TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY:
ADDRESSING DIVERSITY ISSUES IN RESPONSIVE ESL INSTRUCTION

By

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ABSTRACT

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Student diversity has become a typical phenomenon in American public schools. The impact of increasing diversity on literacy instruction is unchallenged. Teachers reinforce this message by often citing ESL student diversity as a barrier for literacy teaching. In order to better understand the complexity of diversity issues, I explored two ESL teachers' perspectives on how student diversity figures in literacy instruction in an elementary ESL class, and the extent to which interventions both teachers received help them teach literacy to ESL students with diverse backgrounds. I analyzed how they conducted responsive literacy instruction based on their understanding of diversity issues.

Both teachers' explorations of diversity issues are in many ways unique to their personal and professional experiences. Their personal and professional experiences with ESL learners, immigrants and other foreigners register their understanding of ESL student diversity: caring, sensitivity to diversity, and intention to use student diversity as teaching resources. Their preliminary explorations of diversity issues in this particular school started with the ESL Student Language Proficiency Plan, the guidance of the required language and literacy policies, and critical reviews of the changing demographics of ESL students, coupled with their multicultural and ESL teaching experiences. However, their first impressions were often at odds with the reality of ESL student diversity. They were also confused by the diversity that they themselves brought into the multicultural settings. They did not receive any assistance for addressing their confusion. Accordingly, when exploring diversity-related issues and teaching in response to diversity, both teachers felt they had to purposefully ignore their own diversity.

This study identified three categories of student diversity that impacted ESL teachers' design and enactment of responsive literacy practices: intercultural diversity, intracultural diversity and human variability. ESL students' culture-oriented diversity played a decisive part in their enforcement of multicultural awareness at the school level, in selecting teaching materials, and setting up ESL learning goals and interpreting mistakes. Culture-oriented diversity of ESL students from a particular ethnic group is necessary to help teachers design responsive activities especially when teachers had limited knowledge of ESL students' backgrounds, but was an insufficient condition for providing opportunities for effective ESL students' learning. Cross-culture diversity such as socio-economic power could significantly moderate or even counteract cultural control. Students from the same ethnic group sometime might demonstrate similar learning styles, but they were not necessarily the best ways for them to learn. Understanding diversity issues only with cultural insights might lead teachers to overestimate the power of culture on ESL learning. Additionally, when applying the research-based strategies to classroom instruction, both teachers cautiously took human variability into consideration, and demonstrated that effective instruction should be not only linguistically and culturally responsive but also individually responsive. Therefore, responsive ESL instruction calls for us to look beyond ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity and draw upon students' individual funds of knowledge.

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Introduction

Linguistic and cultural diversity among students has become a typical phenomenon in American public schools (Flores-Gonzalez, 2005; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). In 2008, the overall number of English Language Learners (ELLs) aged five to seventeen increased 20.5 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Researchers predict that in 2030, approximately forty percent of students in American public schools will be those who come from families speaking languages other than English (Crawford, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2001). The impact of increasing numbers of ESL students on English language and literacy instruction is unchallenged. Teachers reinforce this message by often citing ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity as a barrier for classroom teaching. More than 87 percent of teachers in American public schools reported they received inadequate training in how to teach ESL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002a). To prepare teachers for working with a diverse student population, three primary lines of inquiry have emerged: linguistic studies informing children's second language acquisition and development (Cummins, 1996; Freeman, 1998); educational studies analyzing specific cultural models and learning needs of ESL students with specific cultural backgrounds (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2000); and studies focusing on content-based English language teaching and learning (Au, 1994, 1998; Fradd & Lee, 1999; Stoddart, Pinal & Canaday, 2002).

Applied linguists emphasized children's first language and culture in their second language development, and suggested children's proficiency in their first language is closely related to their performance in learning a second language (Krashen, 1995; McLaughlin,

1984). Educators also pointed out that teachers must develop their understanding of the role of the first language and culture in learning English as an additional language and in other academic contents (Clair & Adger, 1999; Clair, 2000, Walqui, 1999), and improve their ability to recognize how culture and language intersect with classroom participation (Antunez, 2002; Menken & Look, 2000). Educational researchers, especially multiculturalists, accordingly advocated using culturally responsive pedagogy to develop a more collaborative, culturally relevant, and democratic learning community for this group of students (Banks, 1996; Delpit, 1986; Landson-Billings, 1994). However, teachers' own views of ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity are notably absent in research, even though they are the ones expected to conduct culturally relevant teaching. In particular, researchers have paid little attention to how ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity figures in teachers' design and enactment of academic content instruction. Furthermore, in a linguistically- and culturally-diverse classroom, teachers have to face challenges in teaching ESL students due to their diverse linguistic and cultural needs and interests. It is surprising then that teachers' understandings of the possible conflict and its influence on classroom instruction are rarely explored in research.

Thus, although existing research offers a compelling case in favor of taking into account ESL students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds in ways that will support their learning English as a second language (ESL)[1], we still have much to learn from teachers' perspectives on this topic. That is, we need to know more about their views on ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity in academic content instruction. How do teachers understand the expectations of the curriculum in terms of teaching diverse ESL students? How do they define linguistic and cultural diversity? How do they design and enact their lessons and

[1] I am using ESL because this is the term that my research participants and their school use.

classroom activities based on their understanding of diversity? What preparation (if any) have they had to better teach students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds? In an attempt to re-conceptualize and broaden our understanding of literacy instruction, I conducted a study to explore, from two teachers' perspectives, how linguistic and cultural diversity figures in literacy instruction in elementary ESL classrooms. This dissertation will describe my observations of this specific type of literacy instruction through the lens of ESL teachers' interpretation of ESL curricula, their choices of teaching materials and other related artifacts, adoption (and adjustment) of instructional strategies for literacy and the process of designing literacy lessons for ESL students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Review of Literature

I introduce the review of literature with an overview regarding the relationship between language, culture, and second language development. I then review literature focusing on linguistic and cultural complexity that reflects the current state of American public schools, and this is followed by an examination of the political nature of education for ESL students in the United States.

