussion Yusef indicates that he is a language learner, one who has made considerable progress since first arriving in the United States. Yusef shows himself to be someone knowledgeable of the school procedures. He advocates for what he believes to be true and is persistent in putting forward his viewpoint. It is evident that Alia identifies herself as a language learner, a language teacher to her mother and a translator for both her mother and teacher. She shares her identity as a student who is behaving in class. In the example earlier, we see that Salim is not direct with his responses, but does allude to his challenging relationship with his brother and we learn that he stutters, both in Somali and English, which is confirmed by all three children. In this section examples are provided of the ways in which participants express their multiple identities.

Our identities are so complex and fluid that at each moment, as we interact with others, we express who we are at that moment in time. How those expressions of identity are received is not in our control. (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) In the following examples selected, we learn more about how the children in this study perceive

themselves and how they want to be perceived. The expression of their identities is sometimes in conflict with how those around them are reading their identity.

Midway through episode 8, Yusef asks the question into the recorder in a loud and confident voice, “Do you know me?” and then says, “Because I know you!” We don’t know who he is directing his question to, possibly me or anyone in general, but he asks it with self-assurance and conviction. This interaction sets the stage for this discussion about the expression of identity, the positioning of the identities of people around us and the ways in which these students push back against those identity perceptions they don’t agree with.

At the beginning of episode 8, “Do You Know Me?” Yusef teased Alia about the way she opened a juice box. She tried to defend herself explaining that she did open it the correct way, but this was not accepted by either Yusef or Salim. She responded by saying she hated herself. It’s a strong statement but seems to emanate from a sense of not being able to get her point across. She was clearly frustrated by the fact that two of her peers did not accept her explanation of how she opened the juice container and continued making fun of her. Again, we see that Yusef is not as quiet and shy as he is perceived to be. He comes across in this episode as a jokester and instigator in commenting about how Alia opened her juice box. Boxer & Cortes-Conde (1997) write about the way in which speakers use conversational joking as a way of bonding, or alternatively, of nipping at an individual. By teasing Alia about the way in which she opens the box, Yusef is setting her apart from Yusef and Salim. This seems to be a way for Yusef to create a closer bond with Salim while nipping at Alia.

Still in episode 8, Yusef then gains the attention of the adults and points to the microphone on the recorder asking what it does. I explained that it is the part that is capturing the voice. He then speaks directly into the microphone with a very slow, clear and loud voice as if the person listening to the tape didn't speak English or couldn't understand him. He first greets the listener by saying in a sing-song voice slowly and loudly, "HELLO" and then with the same tone and volume gives his full name saying, "MY NAME IS YUSEF, ABDOU HASSAN." It comes across as very formal. Using the same manner he asks, "DO YOU KNOW ME? BECAUSE I KNOW YOU!" Yusef announces to the world, in case they didn't know, who exactly he is. He seems not to want to be confused with anyone else and provides his full name, speaks loudly and clearly so that you can be sure anyone listening to the tape will have no doubt about his identity. In this short statement he not only lets the listener know who he is, he lets the listener know that he knows who they are as well. Is he talking to me? Possibly, but it seems more likely that he is speaking to anyone who might hear the recording. He comes across as strong, confident, proud and sure of himself. He seems to want the listener to know that he is not shy or reticent but rather a strong, smart and knowledgeable person. Even though the listener may not know Yusef, he conveys through his question and statement that he is knowledgeable and does know him/her/them. It seems as if he is trying to convey that he does know this American society, does understand the people living here and that there is a place for him. He is identifying himself as someone who understands this place and seems to indicate that he fully belongs here even if the listener doesn't know him. Although this interaction is brief and done in a joking manner, it actually conveys a powerful message of strength, knowledge and pride. We can see the

way in which Yusef Abdou Hassan identifies as someone who belongs and someone who understands the world and people around him.

In episode 2 there is another instance where we see how Yusef is positioned as a quiet child, yet his behavior shows another side of him, one that the teachers do not usually see. Yusef enters the classroom and says loudly “HeLLLOOO...” extending the word and emphasizing the second syllable. It’s as if he is saying, hello, here I am; do you see me? He seems to want to be recognized. While we can not be positive of his intention, the reaction by the Somali aide and myself was one of laughter and perhaps surprise as this kind of verbal display by Yusef was unusual. We can see from my comment, “You’re usually so quiet Yusef.” (Line 6) that his loud greeting is not typical. It is further confirmed by my comment, “We hardly hear your voice.” (Line 8) Mrs. Nadif confirms that he is usually quiet when she says, “Yeah, I know.” (Line 9)

The teachers comment that this behavior is unusual. Yusef is positioned as someone who is usually quiet. The discussion later focused on the children’s behavior in general. When Yusef was asked about his behavior, he describes himself as being someone who behaves. When asked why he behaves, he said, “I just behave.” (Line 26) As I probed further and asked if he liked to behave he shook his head no and said in an exasperated tone, “I just behave!” (Line 28) At various points during the year the other children alluded to some incidents that occurred on the bus, where Yusef didn’t behave. Salim, in particular, seemed to like to raise these alleged incidents of misbehavior, a characterization Yusef continually pushed back against. These interactions between the students are the kind of interactions that Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) refer to in how identity is constructed and displayed. They write, “Membership of a category is ascribed



(and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people's lives." People don't simply have an identity, but it is constructed and visible through the interactions we have with others. We see the suggestions participants make about one another's identities and the either affirmation of that identity or the push back against the proposal.

Again in episode 6 when Yusef is trying to advocate for his point that they will have a substitute for music, he demonstrates his perseverance. He is often positioned as quiet and reticent, but we see from this interaction that when he has a point to make he will stick with it. In these episodes we hear how Yusef is positioned, but we also see the way in which he speaks out and is not the quiet, shy person he is perceived to be by the teachers.

From the previous discussion, we see how Alia shares her identity as a language learner, a teacher of English to her mother and a translator between her teachers and mother. Through her dress we see Alia's identity as a Muslim. She wears a hijab or head scarf daily. She often wears dresses with pants underneath and long sleeve shirts and a light jacket over it. She dresses modestly making sure no bare skin is showing on her body, arms or legs. During the lunches we shared together there were numerous times that conversations arose around what was being served for lunch and making sure there was no pork. All three of the children emphasized on multiple occasions that they didn't eat pork because of being Muslim. Throughout the year, I never witnessed an incident that brought their identity as Muslim into question. There were no examples that

I witnessed on the part of any of the children that suggested they ever wavered in their identity as Muslim.

In episode 1, “Don’t Talk About Me,” Alia shares her concerns about being the focus of a discussion between Mrs. Nadif and me during an interview we were to have the following week. Alia asked what we were going to talk about in our interview and when I said we would just talk, she immediately said, “Don’t talk about me.” When Mrs. Nadif asked her why she thought we’d talk about her, but not Salim or Yusef, she said, “Because I don’t behave.” (Episode 1, Line 21) Through this brief interchange we see that Alia sees herself as a student with behavioral problems and feels that Mrs. Nadif and I also view her as a problem student. Her identity as a problem student is not how she wants to be identified, even though she recognizes she sometimes has behavioral problems. As the exchange continues we see through two of Yusef’s comments that he also views Alia as a student who gets in trouble. He says, “Yeah, she do things.” (Episode 1, Line 27) and seconds later confirms her misbehavior again and says, “Yeah, she’s acting out.” (Episode 1, Line 45) He is admonished by Mrs. Nadif and then Alia, clearly perturbed with Yusef’s comments, tells him to “shut up”. When Mrs. Nadif tries to get to the root of why Alia misbehaves, Alia pledges, “Yeah, from now on I’m going to behave.” (Episode 1, Line 62) It’s evident from the exchange and Alia’s tone and demeanor, that she doesn’t like being positioned as a trouble maker and that she really does want to try to change her behavior and be perceived differently. It’s an identity that she recognizes she has about herself and a perception that others have about who she is, but it is also an identity that she is pushing back against.

As Mrs. Nadif tries to get at why Alia is behaving in a negative manner she questions Alia about not following the directions from the gym teacher on the previous day. Through their exchange we learn that what Mrs. Nadif perceived as misbehavior by Alia was actually an attempt on her part to avoid getting in trouble. It's only when Alia has the chance to explain her actions and reasons for moving her chair in gym do we learn that she was trying to make the right choice, but was still viewed as being a troublemaker and disruption in the class. Alia's attempt in gym class to break out of the perception others have of her as disobedient was unsuccessful. She was trying to enact a different identity than the one imposed on her, but was relegated to the same troublemaker status.

Bloome et al. (2005), calls to our attention that when cross cultural communication is involved, students may respond to a situation in an unforeseen manner. In Alia's class the teacher expected her to take a particular course of action and when Alia didn't, it was interpreted as misconduct. Bloome et al (2005, p. 27) write, "How teachers interpret the unexpected behaviors of students may be crucial to a student's educational opportunities." In this case Mrs. Nadif and I had the chance to discuss the situation with Alia to find out what happened. By being aware of the way in which people position one another and sometimes hold on to a particular perception of an individual's identity, we can stop to check ourself in such situations. When adults who are working with second language learners encounter an unexpected response by a student, taking the time to talk to the student about their reasoning surrounding the choice they made, may lead us to unanticipated insights into their behavior.

Alia's identity as a storyteller and an individual concerned about others became apparent following a weekend trip she had taken to Maine. At one point during lunch Alia said she had a story to tell. Despite a long delay and several interruptions she persisted and was able to tell her story about a wedding she attended where the brother of the bride took her outside and hit her for getting married without the family's permission. She described the event as a very sad story. Alia and Yusef both said that the brother was "crazy" for doing that. Alia shows herself to be a person sensitive to the plight of others and aware of the injustice of the actions of the family member toward his sister. Her story also indicates that she is immersed in her culture and family and participating in extended family gatherings.

Salim identifies as a person who is not good at math and someone who stutters all the time. Alia and Yusef describe Salim as being someone who is very talkative. Yusef said that Salim talks a lot on the bus and he shared a story where Salim kept on talking to the boy next to him on the bus, even though the boy had fallen asleep. Alia adds that Salim talks too much and is "talky talky." In response, Salim doesn't deny that he's talkative, but rather says that she does the same thing, which Alia denies, saying, "No I'm not a talky, talky. I don't talk that much like you do." Each of the students hold very clear perceptions of one-another.