Language, culture and second language development

The relationship between language and culture is interdependent and inter-influential. In a community where people speak the same language, there is linguistic evidence that language and its use in daily conversation or other contexts constricts the development of existing culture; that in turn complicates and constrains people's communication through (oral or written) language as a medium (Kaplan, 1966; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Ogden & Richards, 1927; Whorf, 1940). Indeed, as I will discuss below in more detail, the complex relationship between language and culture, and the incompatibility among different languages and cultures, become a visible barrier when people communicate in a second language, especially when people attempt to learn a second language or teach in a second language. In spite of this, there

is little published research targeting children's second language learning in a culturally and linguistically diverse setting. Existing research has focused on children's second language acquisition and development in general (Cummins, 1996; Freeman, 1998), analyzing cultural models and learning needs of ESL students from a specific cultural background (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2000), and identifying ways to support children's English language development, especially in terms of their academic language (Bunch, 2006; Huang & Morgan, 2003; Scarcella, 2003; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004). ESL students' English language and literacy development is implicated in each of these areas, although few studies attempted to investigate how teachers understand and address the complexity of language and culture or how they help ESL students overcome language barriers related to the constraints of culture on their second language development in a multicultural setting.

Relationship between language and culture

Odgen and Richards (1927) developed the "Semantic Triangle" model (see Figure 1) to illustrate the indirect relationship between Symbol (or Language) and Referent (or Object) and concept (or thought). The semantic triangle is "a simple model in which the three factors, Symbol, Concept and Referent, involved with the statement or idea are placed in the corners and the relationships between them are represented by the sides" (Ogden & Richards, 1927, p.10). Symbol, Concept, and Referent are elements situated in the triangle as shown in Figure 1, and "the relationship between the Symbol and the Referent is purely indirect in that it is an arbitrary relationship created by someone who wishes the Symbol to represent the Referent (Thought/Concept/World Experience)" (Ogden & Richards, 1927, p. 11). For example, in Figure 1, the word "literacy" is a Symbol. When attempting to refer to something as "literacy", people may first think about what "literacy" means to them or rely on their prior experience of "literacy." Through the mental process, people may then match the Symbol "literacy" with the Referent. As illustrated by Odgen and Richards, the Symbol "literacy" is associated in both

speaker's and listener's minds as a particular object. During the process of communication, it is quite possible for people to use the same symbol (the word "literacy") to indicate different Referents (the object "literacy") and vice versa. It is the "Thought/Concept/World Experience" at the top of the Triangle that results in the differences. Due to people's different experiences of the real world, Symbols (or words) are granted additional meanings, which become invisible when people communicate with each other. Accordingly, certain meanings of the word may disappear when the speaker tries to talk with the listener through language. Or, it is quite possible that the listener may interpret more information from the word than the speaker planned to convey. The worst scenario is when the listener and the speaker have different thoughts and world experiences with the Referent, but they still use the same Symbol to indicate the Referent. Invisible miscommunication might then occur between the speaker and the listener.

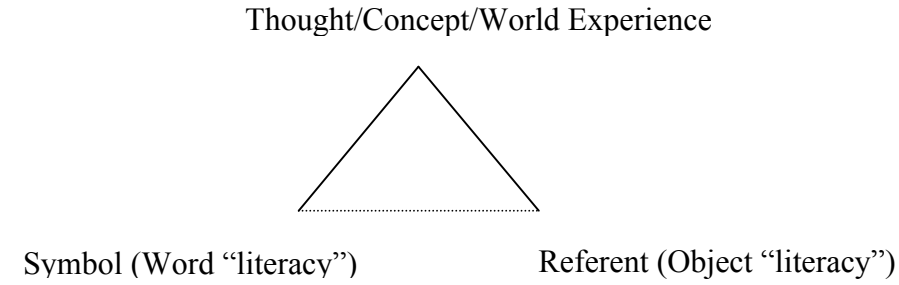

Figure 1. Semantic Triangle adapted from Ogden and Richards (1927).

Linguists further argue that culture is among the core factors that shape thoughts and world experiences. Believing in linguistic relativism, Sapir (1929) first explained the inter-relationship among language, thoughts and culture. Sapir (1929, p. 209) argued that culture determines language, which in turn restricts people's thoughts and behaviors:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression in their society. It is

> quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection: The fact of the matter is that the ‘real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The words in which different societies live are distinct words, not merely the same word with different labels attached...Even comparatively simple acts of perception are very much more at the mercy of the social patterns called words than we might suppose...We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

According to Sapir, human beings are unaware of the connection among language and culture and are affected by the connection without choice. Whorf (1956), the student of Sapir, suggested that language strengthens culture through semantics, syntax and vocabulary, and at the same time determines people’s interpretation of world reality. In support of their hypothesis, Sapir and Whorf investigated the differences between several languages from syntactic and vocabulary perspectives. For example, they compared the vocabulary related to snow in the Inuit and Aztec languages, and found only one word in Aztec used for snow while Inuit had an unusually large vocabulary for referring to snow. Comparing Hopi with English, Whorf found that tense was seldom used in the Hopi language and suggested that time may not be regarded as one of the dimensions of the real world in Hopi. The differences in tense use may cause communication barriers between spoken Hopi and English (Whorf, 1940).

In sum, when communicating in the same language, people may rely on their respective world experiences to process language. Information might be misinterpreted due to

the characteristics of a particular language, and miscommunications among people accordingly appear. Language is further constrained by the culture in which the language is used, and people develop different habits and preferences for using language in their respective cultures. Therefore, there is reason to believe that different interpretations and uses of language may lead to miscommunication among people in the same culture or those who speak different languages. However, previous studies of second language learning and teaching paid little attention to the limits of language use in instruction and the possibly inaccurate information that teachers pass to students through language, especially when teachers are confronted with a group of students with diverse habits of language use. This study will examine teachers' perspectives on using English as a medium to teach literacy in a multicultural setting, and aims to extend the literature with its focus on the extent to which teachers consider language and culture as barriers or constraints for communication when designing and delivering literacy knowledge in English to ESL students.

The Influence of first language on second language development.

Applied linguists have also demonstrated the influence of learners' native culture and first language on their second language development. Influenced by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Kaplan first transferred the traditional theory from the broader area of second language learning into the specific application of writing development in a second language (González, Chen, & Sanchez, 2001). Kaplan (1966, 1972, 1987) suggested that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize discourse differently, as a reflection of their first language and native culture. Other applied linguists have also suggested that people's native culture exerts an influence on their values, behaviors, learning and use of a second language (Hing, 1993; Qi, 1998; Wang, 1994; Yu, 1996).

For example, in a study about Chinese students' writings in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Matalene (1985) supported Kaplan's (1966) observation of second

language learners' different rhetorical structure preferences across cultures, and found that most of her Chinese students' EFL persuasive essays, as well as the ''arguments'' in the Chinese–English newspaper China Daily, offered assertions rather than proofs. Chinese EFL students' argumentative essays followed a standard pattern: ''an opening description of a specific incident, a look back at the usually unfortunate history of the issue or practice, an explanation of the current much improved state of affairs and a concluding moral exhortation'' (Matalene, 1985, p. 800). In a study of Chinese ESL writing, Alptekin (1988) identified some rhetorical patterns in their expository compositions: a non-linear rhetorical organization, complementary propositions with Yin-Yang attributes, analogies, and a global perspective of the topic as an essentially indivisible entity. In a case study, Cai (1999) focused on Chinese ESL learners who took undergraduate English composition courses in the United States, and investigated their ESL writing portfolios. Cai's findings concurred with Kaplan's claim that Chinese EFL writing was influenced by the eight-legged essay structure. He suggested that this structure, qi (beginning) –cheng (transition) –zhuan (turning) –he (synthesis) –jie (end), instead of the typical American topic-support organization, characterized Chinese EFL students' paragraphs across all essays.

Studies comparing argumentative writings in English by Chinese EFL students and English-speaking students in the United States further disclosed that cultural differences led to different rhetorical patterns (Benson & Heidish, 1995; Cahill, 2003; Connor, 2001; Grabe & Kaplan, 1989, 1996; Kaplan, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 1997, 2002; Liu, 1990; Taylor & Chen, 1991). For example, Taylor and Chen (1991) detected differences between Chinese ESL and American writers in the field of science, and suggested the salient difference was that American scientists showed a preference for elaborated structures while Chinese scientists tended to omit a summary of the literature and preferred a simple, unelaborated pattern. It is obvious that language learning cannot avoid the influence from one's culture. Indeed, culture

of ESL students' first languages exerted influences on not only ESL students' understanding of the world but also the rhetorical expressions when they use English for academic purposes.

The studies discussed above demonstrate that one's native culture and first language exerted great influence on second language development and the ways that learners use a second language. Accordingly, in a multicultural ESL class, teachers are faced with a variety of ways of students' learning and developing literacy skills in English. In addition, students, including ESL students, construct sophisticated and effective language learning strategies through interaction with their peers (especially mature learners) in a particular context (Lave & Wenger, 1994; Vygotsky, 1979; Wertsch, 1985). Simply imposing second language acquisition theories, teaching strategies and materials on teachers may not necessarily lead to effective instruction or plausible student performances (Freeman, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Therefore, in-service ESL teachers are expected to continually reassess ESL students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds while dealing with possible miscommunications during the instruction process. It is surprising then that ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity in ESL classrooms is not well understood. Previous research has seldom paid attention to how these different learning habits in a multilingual and multicultural classroom influence teachers' literacy instruction, and how teachers have attempted to develop a collaborative learning community based on those diverse learning habits. This study will reveal culture-related complexity in ESL teaching by underscoring the diverse first languages and cultures that ESL students bring into ESL classrooms, and examining them as potential barriers or opportunities for teachers to use in developing an effective and collaborative community for the learning of English language and literacy.

Linguistic and cultural complexity in American public schools

Applied linguists offer a convincing argument in favor of focusing on children's first language and culture in their second language development, and suggest the children's first

language proficiency is closely related to their performance in learning a second language (Krashen, 1995; McLaughlin, 1984). Educational researchers, especially multiculturalists, accordingly advocate culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy that suggests the necessity of relating classroom practices to ESL students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Au, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). While existing literature offers convincing arguments in favor of addressing students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds in ESL instruction (Cummins, 1985; Delpit, 1988; Nieto, 1999, 2000), few empirical studies have attempted to investigate teaching practices that are responsive to students' diversity in real elementary ESL classes. Indeed, linguistic and cultural complexity in American public schools has mainly resulted from the increasing diversity among ESL students in terms of their learning needs, cultural interests (e.g. religious beliefs) and potential conflicts (e.g. Indian ESL students vs. Pakistani ESL students). However, previous studies concerning education for ESL students focused on teaching practices in response to ESL students with one specific cultural and linguistic background (i.e. Mexican ESL students) while neglecting the complexity and the possible challenges in teaching ESL students from multiple cultures in the same classroom. In addition, teaching in a multicultural setting representing a range of cultures has become a normal phenomenon for American elementary teachers (Au, 1993; Genishi & Dyson, 2009). A substantial body of educational research further presents a compelling argument that the linguistic and cultural gap between teachers and ESL students often results in instruction that may disadvantage and discourage minority students (Cohen, 1993, 1997; Hale, 1994), which thereafter exerts a negative impact on ESL students' performance and undermines democracy in American education system (Agee, 2006; Gay, 2000; Landson-Billings, 1994).

Linguistic and cultural diversity among ESL students

The ESL student population has been changing rapidly in recent years. During the

school year of 2007-2008, ESL students' enrollment in American K-12 schools increased 53.25 percent compared to that in 1997. The total ESL student population in 2003 amounted to 5,318,164 (NCELA, 2010). There are more than 400 languages other than English spoken by ESL students in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although nearly 80 percent of ESL students who attended American schools are Spanish speakers, over 75 percent of school districts nationwide reported their ESL students came from more than one language group other than English and Spanish. Seventeen percent reported that more than ten languages were spoken among ESL students in their school districts (NCELA, 2007). The educational setting in American public schools was further complicated by ESL students' birthplaces and schooling history. Seventy-four percent of ESL students were reported to have been born in the United States but spoke a language other than English at home. They usually started their schooling of kindergarten and first grade in the United States (Batalova, 2006). The other 26 percent came to the United States and entered American schools at different ages.

Intensive research on ESL students from specific ethnic groups (e.g. Yemenis, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mexicans) has demonstrated that they had diverse learning preferences, interests, and goals for learning English language and literacy. Although mostly having difficulties in learning English language and literacy, ESL students need help in different aspects of ESL to improve their language and literacy achievement in school (Espiritu, 2001; Sarroub, 2000, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 2004). For example, Asian Americans are usually regarded as a model minority in American K-12 schools (Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007) while being described as "intelligent but unintelligible" (Schmidt, 2000). They may do well in school, but seldom communicate with teachers and peers because of the lack of language and cultural knowledge about ways of communicating with teachers and other students. In an action research study, Palmer et al. (2006) focused on the language and literacy learning of two

Chinese ESL students from second grade. The article first presented Chinese ESL students' ways of literacy acquisition, such as re-reading for memorization and correct spelling. They also found Chinese ESL students relied more on teachers (instead of parents) for modeling reading regardless of their parents' English proficiency and social status. They preferred teacher-centered instruction and tended to learn more effectively when teachers gave them explicit instruction and tasks to accomplish. In addition, when learning literacy, Chinese ESL students were hesitant to share their views in public and would rather seek a small group as a safe zone to discuss ideas and assignments. Palmer et al.'s study further suggested that teachers should give the recognition of educational, cultural and linguistic differences for Chinese ESL students the highest priority. Setting up cooperative groups for Chinese ESL students was a necessity for their effective learning in school. Teachers' additional support beyond the classroom would not only contribute to improving the students' learning but also their better understanding of students' learning needs.