In episode 4 the children identify Salim as being a frequent stutterer. Salim agrees with that portrayal. Salim was asked if he knows why he stutters, to which he responded, "no." When asked if he stutters in Somali, Alia responded, "Duh! A lot" and Yusef added, "He stutters everywhere." From the discussion it was evident from all three children that Salim's stuttering is part of how he identifies and is positioned by his peers.

Salim described himself in one episode as not being good at math. Salim mentions the support he gets for math by tutors who come to his home Mrs. Nadif also spoke about the fact that he struggles with math concepts and in fact she suggests that it's unusual for Somali boys to not be good at math. She describes Somali men and boys as traditionally being very good at math.

In examining the interactions of the children, we see that the students are constantly displaying the multiple identities they take on and they also push back when they feel they have been positioned as having an identity they don't agree with. They frequently position one-another as well, and they seem to know the details of one-another's interactions, both in and out of school. We see that at times, as in the case of Alia and the gym teacher, these students try to push back against the positions they've been given, e.g. Alia as a troublemaker and non-listener. However, it can be difficult for a child to be seen as someone without a particular attribute when the adult believes the child has that particular quality. Through our discussion we learn from Alia that she was unsuccessful in avoiding trouble in gym class, because she is already seen as a troublemaker and is unable to avoid that label and description. Once we really heard from her it became clear why she made the choices she did. Listening carefully to our students and reflecting on our perceptions of students, will help us as educators to see when we're relying on impressions from previous interactions that may not be accurate in a new situation.

We can also see how an interpretation that peers have of one-other may cause great frustration on the part of students. E.g. Alia's frustration with the way in which Yusef characterized her drinking of a juice box, resulting in an expression of self-hate.

Understanding how children in the process of displaying identities sometimes use teasing one student as a way of bonding with another student may help teachers to be aware of the dynamics that may occur within groups. (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997) We also see that once an identity is “established” it becomes hard for a child to change the perceptions others have of her. For example, Alia was trying to remove herself from a troublesome situation, but she is still perceived as creating trouble, when in fact she is trying to avoid it. We learn that Alia is trying to change that identity when in line 62, episode 1 she says, “Yeah, from now on I’m gonna behave.” She doesn’t want to be positioned as a troublemaker, but it is challenging to change others’ perceptions.

#### **D. Negotiating Cultures**

One of the interest areas within this data set is whether the children’s home cultures bump up against the school culture and how the children and adults negotiate that overlap. One area where the home culture and school culture bumped up against one-another that I observed is in how discipline is carried out both at home and school. Through interviews with teachers it became apparent that teachers had the sense that corporal punishment was used in some homes. They spoke in interviews about concerns that if the teacher told a parent about a child’s misdeed, it may result in the child getting hit at home. Teachers reported instances where they tried to educate parents on what is acceptable in terms of disciplining children in the United States and the potential consequences if a child’s punishment reached levels that raised concerns of abuse. The teachers were informing parents of practices and legal consequences here, because they recognized that the Somali parents were likely not familiar with how such issues are dealt with in this country.

There are several times we see examples of Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide, providing scaffolding to bridge understanding and to provide advice to the children about what is culturally appropriate. In episode 1 a description is given about how Alia was corrected in the gym when she moved her desk away from another student. Mrs. Nadif tries to provide a scaffold for Alia to help her understand why teachers are correcting her behavior and to help her understand that they have her best interest at heart when they do correct her. Mrs. Nadif helped to negotiate and bridge the two cultures. We see that Mrs. Nadif is using a strategy of providing advice to Alia, a common practice in Somali culture. Often aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors, and respected elders are called upon to advise a child or anyone who is struggling in some way. (Wolf, 2010, p. 16) Mrs. Nadif's language and tone comes across this way.

While discussing this issue in English I found that both Mrs. Nadif and Alia seemed to be having a communication gap. There was difficulty on both their parts in understanding the other. It is not clear whether it was because of English, the concepts being discussed or less likely because they were simply having difficulty hearing one another physically. We cannot be sure what the cause was, but they both seemed to reach out to be understood.

What does this mean for second language learners who are in a space where the understanding of language, culture, knowledge of acceptable forms of behavior are in the process of being learned and there isn't an adult familiar with both cultures? It is worth asking if there is a way to involve community members of second language learners to help them bridge students' understanding of appropriate behavior in this new setting.

Even when there is a common understanding of culture, there can be miscommunication. Mrs. Nadif and Alia are both from Somalia and speak some of the same languages, although they are from different ethnic groups. Despite this common understanding, they still had difficulty at times communicating. Nieto reminds us that although people may come from the same ethnic group and share culture, there may be variation in their cultural understanding, practices and beliefs. As she writes, “Although culture may influence, it does not determine who we are” (2004, p.148). Nieto explains that, “...culture is too complex and too varied for us to conclude that all those who share a cultural identity behave in the same way or believe the same things” (2004, p. 147). In this particular episode, Mrs. Nadif and Alia said “huh” and “what” frequently, and it didn’t seem to be because of not physically hearing what the other person was saying. Eventually, Mrs. Nadif reached out to me and asked me to explain what she was trying to illuminate for Alia.

In episode 10 the children speak about their behavior and how they are disciplined. I asked the children if there is anything they don’t like about school. Yusef asks in a questioning voice, “Children that are not behaving?” thereby distancing himself from this kind of behavior. In one way, by saying that misbehaving children is something he dislikes, he doesn’t identify with that group of children that misbehave in school. Alia said that she doesn’t like when she gets in trouble or when Mrs. Nadif, the Somali aide, calls her Mom. Mrs. Nadif responds to Alia and says she calls because Alia doesn’t listen to her and doesn’t stop when she asks her to stop. Salim then says that he can tell she gets spankings at home. Alia says that she doesn’t get hit and Salim says that he gets hit by both his Dad and his Mom. Alia confirms that Salim’s Mom gets very mad when



he's in trouble. When Yusef is asked if his parents get mad, he says yes, but when asked if he misbehaves at home he says no.

Alia shares that she gets in trouble at home when she's with her baby brother who is three. She explains that he likes to touch what she likes in the house so she hits him and he cries which results in her getting in trouble. I ask her what she could do instead of hitting him in these situations. Yusef twice suggests running away and then Salim says she should run away from home. I attempt to provide some alternatives for her and instead encourage her to take the item away that he shouldn't be playing with.

Alia then makes us aware of a situation the previous year where Salim ran away from home because his brother was bothering him. When asked about it Salim didn't want to discuss it. Alia tells us more and we learn that Salim got lost when he ran away and was eventually found at a train station by his friend's father. We learn that the school was involved and the principal told him never to run away again. Salim explains that when he got home, "Boom, spanking from my Mom." Alia is very aware of the situation as she describes how Salim's mother was crying when he ran away.

This situation calls to our attention the stressors that some Somali families may be facing with their transition to the United States. We don't know exactly what Salim was thinking when he ran away, but the difficulty he was facing at home with his brother was enough to cause him to search for a way out. In Somalia his frustration with his brother might have been resolved in a different way, reaching out to extended family members or going to a neighbor or friend to seek solace or time away from the difficulty. In the U.S. those strategies might not have been available. Extended family may live in another part of the city or even in another state. The usual support systems that parents and children

relied on in the past, including family and community networks may not be readily available or may be harder to access. Alia often spoke of her immediate family members who lived in cities that were at least a day's drive away. Family dynamics may have also changed as more Somali women are working outside the home, as is the case with Salim's mother. In Somalia his mother may have been home to help resolve disputes but in the U.S. she is working outside the home and is not always around to help the siblings resolve conflicts. According to Alia, his mother was very upset that he ran away yet her response when he got home was to discipline him by using corporal punishment.

Wolf (2010, p. 63) in her research with Somali immigrants living in Massachusetts, explores the ways in which child rearing practices have changed following the refugees resettlement in the United States. Her participants shared that in Somalia and Kenya parents did on occasion use corporal punishment or raise a stick to threaten children in order to discipline them. Some of the parents mentioned that since moving to the United States, they no longer threaten their children with beating, but instead discuss the issue with their child.

We can see that corporal punishment is a concern for Salim and that even though Alia doesn't seem to get hit, she still hits her younger brother to deal with his actions. Although, when she causes him to cry there are also consequences for her. For teachers working with children who may face physical punishment at home it can be a source of difficulty. As a teacher, how do we communicate with parents without being the cause of corporal punishment? In some cultures and societies corporal punishment is an acceptable and expected form of discipline. (Wolf, 2010) In fact for some parents, if

children are not hit to discipline them, they comment on the old adage, “spare the rod and spoil the child.” Some of the teachers who worked with Salim knew that he sometimes faced getting hit. They said they struggled with this issue and wanted to communicate with his mother concerning his behavior in school at times, but also didn’t want him to face spankings at home.

One teacher I interviewed spoke about the laws in the U.S. with the mother because the teacher cared for the children and the mother and she wanted her to understand that in the United States parents can lose their children if the parent crosses a line in terms of hitting or abusing a child. These are issues that parents certainly struggle with as well. When the parent has been raised with corporal punishment and most people around them have used hitting as an acceptable way to discipline a child, how do parents learn new and acceptable ways to discipline? For immigrants who possibly face a new language, new laws, new ways of making a living, the challenge to also learn different ways of raising children and bridging the two cultures may be difficult. So much new information is coming at parents and yet they know what is expected, is acceptable and works in their society and within the boundaries of their cultural norms. To then come to the United States and see that practices that they had in their country of origin could cause them to lose their children must be unsettling. Wolf (2010, p.69) shares examples of the change in the dynamics between parents and children for some Somali families. Some parents spoke of a sense of loss of control because their children would threaten to call the Department of Social Services on their parents if the mother or father didn’t do something the child wanted. For the children to navigate this world must be difficult too. On one hand they’re hearing from school that hitting is not okay and on the other hand,

that can be a common practice in some families. They may be feeling stuck between two worlds.