Contrary to Chinese ESL students' reluctance for expressing ideas through oral language, research suggested storytelling was a traditional and powerful tool for Sudanese youth to learn literacy. For example, Perry (2008) employed an ethnographic study to demonstrate the importance of storytelling and narratives for orphaned Southern Sudanese refugee youth in terms of their literacy learning, identity construction, and life adjustment in the United States. The author found storytelling, as a tradition and tool that elders used to pass on history and culture to the younger generations in Sudan, transformed "from an event that happens in the local community to one that is shared with the global community" (p. 37). Sudanese refugee youth used transformed storytelling to keep their Sudanese identity in the local community and to become educated in the United States. The study suggested that incorporating the stories of those refugee youth would provide global audiences with literacy learning opportunities to better understand the Sudanese community. At the same time,

encouraging Sudanese youth to make use of their storytelling skills would "offer more authentic learning opportunities for students and may motivate them to engage more deeply in school literacy practices" (p.40).

Researchers also suggested the importance of literacy learning for ESL students' achievement in school and their involvement in the local community, although ESL students [and their parents] were stretched by a different conceptualizations of literacy in school and the local community. For instance, Sarroub (2002) suggested that relating ESL students' backgrounds with literacy teaching and learning in school was not only important for their academic performance but also necessary for their after-school life in the local community. The author investigated how Yemeni-American girls in high school used religious and secular texts in school, at home and in the local community and how they negotiated social, academic and cultural norms between their homes and schools. Sarroub (2002) interviewed six Yemeni-American high school girls (who were born in the United States) and observed their after-school life for two years. At the same time, she also interviewed 75 teachers who taught in Arabic neighborhoods in Michigan. The findings showed Yemeni-American girls used literacy as adaptation to both American and Yemeni norms, seeing it as a source of power to be literate in both English and Arabic, and as a way to realize their state of grace as a literate and religious person. However, literacy education in American schools challenged Yemeni girls' cultural traditions that privilege kinship ties within the community. For those girls, knowing how to read academically in school did not mean being literate at home. They were forced to adjust their literacy skills to fit the norms in the Arabic community, and to organize behaviors and speech based on what they learned from the Qu'ran and other related religious education. The study also suggested that Yemeni-American girls had to accomplish academic goals and live up to and satisfy family (and community) responsibilities, while neither their families nor teachers noticed their in-between struggle.

Bankston and Zhou's (1995) case study on Vietnamese ESL students further demonstrated the positive influences of children's language and literacy development in their first languages on their literacy development in English and academic achievements in other subjects. In light of their study of 386 Vietnamese ESL students in New Orleans, the authors suggested literacy development in Vietnamese helped this group of students gain access to social capital at the community level, and realize cognitive transference at the individual level. Other studies informing ESL students' literacy learning characteristics also demonstrated that ESL students had better comprehension and higher proficiency when reading literature related to or similar to their cultural (or religious) backgrounds (Carrell, 1987; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

The aforementioned studies highlight different learning needs and preferences of ESL students due to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The studies recognize the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of literacy learning (e.g. instructional strategies, teaching materials and parental involvement). Educators suggested culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching that might contribute to ESL students' academic achievement, personal growth as well as heritage awareness (Banks, 2001; Gay & Howard, 2001; Landson-Billings, 1994). Teachers are expected to "construct pedagogical practices in ways that are culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful for their students" (Howard, 2003). Significantly, existing research eschews the view that teachers are confronted with ESL students with diverse learning needs, different schooling and life experience in their home country. Teachers, especially ESL teachers, have to teach a group of ESL students with diverse backgrounds at the same time. How to enact culturally relevant teaching in a classroom full of ESL students with diverse cultural interests and linguistic needs has seldom been addressed in previous studies. Very few studies have examined how teachers choose teaching materials, develop instructional strategies, facilitate

communication, and reshape curriculum in response to ESL students' diverse needs within a classroom. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that possible conflicts do occur in culturally- and linguistically-diverse classrooms due to differing cultural interests or religious beliefs. This dissertation study attempts to extend the current literature informing literacy instruction for diverse student populations and to document teachers' perspectives regarding a specific type of teaching by underscoring ESL teachers' choices of literacy teaching materials, instructional strategies, and facilitation of collaborative interaction in a multicultural and multilingual setting.

Teacher homogeneity and ESL student diversity

Educational settings in the United States nowadays are characterized by teachers' homogeneity and students' diversity. As previously discussed, today's student population is increasingly diverse. In contrast to the increasing diversity among students in American public schools, only ten percent of teachers in the teaching force are from ethnically-diverse groups; the majority of in-service teachers are most likely to be white, middle-class, and female. Research shows that both in-service and pre-service teachers generally hold negative attitudes toward language diversity and ESL students (Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Garcia, 1990, 1996), feel unprepared for teaching linguistically- and culturally-diverse ESL students (Berman et al., 1992; NCES, 2002a, 2002b; Nieto, 1992), and request extra help to deal with cultural and linguistic complexity in class (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Sleeter, 2001). Jiménez (1997) found that teachers' knowledge base of literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students was still in formative stages.

To help teachers teach ESL students with diverse backgrounds in a more effective way, three lines of inquiry have emerged: studies informing basic and general constructs of second language development regardless of students' first language background (Clair & Adger, 1999; Cummins, 1984), research on the learning styles and needs of students with

specific linguistic, cultural and schooling backgrounds (Antunez, 2002, Goodwin, 1997; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995, 2001), and instructional strategies of relating English language and content-based learning with ESL students' life experience (Banks, 1989; Gay, 2000; Lipman, 1995). Freeman and Freeman (2007) further synthesized the key factors that lead to ESL students' academic success: theme-based curricula that help ESL students build up academic concepts, collaborative and scaffolding activities that relate to ESL students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and confidence among ESL students that respect both school and their own values. Nevertheless, research showed that teachers tended to impose standardized education on all students regardless of their backgrounds in rural, suburban and urban schools (Cuban, 1989a; Kliebard, 1986; Lee, 2004). To be more specific, teachers usually judge ESL students' behaviors by the mainstream (or dominant) culture in the United States, while complaining about the uniqueness of the difficulties they encounter in schools (Florio-Ruane, 2001), and assumed the culture that they themselves abide by overpowered those that ESL students bring into schools. The interactions between ESL students and teachers in school become more linear instead of dynamic (Cole, 1980): teachers (unconsciously) deprived ESL students of their rights of including their own cultures in their communication, and further expected them to behave in light of dominant culture accepted in American society.

Previous studies comparing ESL students' home cultures' and schools' norms showed the discrepancies of expectations between ESL students' parents and teachers. Teachers tended to standardize education through forcing the students to follow school norms while ignoring the norms accepted and applauded in ESL students' families or local communities. For example, Shultz, Florio and Erickson (1982) carried out a two-year ethnographic study in Italian-American suburb, in an attempt to address factors in classroom organization that confused Italian-American ESL students with distinctive communication traditions.

According to their observation of those ESL students' communication in school and at home, the authors found that a mismatch existed between teachers' expectations of Italian-American ESL students and their behaviors and knowledge of norms for appropriate behaviors in school. In those ESL students' families, multiple communications with different people at the same time were allowed. In schools, teachers strictly controlled the sequence and time of student participation, and considered interruption inappropriate and unacceptable in the classroom. It is quite obvious that Italian-American ESL students' social etiquette learned at home failed to meet the expectations in school. The authors suggested teachers should "understand more fully children's socialization into communicative traditions at home and in school, traditions that may be mutually congruent or incongruent" (p. 91).

In another study focusing on Latino students, Suarez-Orozco (2000) also pointed out parents hold different opinions concerning mainstream culture and norms in the United States and these influence their children's academic and life success. He categorized the culture into two groups: expressive culture (i.e. realm of social values, patterns of interpersonal relations and sense of self) and instrumental culture (i.e. skills, competencies and social behaviors aiming to make a living). Teachers and ESL students' parents expected ESL students to learn a variety of both expressive and instrumental culture widely accepted the United States, and finally realize their social mobility in the future.

> Immigrant parents are very much aware that if their children are to thrive they must acquire these skills. Indeed, immigration for many parents represents nothing more, and nothing less, than the opportunity to offer children access to these skills…many immigrant parents strongly resist a whole array of cultural models and social practices in American youth culture that they consider highly undesirable. These include cultural attitudes and behaviors that are anti-schooling ("school is boring") and anti-authority, the glorification of violence, and sexually precocious behaviors.

Both studies showed that ESL students' habits and use of language at home differ from those that were favored in school. However, teachers enacted standardized instruction for all students regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To make matters worse, research showed that teachers tended to show negative attitudes toward language diversity and held stereotyped views of ESL students. For example, in an empirical study, Byrnes, Kiger and Manning (1997) investigated mainstream teachers' attitudes toward language diversity and ESL students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The study focused on five variables that are associated with teachers' attitudes: experience with linguistically diverse students, region of the country that they teach in, formal training in second-language learning, graduate education, and grade level taught. One hundred ninety-one teachers from Arizona, Utah and Virginia participated in this study. The results showed that most teachers (more than 64.87%) hold negative attitudes toward diversity that ESL students brought to their class. Generally speaking, teachers' attitudes toward language diversity and ESL students varied significantly with the region in which those teachers taught, their personal and professional experience with ESL students, and formal training they had received about positive attitudes toward ESL students and language diversity. The authors further indicated that teachers' attitudes toward language diversity were relatively consistent no matter what first languages ESL students spoke (e.g. Spanish, Vietnamese, Navajo or Chinese). The findings suggested that teachers did not pay attention to language-minority students as individual groups but to "multiculturalism more generally" (p. 641). Formal training might contribute to reducing teachers' negative attitudes and stereotypes of ESL students. This study investigated how teachers viewed ESL students and the extent to which they took into account the range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds present.

In addition to these two studies, there are other studies that illustrate this complexity: Au's research on communication in Hawaiian classrooms (Au, 1980), and Phillips' work

with Warm Spring Indians (Philips, 1992). These views complicate the assumptions behind teacher homogeneity and student diversity in public schools – although students came to school with diverse cultural preference and norms, these studies suggest that teachers' reaction to ESL students' "inappropriateness" was quite similar especially when their behaviors were contrary to teachers' expectations and school norms. Yet it is of particular interest that teachers at the center of these studies did not draw attention to the discrepancy in terms of their view of ESL students' diversity and their teaching choices. Certainly lack of knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and preferences played a profound role in teachers' standardized instruction for a diverse group of ESL students, but it seems unlikely that this was the only issue at play. This study aims to extend people's understanding of teachers' views of ESL students' diversity and their choices of instruction in response to this diversity, an issue that has been neglected in current literature. This dissertation will also focus on to what extent and how students' diversity figures in teachers' choices of teaching strategies, use of materials and development of classroom routines in a multicultural classroom.

Political nature of education for ESL students in the United States

Linguistic studies provide a theoretical foundation for second language development and a compelling argument for effective teaching practices (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Pennycook, 1990, 2001; Toohey, 1998, 2000). However, educators have criticized linguistic theorists for focusing exclusively on individual learners while ignoring the importance of social contexts on language learning and teaching (Peirce, 1995a; Toohey, 1998; Willett, 1995). After the 1980s, researchers became more concerned with how second language learners were situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts and how teachers and learners resist or accept the positions those contexts offer them (Freeman & Johnson, 1998a; Horberger & Corson, 1997). On a school and classroom level, Lave and Wenger

(1991) suggested that social contexts might lead to unequal access to resources necessary for success. From a macro-sociological perspective, educational systems are often structured in a manner that handicaps attempts by disadvantaged groups to realize their democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility through education, especially when they have different interests than powerful groups that have control over the existing (educational) system (Archer, 1978). Other educational scholars have reinforced the notion that schools perpetuate prevalent societal images of immigrants and minority groups through a hidden curriculum of schooling that functions as a means of socializing immigrants to take on roles and positions in society such as consumer, worker, and tenant (Auerbach, 1995; McGroarty, 1985; Tollefson, 1989).

Previous studies informing ESL teachers' instruction for ESL students focused more on the influence of local, community or school-level factors while neglecting the power of federal policies. Indeed, language and literacy education for ESL students has been closely related to immigrant and language policies, which has been changing dramatically ever since the beginning of the 20th century (i.e. "English Only" policy, bilingual education policy, "Limited English Proficiency" policy). A careful macro-sociological review of national policies of English language education contributes to an understanding of the context of classroom practices for ESL students. It also offers a possible explanation for how federal policies play a role to constrain or provide opportunities for teachers' choices of language and literacy practices in the current educational setting of the United States.