Another area in which the home culture and school culture bump up against one another is through the use of language. In episode 4 within the second example, the focus of the discussion is on swearing. Mrs. Nadif has heard Alia repeat a swear word. In this episode Mrs. Nadif is advising Alia not to repeat swear words. Mrs. Nadif says to Alia that she is learning bad words from the streets, clearly not acceptable. Mrs. Nadif speaks of how disappointed she is in Alia – almost as if she is Alia’s parent. It’s evident that Mrs. Nadif has high expectations for Alia. She speaks to both Yusef and Alia and asks them where they learned this and whether they learned the words at school. Yusef, Alia and Salim all respond, “no.” Salim accuses Yusef of always saying the swear word on the bus, which Alia confirms. Mrs. Nadif tells them two more times they don’t have to use it. Mrs. Nadif takes advantage of the opportunity to advise the students and serve as an elder giving advice, a common practice in Somalia. This is an example of how Mrs. Nadif often guides the children to follow the right path.

Part of the process of negotiating cultures is understanding the language of the cultures. Following Mrs. Nadif’s comments about swearing, I advised Alia tell a teacher if a student used a curse word toward her rather than using such words. I further explained that she shouldn’t use words that sound like the swear word either. Yusef asked twice, “Are those swear words?” When he was told they were, he said “I don’t get what swear words are.” I explained to Yusef that they are words used to insult people, and when he was confused about the word “insult” I also explained that to him.

At that point Mrs. Nadif told Alia to put her feet down because it was disrespectful. Yusef then asked what disrespect is. I repeat his question and Alia says in disbelief, “You don’t even know?” When I said that I think he knows the meaning of the word, Salim said he fakes and then calls Yusef a “faker.” At that point Alia misunderstood and thought that Salim was swearing. I then explained that Salim was saying Yusef was faking and Salim was not cursing. Yusef responded that they were trying to get him in trouble. This last exchange made was a reminder for me to keep in mind that we may assume students fully understand these concepts around language use and particular terms, but as in Yusef’s case, they may need a chance to further discuss what these ideas mean and what is appropriate. It is easy it is for the language learners to misunderstand common words and be unsure of their use and meaning. It made me wonder about the frequency of such misunderstandings.

This incident for me raises the notion of what words are considered swear words and whether particular words are acceptable to use at all, in particular places, or with particular people. Language use quickly becomes complicated. Some parents don’t allow certain words, such as hate, shut-up, dummy, etc., while other parents consider the use of such terms okay. Parents, who may not know English or have a limited understanding, may be unable to guide their child in the use of such terms, because they are unfamiliar with the language. A comparable term in their own language may not be allowed, but when they are unfamiliar with the impact of particular words, they may not be able to steer their child away from using those terms. The teachers become very important in guiding second language learners through the minefield. Some of the parents in Wolf’s (2010) study speak about the way in which communication between

children and adults have changed since moving to the U.S. In Somalia children were expected to only listen to elders in their community, not voice their thoughts or challenge adults, and not maintain direct eye contact. The parents spoke of their children now in the U.S. as being more assertive and challenging them more than in the past. Parents have to determine what practices they want their children to maintain and which they may be willing to let go.

Students and parents may not only need assistance in negotiating the language and culture, but also in advocating for their children and accessing available resources. In episode 5 we learn from Salim that one of the greatest challenges he faces is talking. Salim stutters. While he loves to talk and to participate, he recognized how difficult it sometimes became because of his stuttering issue. We learn that he stutters in both Somali and English and that he stutters everywhere. When I asked him about his family's knowledge of the stuttering, he said his mom knew about it because he was born with it. Through conversations with one of the teachers it became apparent that the speech therapist in the school thought that his stuttering was not severe enough to qualify him for services. The teacher also mentioned that school funds were low and the case load of the speech therapist was high. The therapist had given Salim a few quick hints about how to lessen his stuttering, but when I asked him about it, he had forgotten all about those strategies and the one time meeting with the speech therapist.

The roles of parents and teachers may be quite different in Somalia compared to the United States. (Wolf, 2010) In the U.S. parents often have to advocate for their children to get the services that are required. As school districts across the country have had to slash their budgets, services in schools are being reduced. Some school districts

are reluctant to offer testing and services unless the need is dire. Parents can and do advocate to make sure that their children get the services that they believe their child needs. Fortunately, as a result of legislation, schools are required to respond when parents request that their child be tested when a learning issue is noticed.

In Somalia and in refugee camps in Kenya, the Somali Bantu had limited access to education. The culture around school was likely very different. When children are enrolled in school it is left with the school to manage the child. There may only be a classroom teacher who is responsible for every aspect of the classroom and special services for children with disabilities may not be available. One Somali man in Wolf's study (2010) described how there were no tables, chairs or textbooks available when he attended school in Somalia and in fact he had to bring his own stool to the classroom each day. The responsibility of the education of the child is left with the school and there is a clear demarcation. The parents are not expected to help at home with homework and they are not seen as advocates for their child. With parents having little experience with formal schools in Somalia and Kenya, they may not have the awareness of the need to advocate for their child in the U.S. schools.

Roxas (2008) in his study of refugee Somali male high school students in the U.S. found in some Somali families the older siblings, who were in high school, were asked to translate at parent-teacher conferences and in some cases were asked to make decisions concerning the younger sibling's education. He found that those parents who had little educational experience in Somalia were less able to negotiate the U.S. education system in order to advocate for their children. He mentioned one Somali parent in his study who when describing the extreme challenges his sons faced in high school said, "I don't know

who to turn to for help” (Roxas, 2008, p. 7). The question arises; does Salim’s mom know the services that are available for him and how to access them? According to the teachers she is very involved, but she may or may not have the skills or knowledge of how the process works to advocate for him to get the services that he needs. The school administrators, teachers and support staff may not push for him to get services if they see the needs of other students as greater and if the budget is limited. Additionally, the mother may see the stuttering as just the way Salim is, and may not be aware that through speech therapy the challenge he faces could be overcome. Helping parents of second language learners know what services are available and how to access them and advocate for their children is essential to the students having full access to the educational system.

This episode raises the question of how we educate parents, particularly parents who speak English as a second language and parents who are not literate in English, about all of the services available for their children and how we let them know ways they can advocate for their child. I found through my own experience that schools are sometimes not likely to tell parents what services are available or how to go about accessing those services, especially when the school district is having financial difficulties. The children all demonstrated that they knew Salim had a problem with his speech and Salim clearly recognized it was a problem. Salim’s mom, the teacher and the speech therapist were all aware of the challenge he faced. Even though it was clearly difficult for Salim to get his thoughts out, he didn’t benefit from the services of a speech therapist. From what I observed in the classroom, Salim still responded in the large group and participated frequently, but I also witnessed times that it was excruciating to see him reading aloud in a small group or answering questions because of the struggle he



faced with stuttering. Fortunately, I did not witness teasing as a result of his speech, but students may be making fun of him when adults are not observing. Helping parents to understand their role in advocating for services for their child is essential to the successful education of second language learners.

A final idea that emerged from the data was how teachers scaffold concepts where either the teacher is unfamiliar with cultural practices or the examples typically used do not come to the fore-front. In the final episode, the focus is on what is not said rather than what is uttered. Alia was reading a book about Benjamin Franklin with the teacher. She encountered a new word, “minister,” in her reading. The teacher tried to help her to understand the word by giving her similar words, such as priest and pastor. However, the teacher didn’t use the term of “Imam,” a spiritual leader in a mosque, to help Alia understand the new word of “minister”. Since Alia clearly identifies as Muslim, as can be seen through her choice of clothing and her comments, it would seem that one way for her to understand a new term such as minister is to see how it is related to a word and concept with which she’s already familiar. Is it because the teacher didn’t know the term? I don’t believe so. I believe we reach for those words and understandings which are easiest for us to make a connection. The teacher’s father was a missionary and leader in the church. Perhaps for that reason it was easiest for her to use pastor or priest. However, I’m not sure that either priest or pastor is a term that Alia was familiar with. This raises the question, with so many diverse learners, how can we as educators become more familiar with students’ cultures, religions and languages so that as we seek to bridge the understanding between the languages we use concepts and terms which are familiar to children so as to scaffold their understanding? This one example is not representative of

the way in which the teacher reached out to understand and work with the children. She was a teacher deeply committed to the children and their development. She was conscious of helping bridge the students' understanding of concepts. It is simply one event that caused me to reflect on the examples we choose when helping students make connections with the academic content.

### **E. Maintaining Home Culture**

There were many ways in which I saw the children maintaining and sharing their home culture. This occurred through the use of language, references made to communication with extended families living in the United States, the sharing of Somali games, through dress and the following of dietary restrictions for religious reasons. There were several occasions where the children made references to activities they did with family members and the larger Somali community. Through the children's conversations it was evident that the Somali community maintained strong ties with one another, even across vast distances. Between 1983 and 2004 large numbers of Somali refugees were resettled in Minnesota, California, Georgia and Washington, D.C. (U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2004). The children spoke of visiting relatives in different states for weddings and family gatherings and they spoke of frequent communication with relatives from out of state. An example of the way in which cultural practices are still in place is evident through Alia's story of the wedding she attended where the bride was struck by a family member because of not following the culturally appropriate protocol for the marriage process. While some cultural practices are being maintained, it is also evident that Alia, as a young girl, was uncomfortable with the way in which the bride was treated by her family in this instance. We are reminded of Nieto's

observation (2004) that culture is not static and that over time some cultural practices may change while others are maintained.

Near the end of her storytelling, one of Alia's English speaking classmates, who had joined us for lunch, asked her if she was "in the wedding," meaning was she the flower girl or an attendant. Alia responded positively. When asked by the girl what part she played, Alia responded that she was watching. It was interesting to see how the two girls negotiated the meaning of this concept, to be "in a wedding". It didn't appear that they actually understood one another because Alia was not familiar with the phrase, "in a wedding" and most likely was unfamiliar with concepts such as flower girl or bridesmaid, since that is not a part of wedding ceremonies that she's witnessed. The ceremonies around major life events, such as weddings, births or deaths are packed with cultural information. Through Alia's interaction we can see how Alia's perception of being in a wedding is slightly different than her classmates.