The historical and political context for educating ESL students

Widening the lens to explore the historical and social contexts of education for linguistically and culturally diverse students in the United States invites consideration of political forces on teaching English language and other academic contents for English language learners (Graddol, 1999, 2006; Pennycook, 2001). A macro-sociological review of

English language education for linguistically and culturally diverse students contributes to understanding the purpose, and position and development of language education in the United States with respect to the changing national views on English as a second language, ESL students' home language, and the consequent ESL pedagogical preference. This review will present the context of education for ESL students in United States today, and further provide possible explanations informing the impact of ESL students' diversity on ESL education from historical and macro-sociological perspectives.

Before the 20th century, most immigrants to the U.S. came from Europe. The United States did not have a national language policy. Local administration, including state government, school districts, and schools, retained the rights of deciding language policy based on the local reality and community needs. Local language choice was considered an important symbol of democracy and decentralized governance. English did not dominate, but it was widely used along with other languages such as German, Dutch and Swedish in the United States at the same time (Crawford, 1995; Lawton, 2008). For example, in a Germany community, church services were conducted in German, and some newspapers were written in German as well. But, some local schools would employ English as an instructional medium to teach German immigrants as well as other minority groups in this community.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States began experiencing dramatically increased levels of immigration, becoming a melting pot with immigrants from all parts of the world. As a result, language as a symbol of national unity and loyalty received intensive attention from the government. The federal government thought linguistic and cultural diversity would harm national unity (Anderson, 1990; Gonzalez, 1975; Paulston, 1978; Walsh, 1991). In order to strengthen national unity, the federal government adopted a language and culture assimilation policy. This policy promoted the English language as well as Anglo-Saxon values. English became one of the most important tools and medium to forge

similar social values in the United States (Leibowitz, 1971). The federal government started promoting English as the only language for education in the United States by cutting minority language funds for private and church-affiliated schools. Local schools accordingly accepted English as the exclusive language of teaching and learning. Teachers were not allowed to teach students in other languages. Both teachers and students would be punished if languages other than English were used in school. For example, teachers would be fired and sent to court if they communicated with the students in any other language than English (Cortes, 1986; Crawford, 1995). Immigrant students were expected to assimilate into the American culture as much as possible, and their own cultures were disregarded in American schools (Dewey, 1932).

In 1940, the National Act and its addenda reinforced the policy of language and culture assimilation. This Act required new immigrants to have high English language proficiency and English literacy skills if they wished to be naturalized in the United States. Immigrants who intended to apply for American citizenship had to improve their English language proficiency and pass a naturalization test in English. Consequently, immigrants were deprived of their democratic rights of using their original language (Crawford, 1995; Heath, 1976). Schools were required to impose English on ESL students and to alienate ESL students from their native languages and cultural identities. Ideally language assimilation leads to cultural assimilation; unfortunately, though, many non-native speakers who had unequal access to cultural and social capital in the United States eventually ended up losing their heritage language while still not being accepted by the mainstream culture (Gonzalez, 1975; Ogbu, 1978; Paulston, 1978).

In the1960s, with growing awareness of the proliferation of ESL students in schools and the importance of improving the academic performance of all students (Bruner, 1960), the federal government put forward the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. This Act allowed

immigrant students to receive education in two languages: English and their native language. Before the 1980s, bilingual education had been narrowly regarded only as temporary services for English language learners. The Bilingual Education Act of 1980 then started reexamining the effectiveness of previous language policies such as the definition of limited English proficiency and the duration of bilingual education. The ultimate goal of the Act was to improve ESL students' academic achievement in mainstream schooling instead of simply offering temporary language services. The Bilingual Education Act of 1980 was established based on the pedagogical idea that students could learn new knowledge faster in their first language (Cummins, 1986; Krashen, 1982). The main purpose of using the students' first language(s) was to help the students build a solid foundation of literacy skills in English, and ultimately to prepare ESL students for mainstream schooling. Once students were evaluated as having achieved the required English proficiency, the instruction in their first language would cease.

In 2002, the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement Act took the place of the Bilingual Education Act of 1980. At the same time, the federal office in charge of English policy changed its name to The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA). Title III (Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students) is currently the federal guideline for ESL instruction in American public schools. This policy aimed to improve ESL students' language proficiency first, and eventually to improve their overall academic achievement. However, the Act shifted the emphasis to local accountability: the federal government granted funding to the state, while the state and local school districts were expected to develop programs that would lead to the most effective learning progress for local ESL students and result in their proficient progress on national and local standardized tests (Beykont, 2002; Menken & Holmes, 2000;

Rice & Walsh, 1996). Local schools have more freedom to choose programs that work the best for ESL students. In other words, the culture of the school and its policy guided (and sometime determined) ESL teaching practices.

Through the macro-sociological lens of education for immigrant students in the United States, one can understand the foundation and context of a particular ESL instruction model. To be more specific, the historical review of education (or services) for ESL students discloses the political nature of language education in the United States, and its influence on ESL program structures, pedagogical preferences, and the status of American dominant culture as well as immigrants' first language and their own culture in language and literacy education. The historical review also indicated that only powerful members of society (e.g. policy makers, administrators) controlled the modification of educational systems as far as educational input, process and goals were concerned (Archer, 1979; Kjaer, 2004). However, today's English language policy seemingly grants district and school administrators with more freedom for designing ESL programs in response to local needs. Examining ESL and literacy instruction under the decentralized language education system will showcase how federal policy was adapted into local governance and met with learning and teaching needs in multicultural educational settings. Through the lens of ELL practices in a particular school culture, we can also see how the culture and policy of local schools impact ESL teachers' design and implementation of responsive instruction. In sum, my study, focusing on teachers' choices regarding language and literacy instruction under the guidance of federal policies, examined, from teachers' own perspectives, their accountability in adapting the policies into classroom practices.

Effects of policy on language instruction: teachers' choices

The importance of federal, state, local, and individual schools' policies on teachers' choices for classroom instruction have received intensive attention from educational

researchers in recent years. The effects of policies on effective teaching and learning go almost unchallenged. Policies are the central component of nearly every school reform, and have been central for understanding teaching and learning activities in classrooms. No one doubts the guiding roles that policies play in classroom instruction. Teachers reinforce this message, often citing school policy as the most influential factor informing the relationship between teachers and students (Barth, 1984; Phillips, 1996), beliefs about teaching (Richardson, 2001), and construction of professional identity (Gee, 2000; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). However, expecting teachers to satisfy all expectations and requirements of federal, state and school policies is unrealistic (Daniels, Holst, Lunt & Johansen, 1996; Lampert, 1985). Indeed, while researchers present compelling arguments in favor of the guiding role of policies in classroom instruction (Agee, 2006; Archer, 1978; Kjaer, 2004), a substantial body of research also offers persuasive evidence that teachers taught classes based on their own perception of effective teaching, even when sometimes the practices they used might not meet with the requirements of existing educational policies or school expectations. Researchers also suggest that teachers tend to develop hybrid practices based on their own sense of effective practices and required policies (Florio-Ruane, 2002; Kersten & Pardo, 2007; Tyack and Cuban, 1995).