In episode 9 the children discuss the topic of dating and what is expected of Somali adolescents. In this episode the children start off by talking about how bad students' behavior is on the bus which leads to one of their English speaking classmates sitting in on the lunch mentioning seeing a boy kiss another boy on the bus. Both Salim and Alia make a sound of disapproval. Salim calls the behavior gay. I ask the children not to say that and then ask if it's okay for *anybody* to kiss in elementary school. The classmate who raised the issue says no and then Alia goes on to say, "...you're never supposed to like anybody until you're grown up." Salim confirms this and Alia says, "That's what we say." Through this interaction we see that Alia is referring to her social group, Somali. She identifies with this group and seems to agree with this idea as she

says it is “what *we* say.” Alia elaborates on what it means to be grown up. She says, “We can’t like anybody until you’re 15.” Alia informs the group that she’s ten, and thereby implies that she is too young to like anybody at this point. Mrs. Kosha tells Alia that she has five more years and she agrees. Through this interaction we see how Alia identifies with the Somali culture and the practice of not dating or liking anyone until they are grown, which according to Alia is at the age of 15.

In the classroom on a daily basis Alia wore a head scarf or hijab. She dressed conservatively, making sure to have her arms and legs covered, as is expected with her religion. She often wore a dress with jeans or long pants underneath. At times she wore multiple layers including sweatshirts over her long-sleeved shirts, even during warmer weather.

In the spring when the students began having outdoor recess again, after spending months indoors, Alia gathered stones to play a Somali game. In the game, the player tosses one stone up and while it’s in the air, she grabs another. She continues picking up one stone at a time as she tosses that first stone in the air, until she gathers all the stones or until she misses, at which time the next player goes. It was interesting to see that many of the girls from her class gathered around her to learn and play the game. Even Mrs. Nadif joined in and played the game. It appeared that the girls enjoyed the game and they played frequently during recess over the course of several weeks.

Another way in which I witnessed the Somali culture in the classroom was through the use of the Somali language between Mrs. Nadif and the children. There were times that she corrected them or gave them information in Somali. During lunches the children were aware of what food items contained pork and they avoided those choices.

The lunch staff was aware of the children's dietary restrictions and would point out which items had pork in them. During the time I was in the classroom, Ramadan was being observed. While the children didn't fast, they spoke of fasting and Mrs. Nadif fasted and spoke about the practice.

Often during lunch the children spoke of interactions they had at home regarding events, practices or family members. The children spoke on occasion about the disciplinary practices their family used. They spoke of responsibilities they had in the household and mentioned interactions they'd had with family members.

Mrs. Nadif spoke in her interview and during our lunch discussions about her responsibility as an aide to the children. She viewed her role as more than a staff member. At one point she said she sees herself as the parent of the children and she explained how she wants them to succeed as much as she wants her own children to succeed.

I did not see anything within the curriculum about Somalia or providing information to all students about Somalia. There were welcome signs written in Somali at the entrance to the school. I spoke to individual teachers who tried to locate books in Somali or stories about Somalia, but there was not any formalized emphasis to study Somalia that I was aware of or observed in the school.

For these students there are many examples of ways in which their identity as Somalis is evident. Through their language, stories, descriptions of family events, dress, games and dietary restrictions linked to their religious practices, we can see that they are maintaining many of their cultural practices. Nieto (2004) points out that culture is intertwined with power. How members of the dominant culture perceive a non-dominant

culture may affect how students from the non-dominant culture are perceived. Those students from the non-dominant culture may be viewed as having wrong, odd or unusual practices. They may be misunderstood or pushed to hide their identity to fit in with the dominant culture. In this school community the Somali children were definitely in the minority. Their beliefs and practices could easily be overlooked. The lack of curriculum about their history, heritage and lives is one of the ways in which the dominant culture took precedence. However, I found that the small group lunches we were having quickly drew their classmates' attention. Many of their peers who were not Somali asked to join and wanted to be a part of the group. Their classmates saw this activity of having lunch together and the chance to talk about various topics as something exciting. The Somali students clearly enjoyed having the opportunity to meet as a special group and felt proud of sharing their Somali culture during lunch as well as with the larger class.

#### **F. Using language to assert one's views and self**

How do the learners use language to assert themselves and their views? One of the strongest pieces of evidence for this is in episode 3 when Yusef is certain that he will have a substitute teacher for music. He continued to try to make his point with the Somali aide, his classroom teacher and myself until finally he had the bit of information that helped him to realize that Mrs. Nadif would be substituting on this particular day.

Listening to this exchange is fascinating because Yusef is often positioned as someone quiet and reserved, but we see here that in fact he advocates for himself and when he believes something strongly he doesn't give up his viewpoint easily. Yusef is willing to assert his viewpoint and even contradict, respectfully, the authority figures around him, if he strongly believes that he is right. Yusef's persistence in asserting his

viewpoint is especially interesting when one considers how Somali parents in Wolf's study (2010) explain that when in Somalia, children were not encouraged to challenge adults and now they are learning how to balance a sense of respect for elders with being able to voice their ideas.

In another example Alia shares why she moved her chair in gym. While everyone seemed to feel she was disrespecting the gym teacher, Alia explains that she was not disrespecting the teacher; she was in fact trying to avoid getting in trouble. At the time she was not able to explain that, but the following day, when we questioned her about the situation we heard what she was actually trying to do.

On another occasion when Mrs. Nadif and I explained that we would not be meeting for lunch because I would instead be interviewing Mrs. Nadif, Alia asked what we would talk about. She asked us not to talk about her and we learned that she did not want to be viewed as a troublemaker. She was advocating for herself and how she was to be identified.

In Salim's case, the clearest evidence of him advocating for himself comes through with his disability. Although his stuttering was sometimes challenging for him, he did not let it stop him from participating in class. Salim frequently raised his hand and answered questions. He participated frequently in our lunch conversations and persisted, even at those times when stuttering slowed him down.

Although I did not have much time with Malika through our lunchtime interviews, I did have time to observe her and speak with her during portions of class, before her family moved from the area. During that time Malika told me about her goal of becoming a doctor, teacher or a scientist. She had set high goals that she planned to

achieve. Each of the four children used English to share their ideas and views and to provide information and stories from their perspective. I saw each of them eager to participate in class to share their thoughts. When they felt a classmate had misrepresented them, they didn't hesitate to push back and set the record straight. They had learned enough language to assert themselves with students and teachers in both the small group and large group settings.



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

#### **A. Summary of the Research**

In this chapter I will summarize the research, discuss the implications of the findings, and provide recommendations for further research. This study is an exploration of the ways in which four Somali students use language to express their identity and the ways in which their home culture and the school culture influence the development of their identity. Maya Angelou has said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you” and without a doubt it is a powerful statement that is apropos about these four children. It is a privilege that I had the opportunity to hear their stories and reflect on how their lives, experiences, insights and thoughts can influence how we as educators approach education.

In beginning this study I had general questions about how the Somali learners I was working with used language and how they were acculturating to the classroom. In this micro-ethnographic study, the data drove the questions, rather than the questions driving the data. This is typical of ethnographic research and in particular with conversation analysis. (Boxer and Cohen, 2004, p. 15) As I spent more time with the students and began collecting data I continued to generate questions around the situations I was observing. As I listened to the data, I began to focus on the two overarching questions and the five more specific questions below. The overarching question of this study is how do the participants use language to express their identity in school and in what ways are the home culture and the school culture influencing the development of their identity? The sub-questions I ask in this study are:

- How does the acquisition of a second language, school culture and experiences in school shape these learners' multiple identities?
- How do the children in this study express their multiple identities?
- Do the children's home cultures bump up against the school culture and how do the children and adults negotiate that overlap?
- Do the participants strive to maintain their home culture and if so, how is that expressed and received in the school context?
- How do the learners use language to assert themselves and their views?

The data were collected through classroom observations, interviews and the collection of documents including student assessments assignments, articles on the Somali community and a documentary about resettled families from Somalia. Classroom observations were conducted approximately twice per week between October and May of the children's third grade year. Interviews were conducted with teachers who were currently working with the students or who had worked with them in the previous years, a Somali aide who worked closely with the students during the school year and two of the parents of the children. After having spent several weeks with the children observing and becoming familiar with the routines of the classroom I began conducting regular focus group interviews during their lunch break. These open-ended conversations became a rich source of data and opened up a window into the children's lives both at school and at home.

Analysis of the data started from the moment I began collecting it and continues even now as I write my conclusion. My analysis of the focus group interviews conducted during the lunchtime meetings was based on the microethnographic approach explained by Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto and Shuart-Faris (2005). In this approach researchers look carefully at specific events and interactions, but also link these interactions to the broader contexts and connections that the participants are using, responding to and being

influenced by. By examining these broader contexts we may come to new and deeper understandings of the words and actions we use to negotiate this world we live in.

After repeatedly listening to the data, reflecting on possible meanings, considering what indirect references were incorporated into the conversation and what meaning this had for the participants in the larger scheme of things, I identified tentative findings. I went back to the questions I posed in the study and looked through the data to find examples of interactions that shed light on the inquiry. By reexamining the data I was often able to locate several examples of ways in which the participants' interactions helped to inform me about the particular question. Following each question posed in the study is a brief summary of the findings related to it.

How does the acquisition of a second language, school culture and experiences in school shape these learners' multiple identities?

It is evident that they use language much in the same way as native speakers, and are able at most times to express their ideas clearly. There were times when they used slang and other terms in ways that demonstrated they did not fully understand the power of the words they chose. The teachers, Somali aide and fellow students helped to shape the language the children used. In particular the aide was able to bridge the children's understanding of the language and guide them as to what terms and usage were appropriate. In some of the families the children spoke more English than parents and roles changed as the child became the English teacher and translator for the parent. The students were perceived as having particular characteristics but it was evident that they would push back against those perceptions, when they felt they weren't accurate.

How do the children in this study express their multiple identities?

Our identities are complex and fluid, changing depending on who we're with, where we're at, the circumstances of the situation and the events and interactions preceding the current moment. How those expressions of identity are received is out of our control. Within this study there were times that I had glimpses of the way in which participants identified at that moment in time and opportunities to observe how they pushed back and instead shared how they wanted to be perceived.

Yusef comes across as shy and reticent, but when we listen closely we find that he can also be loud, confident, persistent, and someone who teases the other children. When the other children characterize Yusef as a troublemaker on the bus, he pushes back against this perception. Alia identifies herself as Muslim through her actions and her dress. Alia is seen as a child who frequently gets in trouble, but doesn't want to be positioned as a troublemaker. Through the interactions, we can see how difficult it becomes for children to change the perceptions that others have about them. Alia also demonstrates her skill as a storyteller by narrating family events she's participated in.

Salim describes himself as someone not good at math and as someone who stutters a lot. Salim is also described by the other children as being someone who despite his stuttering talks a lot. This is a perception that Salim pushes back against by suggesting that Alia speaks more than he does.

Do the children's home cultures bump up against the school culture and how do the children and adults negotiate that overlap?

During the interviews, both the teachers and the students raised the issue of discipline that occurs at home. Teachers spoke about the fact that corporal punishment was used in some homes and they felt it was important to inform parents of the U.S. laws regarding child abuse so that parents would be aware of regulations that they might not

have had in Somalia. Mrs. Nadif helped to negotiate and bridge the two cultures. She not only explained academic information, but she also helped the children by giving them advice and guiding them in their use of language.

In the U.S., parents are expected to be the advocates for their children in the school system. One of the issues that Salim's family faced was gaining access to services within the school or district for his stuttering. This is one area where it may be very easy for second language learners to fall through the cracks if parents are not accustomed to being an advocate for their child with school personnel.

Do the participants strive to maintain their home culture and if so, how is that expressed and received in the school context?

The children in this study maintained their home culture through their dress, dietary practices, sharing of Somali games at recess, and use of language. At times, the children used their L1 to communicate with one-another and the Somali aide. They spoke about family and Somali community events that they participated in. It was evident that the Somali community maintained strong bonds across vast distances and that through these experiences they were maintaining their culture. They spoke of traveling to neighboring states to attend weddings and visit friends and relatives. The children spoke of practices in their family and community related to dating and what's acceptable within their culture.

How do the learners use language to assert themselves and their views?

During our lunchtime conversations there were various times that each of the participants asserted their views. Yusef was seen as shy and quiet, yet it became apparent, that when given the opportunity, he asserted his ideas, exemplified during one lunch when he insisted there would be a substitute for music that day. Similarly Alia's

actions during gym were perceived as disrespectful when she was trying to avoid trouble and make a choice to remove herself from conflict with another child. She asserted herself in the gym class and when explaining the situation, she put forward the reasons for her choice of action. Salim frequently stated his views. Whether in class or in our small group discussions, Salim often shared his ideas and opinions, despite his stuttering.

### **B. Implications of the Findings**

What do these findings mean for us as educators? What can we take from this study that will help us to do our job better? There are many lessons to be learned from these children. The children's identities are still forming. Aspects of our identity shift from moment to moment, parts of our self coming to the forefront depending on who we are with and the circumstances of a situation. Yet, we, as educators and adults often position students as being this or that. We identify them as troublemakers, shy, boisterous, smart or unmotivated when in reality they may or may not be how we perceive. The students may be working to change those views, but as we hang on to them and reinforce what we perceive to be, we make it harder for the child to break out of that assessment. Students are constantly remaking themselves and fighting against some of the perceptions that are held about them. One of the greatest gifts we can give a child is the opportunity to not be held to a static identity. Allowing children to change and not be positioned as a rigid identity is very freeing. It allows them to grow, learn and develop. Their vision of themselves will be adjustable, giving them the chance to remake themselves when they realize they want to be seen in a different light. By not pigeonholing students, we create openings for them to examine who they are and who they want

to be. By helping them identify goals and the steps to achieve them, we can assist them in more fully realizing their dreams.

One of the issues that became very significant to me while undertaking this research is the fact that students have stories and there's a lot to be gained by listening to them. They have so much to share, but their stories of their experiences and insights can easily be overlooked. The pressure to cover content and meet examination goals can force us to continue moving along in instruction without hearing what students really have to say. By carving out time to hear about their families, experiences and insights we create opportunity for connection with them as individuals, between students, and across cultures. It can be as simple as occasionally sitting down for lunch with a small group of students, spending time on the playground with the children during recess, incorporating opportunities for students to share through the writing process or finding a few minutes before and after school while the students are waiting to be picked up or enter the classroom. School programs where parents and students are invited to observe the learning that's taking place or hear about their child's progress or curriculum are rich opportunities for teachers and administrators to engage in conversations with parents and students to learn more deeply about the children, families and their culture represented in the classroom.

It is helpful when teachers keep in mind that children pick up language quickly but don't always understand the full power of the words they use. They pick up many words from fellow students, friends, neighbors and media sources without fully realizing the nuanced meaning of the language. They sometimes use terms and a tone of voice that would indicate that they intend to use the word in a particular way, but through

questioning we may find that the child is unaware of the subtle meaning of the expression. Parents may not be able to guide their child's use of terms and concepts, especially when they don't speak English or are unfamiliar with slang terms and usage. The teachers and staff's role is greater because they have the chance to help students understand the fine distinctions of the new language they are using.

When second language learners acquire English language before parents do, we are obliged to recognize that roles sometimes change between the parent and the child. Parents, at times, rely on the child to translate information from the school or teacher. This could be information about the child's progress or behavior. On occasion an older sibling is present to translate. What is the impact in a family when a child is translating in a conference or regarding a situation that occurred at school? Does the child have the language skills to translate and is it culturally appropriate? Developmentally is the child able to explain what the teacher is trying to convey? These are issues we need to consider when working with second language learners and their families.

On several occasions either teachers or students raised the issue of corporal punishment. Parenting practices and forms of discipline vary around the world. Teachers in U.S. public schools are obligated by law to report any signs of abuse. Immigrant parents may not be aware of the laws established to protect children who are being abused. Teachers and administrators can play a role in helping parents to be aware of laws and guidelines in raising children as well as alternative consequences that can be used to discipline children. In some families children may be asked to take on what is considered a high level of responsibility, e.g. having a 9 or 10 year old watch a toddler. While this may be acceptable in some communities, especially with the support of



extended family, it may not be judged as a parent providing adequate supervision in the U.S. Having conversations about such topics can help immigrant family members to have information about what expectations are in terms of raising and disciplining children. This information can help parents be aware of what kind of discipline crosses the line into child abuse and provides them with alternative techniques to corporal punishment.

Parents often need information about how the school system works and how they can advocate for what they believe their child needs. Again, language can be a barrier to gaining access to this information for some immigrant parents. They may not even be aware of the range of services offered for their child. Helping parents to identify services they may need and assisting them in advocating for their children is a role that teachers, staff, and administrators can play. With school budgets shrinking, districts are looking for ways to save money. More and more, parents have to advocate for their children to receive the services they need to succeed. Informing parents about the services available in the school district and how to access them is a role that teachers can play.

In some countries the role of the teacher in the school is very minimal. Conferences outlining students' progress are not part of the routine of the school year, parents are not encouraged to visit the children's classrooms and parents are not expected to help children with homework or projects. The school's role is to provide education and the parents' role is to pay the school fees, provide learning materials and the school uniform, and to make sure the child goes to school. Parents who are familiar with schools that operate in this way may be less familiar with education in the United States where parents are expected to provide these basic items but are also expected to advocate

for their child. If a parent has a concern about their child, what they're learning or the situation in the classroom, he or she would be likely to raise his/her concern with the teacher or an administrator. Immigrant parents may not feel comfortable questioning a teacher or challenging a decision the teacher has made. Making parents aware of how they can support their child's learning is another important role that teachers and staff can play.

As educators, it is incumbent upon us to seek out information about our students' language and culture. The more we know about their family beliefs, values, and way of living, the better we can help them make connections to the material they are learning in school. While instructing students, they may find it helpful for us to help bridge their understanding by using terms and concepts they are familiar with in their first culture to learn similar ideas, concepts and terms in their new language. As teachers, we sometimes rely on examples that are familiar to us, but not necessarily to the student. Seeking relevant terms and comparisons may strengthen the child's understanding. We can only do this when we are familiar with the second language learners' community.

Alongside this concept is the idea of bringing the culture of each of the children into the classroom. Each of us comes to school with a bevy of cultural practices, sometimes hidden from us. Although more and more curriculum content is being determined by the statewide testing demands, there are ways for teachers to provide opportunities for students to share their cultural identities with the class. This not only can be a source of pride for each of the students, it also gives the students a chance to learn about one-another, their families and the ways in which their cultures and practices have common ground and yet are distinct. Even if there are not places within the existing

curriculum to incorporate facts and activities about the children's heritage and background, there are passive ways to provide a space for children to learn about one-another. Through the use of bulletin boards, the display of artifacts, the selection of books we provide for the classroom library, and activities such as morning routines and transitions, we can find ways to integrate details about each child's background. Even sharing a few facts each day will, over the course of a year, provide students with an abundance of knowledge about one-another. Displays of different languages in the classroom and the incorporation of activities that encourage students to learn a few words from one-another's language shows an interest in the child and their background. Inviting parents into the classroom for culminating events around culture is also a way to honor their heritage and help them learn about the ways in which they can be involved in their children's education. Opening the school doors and encouraging parents' participation in the school will foster a stronger more open relationship between home and school which can result in a more robust education for their child. By learning more about individual children's country of origin and culture, teachers will also have the opportunity to gain knowledge about the multitude of cultural practices that originate from the country. Having the chance to discover the many kinds of cultural expressions emanating from our diverse student populations can only enrich our lives and our classrooms.

The importance of hiring staff and teachers who speak the language and understand the culture of our immigrant students should not be underestimated. The ability of these staff members to understand situations and identify times when culture or language may be playing a factor in our understanding of a situation can be a tremendous

benefit. They may ask questions and see circumstances that someone less familiar with the culture would not recognize. These staff members can help to bridge understanding between families and the rest of the school staff. They are an excellent resource to the community.