For example, in one case study, Salazar (2008) investigated the effects of school district language policies on humanizing practices, through which students' linguistic and cultural resources are validated, as essential for the development of academic resiliency. The school district policy focused on the linguistic aspects of ESL education. ESL teachers were expected to devote effort to improving ESL students' language proficiency, helping them use appropriate language in communication, and learn content knowledge in English. The researcher found district policy prevented ESL teachers from enacting humanizing practices in classrooms, and teachers seldom questioned the drawbacks of the policy that ignored the

students' native language and cultural knowledge on purpose. Also employing a multi-case study, Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman (2004) researched the development of ten beginning literacy teachers' views and pedagogical practices in response to school district policies designed on the basis of state and national pressure over scores of standardized tests. They found literacy teachers working in a low socio-economic school district tended to offer more teacher-centered, scripted instruction. While teaching in a high-capital school district with relatively less minority students, the other group of literacy teachers developed different views of teaching. They responded more proactively and critically toward district policies, socializing into more student-centered literacy practices by creating a more dialogical learning discourse for students. Both studies confirmed that district and school policies played a guiding (or a determinant) role on teachers' choices of language and literacy instructional strategies. When noticing the constraints of current policy, teachers tended to passively accept its guidance instead of seeking alternatives.

Other teachers recognized the drawbacks of current policies, and attempted to initiate instruction based on their own perception of good teaching that, to certain degree, conflicted with current policies. However, they were eventually persuaded to fulfill the policies with the highest priority. Agee (2004) showed an example of African American students' ignorance of their culture due to the school's promotion of American mainstream culture through the professional growth of Tina, an African American female teacher, from her pre-service to induction years. Relying on the constructivist methods and multi-cultural education learned from the teacher preparation program, Tina tried to integrate English literature concerning African American life or written by African American authors into the curriculum because she thought it was a good way to help African American students better understand themselves, and to help white students broaden their own views of literature and historical issues. To her surprise, neither African American nor White students were interested in this

kind of literature, which was not tested in exams. Although the school administrators did not display negative attitudes toward Tina's changes, they did ask her to focus more on test-oriented readings. In light of this African American literature teacher's experience, it can be seen that the teacher's efforts to introduce African American culture to the students were not welcomed by the students. Although the students were not interested in this kind of knowledge, it did not necessarily mean that knowledge about African American culture or its instruction was not important. Indeed, "overt and convert messages that devalue the culture, heritage, and identity of minority students" is a crucial issue of contemporary education in the United States (Huffman, 2001, p. 25). However, both schools and students urged the teacher to revise her conception of good teaching for the sake of standardized tests.

Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from other countries had struggles similar to Tina's. Duff and Uchida (1997) documented two EFL teachers' struggles to teach American culture to Japanese students in a Japanese private postsecondary school. The authors aimed to find out how EFL teachers perceived their roles when teaching English and American cultures to Japanese adult students. They focused on three areas: what pedagogies they adopted during the process of teaching another culture, how those EFL teachers maintained their own socio-cultural identities, and how they related their established beliefs about American culture with their life experience in Japan. The authors indicated paradoxes between teachers' reflection on professional identities and their representations in EFL classes, and the disconnection between their understanding of culture and their classroom practices. The authors suggested the discrepancies arose from the requirement of EFL curricula in Japan that expected teachers to stick to Japanese culture, and to negotiate their socio-cultural identities to meet with the curriculum requirements. This study demonstrated school policies interfered with teachers' enactment of good teaching based on their own perception, and further exhibited teachers' vulnerability when confronted with the pressure of

policies.

These studies highlight the influences of policies on teachers' choices of classroom practices. Although federal, state and district policies are supposed to build up shared beliefs and pass expectations to teachers, these studies also suggested that when public beliefs and expectations (as represented in policies) conflicted with teachers' own understanding of good teaching, teachers tended to rely on their previous experience first. Yet it was of particular interest that teachers did not fade into the shadows of policies. On the one hand, policies determined what, how and by what means teachers teach in schools. On the other hand, research suggested that teachers relied on their experiences and developed teaching practices that they thought would work the best for the students. This dissertation study re-examines these debates by underscoring teachers' decision making regarding classroom instruction as it occurred within a specific historical, social and political context. In addition, unlike other educational policies, language policy targeting ESL students nowadays (specifically/especially Title III) provides districts and schools with more freedom and rights to develop their own language programs with an ultimate goal of satisfying the specific learning needs of the local ESL student population. My focus on culture-complexity-related ESL instruction will contribute to extending current literature on teachers' accountability through investigating how in-service ESL teachers enacted literacy instruction in ESL classrooms to satisfy the learning needs of ESL students in local communities under the guidance of federal and state policies, and how a particular ESL program model affords opportunities for or constrains ESL literacy practices.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory orients most researchers' conceptualization of literacy practices in a multicultural setting (Au, 1993; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Erickson, 1984; Gee, 1999; Street, 1995). Understanding *sociocultural theory* is thus the first step in defining literacy

instruction in a multicultural setting. Therefore, in this section, I initially illustrate theories that guide my understanding of literacy in a multicultural setting, and then discuss important aspects of literacy instruction. Finally, from a sociocultural perspective, I theorize teacher identity that provides a lens through which I can see how they learn to teach students with diverse backgrounds. In this section, I present my conceptualization of literacy practices and teacher identity by considering the following three questions: What does literacy instruction mean in a multicultural setting? What roles do teachers undertake as they teach literacy to ESL students with diverse backgrounds? And how do they understand the interventions they undergo as they move through these social contexts?

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory serves as a theoretical orientation of this study for understanding literacy instruction in a multicultural setting. Vygostgy (1978) first developed sociocultural theory to understand children's cognitive development, and emphasized the forces of history, culture and social context on human activities:

> Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers…. learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions. (p. 90)

Although agreeing that humans' cognitive abilities were biological in nature, Vygostgy and his followers argued that cognitive development was fundamentally shaped and mediated by activities that humans participated in (Cole, 1996; Hall, 1993; Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont'ev, 1981; Wertsch, 1991). To be more specific,

Vygostgy suggested that human beings genetically inherit their elementary mental functions from their birth parents, and reach their high-level cognitive development through culturally mediated social interaction. Low-level mental function results in people's impulse behaviors. High-level mental function allows people to think, speak and act with self-awareness and in a more complex manner. Vygotsky (1978) referred to the place that differentiated low-level mental function from high-level cognitive development as Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Through the ZPD, teachers can see what students have learned, what they are achieving and what they are going to achieve academically and cognitively (see Figure 2).