One of the observations is the frequency of transitions in and out of the classroom. Throughout the academic year there were students leaving the school and new students joining the classroom. The Somali students often spoke of the fact that they would be moving soon. Alia in particular was sure she would be moving soon. She was delighted at the prospect of missing the statewide testing. When we told her there would still be testing at the school she moved to, she was greatly disappointed. There was always an expectation that students would be leaving soon. Malika did move half way through the year. Through communications with the teachers we learned that she was not happy at her new school, longed to come back to Hamilton and was struggling to make friends and feel connected to her new school community. Parents make the choice to move for many reasons, but the impact on students' learning cannot be underestimated. Acclimating to a new setting takes children time and the disruption to their learning can be significant. In previous years the district had kept children in their original school and then bused them if they moved away from the neighborhood school. This allowed their learning to go on uninterrupted for that academic year. Unfortunately, with budget cuts, during this academic year they stopped busing and students were required to make the transition to the new school mid-year.

### **C. Recommendations for Further Research**

Further studies which examine how parents view their role in their children's education would be illuminating. Understanding what barriers there are to immigrant parent participation and involvement would be beneficial to educators everywhere.

Pursuing research about how school systems can develop curriculum which incorporates a deeper understanding of cultures represented in the classroom and at the same time meeting state standard goals would be helpful. As the state standards and examination process drives us further and further toward a narrow curriculum which focuses on reading and math, we risk losing the exploration of the diverse cultures represented in our society. Every day we see articles about how diverse our society is and how it will continue to diversify, yet the very children who will live and work in this interconnected world have little time in an average day of school to learn about those within their class, school, community, country and world. I hope with that as we educators reflect on the education system as a whole and children and families who are being served by it that we can learn about one-another and be prepared to hear one-another's rich and interesting stories.

## APPENDIX A

### GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER AND SUPPORT STAFF INTERVIEWS

1. Explain my purpose and interest in the research topic. Provide a brief explanation of the focus of the study – children's level of literacy, social connections and interactions, incorporation of culture, parents' expectations, teachers' expectations.
2. What are your hopes for the children in your class? Your hopes for the Somali children?
3. Tell me about the Somali children's literacy skills.
4. How do you see their skills progressing?
5. How do you incorporate their culture into the classroom?
6. How do you learn about their culture?
7. What are their strengths?
8. Have you noticed particular areas of challenge for the Somali learners?
9. How do you incorporate the Somali children's aide into the learning environment?
10. When do you plan or share ideas with the aide?
11. If you could have any wish come true for your class, what would it be?
12. What are the challenges you face in helping the Somali learners?
13. What social connections do you see in the classroom with the Somali children?
14. In what ways, if any, do the Somali children support one-another?
15. Do you have work samples available from the beginning of the year up until now?

## APPENDIX B

### GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PARENT INTERVIEWS

1. What are your goals for your children?
2. What do you feel is the purpose of education?
3. What do you hope your children will achieve?
4. How do you see your children affected by school?
5. Are there any negative impacts that you've seen?
6. How has your child's behavior been since starting school here in the U.S.?
7. What do you expect from your child in school?
8. How do you support your child's education?
9. Have you seen your children not meeting expectations? If not, how do you handle that situation?
10. Are you concerned with maintaining your culture and of your child maintaining your culture?
11. Do you see your children's cultural practices changing? If so, in what ways?
12. In what ways are you able to foster your culture at home?
13. Do you expect school personnel to know and understand your culture? Do you feel teachers, staff and administrators do understand your culture?
14. How does school affect your home life?

## APPENDIX C

### GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

1. How old are you and when is your birthday?
2. When did you move to the United States?
3. Did you go to school in Kenya?
4. Do you like school? What do you like most?
5. What's your favorite subject?
6. Do you like to read? Do you like to write?
7. What kinds of stories do you like to read?
8. How do you pick books to read?
9. Do you read at home?
10. What kind of reading do you do at home?
11. Do you go to the library?
12. Where do you get books from or materials to read?
13. What languages do you speak?
14. Do you read or write in any other languages?
15. Do you help your parents or family to figure out words, signs, information?
16. Do you ever help explain something in English?
17. How has your life changed since starting school in the U.S.?
18. Do you like the changes that have happened? If so, what do you like about coming here to the U.S.?
19. What don't you like about coming here to the U.S.?
20. Do you feel people understand you here?



21. What are the things you miss about Kenya or Somalia?
22. If you could have any wish come true, what would it be?
23. How do you know a book is just right for you?
24. What do you do when you get to words you don't know?
25. What do you do when you read something that doesn't make sense?
26. Do some of the books seem strange to you?
27. Who do you like to play with?
28. What do you like to play?
29. What's your favorite day to celebrate?
30. Do you like writing?
31. What do you like to write about?
32. Do you do any writing at home?
33. Tell me about the reading responses and practice tests you take. How do you support or help the other Somali children?
34. Who do you play with at home?
35. Where do you play at home?
36. Do you and your family come to school events?

## APPENDIX D

### PILOT STUDY

#### Spaces and Places, Lessons from Students: Asserting Oneself

Lunchtime Discussion on Behavior

March 2008

12:00-12:25 (a portion of the 25 minute interaction)

Folder A

File 33

#### Participants:

- Alia
- Yusef
- Mrs. Kosha (Mrs. K)
- Mrs N (Somali aide assisting in the classroom)
- Mrs. M (classroom teacher)

**Table 21: KEY to transcription**

Symbol	Description of use
[ ]	comments or observation by researcher providing background or description
	pause - each bar represents one second
xxx	undecipherable speech
?	question, raising intonation
---	within word shows an extension or elongation of the word
<i>Italics</i>	shows emphasis on those italicized words
<u>Underline</u>	shows overlapping message units

#### Context

This study focuses on four third grade Somali students who are attending an urban school in New England. This segment of transcript is taken from a focus group session that occurs each week. Usually after recess I go with the Somali children to get their lunch and we go back to the classroom to talk and have lunch while the rest of the class

eats in the cafeteria. On this particular day a portion of the conversation during out lunch meeting was about children's behavior in the classroom and on the topic of the lesson following lunch, which was music.

On this particular day, the students got out their homework folders and prepared to transition to their "home room," as they usually do after writing. The class then went for recess outside, where they had a chance to play on the playground, something that hasn't happened for months, due to the cold weather and saturated state of the ground. After playing outside for about 15 minutes they came in the building and lined up in the hallway near the wall just outside the cafeteria doors. Normally they would have been able to go in right away, but it appeared the younger classes were still finishing up their lunch, so they had to wait for about five minutes in the hallway.

While waiting, there was a small class of students lining up with their two teachers. One of the children, a girl, looked quite a bit older than the other kids. She appeared to be about 13 or 14 years old. The school's highest level is 5<sup>th</sup> grade in which most children are usually 10-11 years old. The teacher for that class asked the girl to line up and wait quietly and she began to talk back to the teacher telling the teacher she didn't have to listen to her. The young girl began using profanity and disrespecting the teacher. I was surprised that the teacher didn't immediately send her to the office or take some kind of immediate action. It was unclear whether the teacher heard the profanity, but she did hear the girl talking back rudely. The teacher did not respond to the student.

One of the students from our class standing next to me, Yusef, looked at the girl and made an expression of surprise on his face. I then realized that the class seemed to be a group of children with varying special needs, one boy had Down Syndrome, others

seemed to be developmentally delayed and one was boy, who we often see walking the halls to develop his motor skills may have cerebral palsy. I realized that perhaps the teacher wasn't responding as a teacher normally might because of this girl's special learning needs.

At that point the teacher of this small class had the students begin to exit the cafeteria and shortly after they exited we entered to line up for lunch. Usually, the three children who eat lunch with me are Salim, Yusef and Alia. On this day, because of our delay in being able to enter the cafeteria, we saw that Salim had already sat down in the cafeteria and was eating with children from his class, so just Yusef and Alia ate lunch with me on this day. On the way upstairs to the classroom, where we eat our lunch, Yusef began to talk about the girl who had been talking back to her teacher. We continued the conversation when we sat down for lunch and I asked the children about this girl's behavior and their own behavior. As the conversation progressed we shifted to the topic of music.

### **Process of Transcription and Data Analysis**

The data from the conversation has been transcribed in the table below. There are columns to identify the line number, speaker, message unit, observer comments, identity reflections, source of knowledge, intertextual and intercontextual connections and ideational notations. Each of these column headings is first explained in the table so as to inform the reader of the author's use of these terms. Intertextuality and intercontextuality are two concepts that require more detailed elaboration. For that reason, you will find an expanded explanation of those terms below.

Intertextuality is a concept that suggests that no text is original and that what we write is actually portions of other texts. These texts can be verbal or written. According to Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993, p. 306), intertextuality when viewed from a social semiotic perspective is not limited to literature text references but could also include “...words, the organizational structure of texts, register levels, genre types, content, and the situational contexts in which texts occur...” Intertextuality could be referenced to a specific time, event or situation. With intertextuality the details only make sense when you have the frame of that context. The texts proposed in conversation may or may not be accepted by those participating in the conversation and that is part of the analysis by the researcher. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993, p.307) suggest that people are not conscious of the ways in which they utilize various texts in speech and that researchers examining the use of language should make the use of these texts noticeable when analyzing language.

Exploring the use of texts in conversation, writing or reading may help educators in understanding how learners are using their knowledge of various texts to make meaning. These scholars see intertextuality as a social construction where language and the meaning conveyed is developed through actions and reactions with others, be it verbally or written. Bloome & Egan-Robertson add that individuals use contextualization cues, a term used by Gumperz (1986), such as verbal signals, nonverbal signals and prosodic signals (e.g., intonation patterns, volume, stress patterns) to make their meaning clear to those included in the dialogue. They explain the concept of text and intertextuality well when they write,

No text – either conversational or written- exists in isolation; every text exists in relation to previous and forthcoming texts. But which texts are

and will be related is not a given; it is a social construction. People interacting with each other, construct intertextual relationships by the ways they act and react to each other. An intertextual relationship is proposed, is recognized, is acknowledged, and has social significance. (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311)

The authors also call our attention to *who* gets to make the intertextual connection and who acknowledges it or contests it. This is all a part of the analysis.

Intercontextuality is a concept related to intertextuality. Intercontextuality is when reference is made to a previous situation or event. For example, in a conversation or dialogue a teacher or student may reference a previous situation or event that occurred in an earlier lesson. Participants in that conversation then choose to acknowledge the connection referenced and show that the connection is relevant or has social significance to them. Through this process meaning is created. Bloome et al. (2005, p. 38) writes, “A connection among events has to be ratified by others; the participants have to acknowledge and recognize the connection, and the connection has to have some social consequence.” Intercontextuality involves drawing on what is in the participants’ schemata. As we have experiences, we build a framework for understanding. The more experiences and interactions we have, the more we build our framework and our understanding. We begin to understand the context and how those contexts change. We draw on these previous experiences to help us understand new ideas. Learners without particular schemata may not be able to relate to certain statements because of not having that contextuality.

Patty Duff did research working with second language learners in secondary school who were mainstreamed. She found that when the students were listening to or participating in discussions of current events, the students had to make, “quick

*intertextual* connections between references across ... modes and from one lesson to the next and to understand how the topics made sense together, if at all” (Duff, 2001, p. 118). She noted that “to learn effectively in this context and to become an active member of the classroom discourse community, students’ ‘social’ communication, interaction skills, and cultural knowledge seemed to be as important as their ‘academic’ proficiency” (2001, p. 118). When learners are able to draw upon textual and intercontextual connections it is easier for them to learn. Lack of intertextual and intercontextual connections may be keeping out second language learners and this is why intertextuality and intercontextuality matters. Learners need to be able to draw upon school, family and world contexts and texts.

The last column of the transcript is ideational notions. This has to do with the references participants make to broader concepts in the world. This concept comes from Systematic Functional Linguistics which highlights the ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ functions of interactions. Fairclough (2003, pp. 26-27) describes these three concepts and writes,

Texts simultaneously represent aspects of the world (the physical world, the social world, the mental world); enact social relations between participants in social events and the attitudes, desires and values of participants; and coherently and cohesively connect parts of texts together, and connect texts with their situational contexts (Halliday 1978, 1994). Or rather, people do these things in the process of meaning-making in social events, which includes texturing, making texts.

In Halliday’s explanation he identifies 3 functions of language – the ideational, interpersonal and textual. He describes the ideational as, “the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and

perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding” (Halliday, 2002, p. 91). Fowler (1991, p. 70) takes the ideational a step further and suggests that the participants are not necessarily aware of the choices they make in their use of language. The meaning is determined more through the interaction with others than an individual deciding “this is the meaning I will convey.” Fowler writes, “the ideational, interpersonal and textual are sets of social options, not areas of privileged personal choice” (1991, p. 70). His view is that meaning is constructed and we do not have control over how texts are produced or received.

Following the initial chart with a brief explanation of each column, you will find the conversation with the participants is transcribed and my reflections on each of the last five columns are included. The conversation is divided into eight episodes. The episodes were based on the topic of conversation that tended to be occurring during that time period of the transcript. They were natural breaks as the conversation shifted to new topics.

Table 22: Chart Explanations – Pilot Study

<u>Line</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Message Units</u> State-ments along with who the comment is directed to and how (tone, volume, etc.) the statement is made.	<u>Observer Comments</u> Examines the content of the conversation - who determines the topic of conversation? Who introduces and/or closes topics? Who takes up topics or not? Clarifying descriptions.	<u>Identity –</u> What identity is being portrayed by the speaker? What identity is being put upon a participant?	<u>Knowledge-</u> Source of knowledge – who holds the knowledge? Whose knowledge is validated? Whose knowledge is contested?	<u>Intertextuality / Intercontext-uality -</u> Intertextual is the analysis of texts. Intertextuality refers to the idea that no text is original, but rather when we write or speak we are constantly using portions of texts that have already been written or spoken. In our conversation when we refer to texts participants	<u>Ideational Notations</u> - the ideational function refers to the experiences of the speakers, of the world and its phenomena.
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						in the conversation may accept/ acknowledge those texts or not. Inter-contextuality refers to times that a participant makes reference to a previous event or situation. Again, the participants must acknowledge and accept the reference in order for it to carry that meaning.	
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Table 23: Episode 1 Getting Settled – Participants’ interest in recorder

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Observer Comments	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality /Intercontextuality –	Ideational Notations
1	Alia	XXXX	[Alia is referring to the tape from the last lunch meeting we had. She was saying she wanted to hear their voices on the cassette from the last meeting we had.]	An active participant in the group.	Alia knows the pattern of the lunch and the workings of the recorder. Alia knows she can request to hear herself and the other group members.	Reference to previous lunch meeting.	
2	Mrs. Kosha	Oh, okay. Can you hear what? [softly to Alia]	Mrs. K acknowledges Alia’s comment and requests more information		Mrs. K. knows that Alia wants to hear herself, but doesn’t know specifically what she said.		

3	Alia	That when we were, me and the <u>xxxx</u> . [to Mrs. K.]				Reference to previous meeting and recording.	
4	Yusef	<u>Hel---</u> lo!!! [Said very loudly interrupting Alia. In an elongated fashion while leaning over the table trying to get closer to the recorder. ]	Yusef's loud greeting is a surprise to the researcher. A possible meaning may be, "Heh did you hear me or see me?" or "I'm here! I want my voice to be heard on the tape." Yusef seems to be speaking more to the recorder than to Mrs. K or Alia. He may be wanting to insert his voice into the tape recorder to be heard. Yusef doesn't accept the proposal made or may not have heard the request	Yusef – member of the group, comfortable with group members. Making his presence known... identity as a person here, who matters.	Yusef knows if he doesn't speak up his voice may not be heard. Yusef knows that if he keeps quiet the tape recorder won't capture him or his essence. He may or maynot be aware of the perception of the intonational pattern of the "hello" greeting he used. The intonation of the "hel-lo" can convey sarcasm or a strong sense of, "you aren't listening to me, I'm saying hello". However, I don't believe that was his intention.		
5	Mrs. Kosha	[Laughter by researcher	Through laughter the researcher acknowledged	Mrs. K. Comfortable with group	Through laughter Mrs. K. recognizes that Yusef is		

		er]	ges his presence and his desire to be a part of the conversation and to hear his voice on the recorder.	members	not being sarcastic.		
6	Mrs. Kosha	[directed toward Yusef.] You want to hear yourself today?	Mrs. K. drops the conversation with Alia only and welcomes Yusef into the group.		Mrs. K. knows that Yusef's hello is a way of wanting to be heard on the recording.		
7		You want to listen to yourself?					
8		[laughter by researcher]					
9		okay					
10	Alia	[whispering to Mrs. K.] Cause xxx he's not here.	Alia doesn't seem to accept his proposal or does not choose to continue this line of the conversation about the recorder.			Reference perhaps to another group member who is not present today.	
11	Yusef	That's why.	Unclear as to what this is in reference to.				
12	Mrs. Kosha	You're usually so <i>quiet</i>	The researcher initiates a new line of	Mrs. K. positions Yusef as quiet,	Mrs. K. shows that she is familiar with Yusef's	Referencing past interactions where Yusef is quieter and	

		<u>Yusef</u> .	conversation and switches from speaking with Alia about listening to voices on the tape recorder to remarking on the contrast between Yusef's behavior today and his usual behavior. She positions Yusef as someone quiet and reserved, different from the unusual behavior just displayed.	quite unlike his entrance on this occasion.	pattern of behavior in this setting.	more reserved.	
13		[loud burp by one of the two students overlapping with above comment]	The burp was not in relation to comments made or intentionally disruptive.		There were no comments or laughter by any of the children or teachers to indicate that it was intentional or seen as a disruption to the interaction. It appeared to be taken by all as a natural occurrence.		
14		[Whispering, xxxx] We hardly		Mrs. K. reinforcing the positioning of Yusef as quiet.		Mrs. K. references past interactions by the use of "hardly," which is indicating the	

		hear your voice. [said softly and lyrically ]				usual pattern of interaction by Yusef.	
15	Mrs. Nadif	yeah, I know.     [to Mrs. K, said quietly in background]	Mrs. Nadif joins in the conversation in the background assenting that Yusef is usually quiet and doesn't speak up much.	Mrs. Nadif affirms that Yusef is usually quiet.			

Table 24: Episode 5 - The Music Teacher's Absence

Line	Speaker	Message Units	Observer Comments	Identity	Knowledge	Intertextuality/Intercontextuality	Ideational Notations
16	Yusef	<u>We're not staying here.</u>	Yusef contradicts Mrs. N.		Yusef positions himself as someone with knowledge about the schedule and usual happenings in the classroom.	Yusef drawing on previous experiences of having music downstairs with the music teacher.	
17	Mrs. Kosha	<u>before...</u>					
18	Yusef	we're going downstairs.	Yusef reasserts his opinion about music class and states that they'll be going downstairs where music class is normally held.		Yusef positions himself as someone with knowledge about the schedule and usual happenings in the classroom.		

19	Mrs. Kosha	No, you don't have music today.	Mrs. K. attempts to clarify to Yusef the fact that there is no music class today and that the class won't be going downstairs.		Mrs. K. has knowledge about music class.		
20		She's absent.	Mrs. K. provides a reason for why there isn't music class.		Mrs. K. provides information about the music teacher that the students may not know.	Mrs. K. references information she learned about the music teacher's absence through a previous interaction with Mrs. M and Mrs. N.	
21	Mrs. Nadif	I'm your music teacher. [directed to children]	Mrs. N. says this in a humorous manner.	Mrs. N. positions herself as the children's teacher – a role with more responsibility and prestige than the position of aide.			With being a teacher comes a certain amount of responsibility and prestige.
22	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah [laughter]					
23	Yusef	I saw yesterday a teacher.	Yusef refers to a teacher he saw substituting the previous day in the music room. He has not yet abandoned the idea that the class will	Yusef positions himself as someone who witnessed the substitute in the music class on the previous day.	Yusef demonstrates knowledge of substitution and scheduling. He knows the teacher who usually substitutes for music class.	Yusef draws on experience from previous day where he saw a teacher in the music room.	

			be going downstairs for music class. The construction of Yusef's sentence is somewhat out of word order.				
24		<u>Not, not Mrs., not Mrs. Lewis.</u>	Yusef clarifies, that it is not the music teacher he is referring to, but another teacher. He continues to provide information .		Yusef knows the regular teacher who teaches music and a substitute who may fill in, in the music teacher's absence.		
25	Alia	[directed to Mrs. N] <u>What are we,</u>	The conversation here splits into two. Alia is speaking to Mrs. N about what they will be doing during music while Yusef continues his assertion about the substitute for music.				
26		<u>what are we gonna to do?</u>		Mrs. N is seen as the source of knowledge about the music class.	Mrs. N. is seen as the source of knowledge by Alia. Alia has a sense that if Mrs. N is substituting during music class they may not be		

					doing music or they may be doing something else.		
27	Mrs. Nadif	[Directed to Alia] We're going to watch a show.			Mrs. N. is source of knowledge		Shows or movies seen as a way to hold children's attention
28	Yusef	[not clear who he is directing his comments to.] That old teacher that we had.	Yusef goes on to describe the teacher who had substituted in music on earlier occasions, providing more descriptive feedback. It's not clear whether Yusef is saying that the teacher is old or whether it's the teacher he had a long time ago. Yusef is asserting his view with Mrs. N. and then Mrs. M. that there will be a substitute teacher during music.			Yusef references past occasions when they had a substitute for music.	
29	Alia	[Directed to Mrs. N.] What kind of	Alia seeking more information from Mrs. N.		Alia positions Mrs. N as having the knowledge as to which show they		Shows can be entertaining.



		show?			will see. Alia knows that there are different kinds of shows, perhaps some more educational and others entertainment .		
30	Mrs. Nadif	A movie			Mrs. N knows which show will be viewed.		
31	Yusef	The <i>Black</i> teacher	Yusef provides more details so as to inform everyone that there's a substitute. No one has been taking up his line of conversation about the substitute, so he continues to provide more details.		Yusef has knowledge about the teacher's appearance.		In many schools in this locale there are more Caucasian teachers than Black teachers.
32		Was in there.			Yusef is certain about his information.	References the time that he saw the substitute there.	
33	Alia	We're gonna watch a movie! Wooooo [Excited voice, almost giddy]	Alia comes to realize that they will have an entertaining film versus something more educational . This appears to be				Movies during school are unusual... this is seen as an opportunity to have fun and excitement during school, perhaps in contrast to

			something unusual and special.				the work atmosphere that permeates the class.
34	Yusef	Miss, [calling loudly across the room, to the classroom teacher who's eating lunch at her desk and working]	Yusef continues to look for an audience about the substitute music teacher. He seems to be looking for someone to affirm his view that he saw a sub for music and that they will have music downstairs today. He seeks someone who will listen and can affirm his understanding.	Yusef positions the classroom teacher as being someone who can hear his voice and support his claim.			
35		Miss [calling more loudly to the classroom teacher]	Yusef gets no response but persists and calls more loudly a second time.	Identity – no one seems to be listening to Yusef, but he doesn't let that sway him. He is confident that he is right about the substitute teacher for music. He perseveres in his argument.			Teachers are to be called with respect, and one way to do that is through the use of the term, "Miss." Calling for recognition or attention or to be heard.

				He is a student who makes himself heard, when he feels he has something to say.			
36	Mrs. Morris	What ? [in a high voice calling back to Yusef]	Finally someone, the classroom teacher, picks up his line of conversation again.				
37	Yusef	The black teacher? 	Yusef seeks affirmation that the substitute teacher is here today; he asks in a questioning voice and provides more description of the substitute he saw on the previous day.		Mrs. M. is seen as the person holding the knowledge about this possible substitute.		
38	Mrs. Nadif	She's not here.	Mrs. N. denies his claim.		Mrs. N holds information about the music teacher.		
39	Yusef	I didn't know her name.	Yusef does not accept Mrs. M.'s claim that there is not a sub or teacher for music. He goes on to provide more information		Yusef reveals that he doesn't know her name.		Ways of addressing adults.

			in the hopes that the classroom teacher will be able to identify her and then know that she's present today.				
40		I saw her yesterday in Mrs.				Reference to what he saw in the music room on the previous day.	
41		In Mrs. Lewis's class.					
42		She was teaching ...	Yusef provides more details as if to prove what he saw.			References the previous day when he saw the substitute teaching.	
43	Mrs. Morris & Mrs. Nadif	The substitute?	Both teachers seek clarification from Yusef				
44	Yusef	Yeah					
45	Mrs. Morris	Yeah, I guess they couldn't get a substitute today.			Mrs. M		
46	Yusef	Why?	Yusef finally seems to accept that there is no substitute on this day and seeks more information.		Mrs. M seen as the source of knowledge.		

47	Mrs. Morris	I don't know [high voice]	The use of "I don't know" may be a way of saying that she really does know, but doesn't want to talk about it further.				
48		Sometimes they just					
49		<u>Can't get anybody</u>	She goes on to provide a possible reason for not having a substitute.				The process of finding and sending substitutes .
50	Yusef	<u>We had a substitute</u>			Yusef knows what he experienced the last time.	Again, Yusef references his previous knowledge about what happens when the regular teacher is not present.	
51		last time				Yusef references the last time his teacher was absent.	When one teacher is absent, another will be called in her/his place.
52		And it was the <i>same</i> as that lady	Yusef continues to assert what he saw and experienced.		Yusef doesn't seem to understand that even though they had the same substitute the last time the music teacher was absent as the sub who was there the day before, she likely wasn't available to		Substitutes may have a specialty and work at particular schools in a district.

					teach on this particular day.		
53	Mrs. Kosha	Yeah, but maybe she's teaching at another school today.	Mrs. K. provides additional information that may help to clarify why the sub Yusef's referring to is not subbing today in the music room.		Mrs. K.	The process of subbing and substitute teacher placement.	
54	Mrs. Nadif	[directed to Mrs. M.] Are you going?	Mrs. N. seeks information from Mrs. M. Mrs. N has abandon Yusef's conversation and moved on to a different tangent.		Mrs. M seen as the source of knowledge.		
55	Yusef	Oh xxx	Yusef accepts the knowledge that there is no substitute today and that the sub he saw yesterday is not in the school today.		Yusef seems to now understand that the substitute teacher he saw the day before is not present and even though she's usually there when the music teacher is absent, on this particular occasion, she could not substitute.		

## **Process of analysis**

Initially I wrote the data out as the participants spoke, that is, each participant's turn at talk was kept together as one unit. I then went through line by line and reflected on the topic or line of conversation that was proposed by participants and the responses by fellow participants to see what lines of conversation were taken up by the group. I considered how participants were being positioned by the researcher, one-another and the aide. I also reflected on how participants resisted this positioning. I read through and reflected on the data numerous times. After about a week of allowing the data to "rest" I took another look at it and added a few more comments. I also stepped back and reexamined the data to see how it might be further analyzed according to smaller message units. While I had been considering the issues around the power dynamic earlier in the analysis, I hadn't been explicit about it. During this last round of reflection, I wrote more of the reflections about issue of power and resistance especially as it relates to positioning.

The process of breaking the text into smaller message units, did not change the comments and insights written, however, I found myself hearing the conversation and intonation in my head as I did this. I also think that if I had done this earlier, it may have been helpful, just in being able to reflect on each bit of meaning as I analyzed. For my work with future data in this study, I plan to try breaking conversations down into the message units at the start of the analysis.

## **Findings**

After examining the data and looking for ways in which participants propose topics, make claims, refute claims, provide evidence, enter conversation and so on, we

then have to ask ourselves, so what? What does this all mean? What sense can I make from this data? When I reflect on how proposals are made and accepted or denied through the interactions it is interesting.

Yusef, who had been positioned as being the “quiet one,” and who is frequently not heard from, starts the lunch meeting with a loud boisterous hello, hoping to be heard on the cassette tape. In episode 5, Yusef is told that the class will not have music on that day. He has a different view and though he is positioned as being “quiet” he clearly has an opinion and makes his voice heard. Through his words and persistence he shows his belief that there will be a substitute. After voicing his views with three adults in the classroom and getting the same response, he finally resigns himself to the fact that there will not be music in the music room. What is most interesting in this interchange is that while the teachers view him as being quiet, when we actually listen to the data, we see that he does stand up for his views and state his beliefs.

An important issue to further examine is the idea of power relationships in this dynamic. As the researcher and an adult in the classroom, there is a certain amount of authority that simply comes from the roles that we play, as student and researcher. At the same time, the students have an intimate knowledge of who they are as people. They have knowledge and understanding that I as a researcher do not possess. They have the right to question the assumptions I make about who they are as people. Through this conversation, we can see that they do challenge my comments and they feel comfortable asserting their views in this conversation. They indicate when they disagree with my thoughts and stand up for their own views. They are comfortable in shifting the



conversation to the topics they are interested in. It is not only the researcher who sets the agenda in this focus group.

I have found Discourse Analysis to be a helpful tool in the analysis of interactions between myself and the participants of the study. In reflecting on interviews and observations, I have come to see how students in the class are positioned as learners and as individuals within a social milieu. Teachers, aides, colleagues in the building, researchers and the learners themselves have particular perspectives about who these students are and how they interact in their school environment. By taking just a few minutes worth of interaction, we can begin to see what is important to the learners and how they view themselves as well as how they are viewed. We see what ideas they propose and what members of the interaction are willing to accept or deny. The conversation and ideas are shaped by what occurs before and what occurs after each of the statements. We can begin to see what individuals may concur with and what their own perspective is. Examining the data with this kind of focus on detail and focus on the reactions of others within the dialogue is helpful in taking a deeper look at what is being said or suggested. Statements at times seem contradictory to one-another, giving us an opportunity to look for other pieces of data that may illuminate the subject further.

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