The Individual-Learner is shown at the bottom of the figure, to remind us of the cognitive, cultural and historical backgrounds that students bring into the classroom. Learners' cultural and language backgrounds and previous schooling experiences affect their future academic development and achievement. As described in the literature review, ESL students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have different learning preferences, levels of cognitive development and skill bases. The next level of the figure highlights the Zone of Proximal Development, and depicts how learning communities affect students, although their academic success or failure is grounded in the skill bases and cognitive levels that they bring into the learning community. Vygotsky believes that learning does not necessarily lead to cognitive development, but only opens up the opportunity for learners' development which Vygotsky terms as "potential skill range as a result of social interaction." The first area, Individual Skill Range, has to do with a learner's skill base and shows what s/he has learned. The second area, the Zone of Proximal Development, is the buffering area between

"individual skill base" and "potential skill range as a result of interaction." Locating the ZPD is critical for teachers' adoption of successful instructional strategies. To be more specific, in the ZPD, teachers or other skilled learners may discover intersubjectivity (shared understanding) with students, and then provide additional support for them to achieve new tasks (or cognitive development) independently. Vygotsky and other sociocultural theorists further suggest that instruction will be more effective if teachers are aware of learners' skill bases and the internal barriers that prevent learners from academic success (Cummins, 1986; McLaren, 1989).

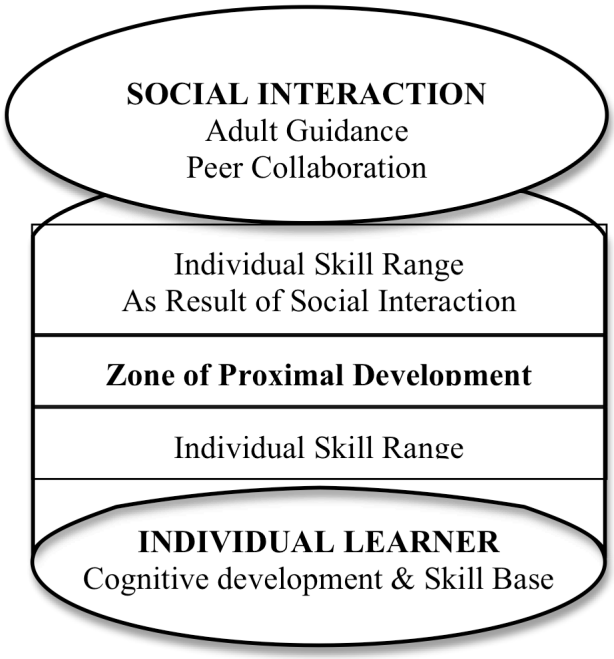

Figure 2. Sociocultural Theory Adapted from Vygotsky (1976).

The top area in Vygotsky's framework deals with Social Interaction. He identifies three key areas of social interaction: adult guidance, peer cooperation and the instructor. Vygotsky indicates that learners' interaction with adults (i.e. supervisors, mentors, and other mature learners), collaboration with peers, and involvement in instruction affect their cognitive development. Vygotsky and his followers (e.g. Smagorinsky & Lee, 1999) demonstrate that shared activity in literacy learning is essentially democratic. It does not

involve “a process of one-way appropriation,” they write, “but rather . . . a process of multidirectional change over time. In such joint collaborative activity, teachers, students, and even the nature of the task all change over time and are negotiated among interlocutors in complex ways” (Smagorinsky & Lee, 1999, p. 5). Vygotsky hypothesizes that new forms of understanding of language and literacy will not remove learners’ old forms. Instead, new forms will complement old ones. Learners’ involvement in shared activities makes their cognitive development and different forms of understanding possible. Many studies have demonstrated that learners’ cultural backgrounds and the instructional interactions and shared activities students experienced within the school and at home affected their academic development and achievement (Gee, 1999; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Kersten & Pardo, 2007; Smagorinsky & Lee, 1999), and that language and literacy instruction not only involves “imparting knowledge about letters and sounds,” but also depends on areas such as literacy curricula, community, family and society (Taylor, Anderson, Au & Raphael, 1999; p.7). Educators with a sociocultural perspective toward classroom instruction are aware of the effects of learning contexts, learners’ skills bases, and social interaction on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and seek to involve students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds as they design classroom activities, select teaching materials, develop classroom routines, and adjust curricula to satisfy students’ learning needs. In short, Vygotsky’s framework shows how students’ backgrounds (or skill bases) and social interaction with peers and other mature learners (e.g. teachers) affect their critical learning area, the Zone of Proximal Development. He defines three areas of social interaction—adult guidance, peer collaboration, and instructor—and proposes that mature (or adult) learners play significant roles in either promoting or preventing learners’ cognitive development. Vygotsky argues that learners’ ZPDs are historically, culturally and socially situated. Successful teachers must create a learning community that is built upon learners’ skill bases and where learners can interact

with their peers and expert learners.

In this dissertation, I use Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective to understand literacy instruction in multicultural classrooms. These three levels serve as diverse instances where I examine literacy instruction with emphases on learners' backgrounds (or skill bases), collaborative learning communities, and guided instruction from adults. The first level focuses on what ESL students bring into literacy classes and how teachers understand the basis that directs their design of effective teaching practices. The second level investigates what learning opportunities teachers provided for students to realize their cognitive development. The third level discusses how teachers initiated and guided social interaction in literacy education. Each enjoys a prominent place in previous research literature, teacher education, and classroom practices. The explanatory power of a sociocultural perspective on instruction enables ESL and literacy teacher educators and researchers to move beyond simple description of classroom instruction, and allows us to trace the inherent complexity of design and enactment of those classroom practices and make visible what those practices ultimately lead to. By capturing literacy instruction through a sociocultural lens, I am able to see the rich details of how literacy instruction emerges out of and is constructed by both ESL teachers and ESL students in a multicultural setting.

Theorizing literacy instruction in a multicultural setting

The basic domain of literacy concerns variation in knowledge of listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing that teachers impart to students in school. While we tend to talk about literacy instruction as monolithic, the means that teachers use to pass literacy knowledge to students are wide-ranging. Teachers build different discourses in classrooms, witness a variety of students' emergent literacy skills, and engage in a range of literacy policies, each of which interact with their own previous personal and teaching experience and with their current teaching context. From a sociocultural perspective, here too theories of

literacy serve to direct this study toward investigating important aspects of literacy instruction for ESL students in American elementary schools that include policy (Cummins, 1986; Gee, 1999), school context (Au, 1993), negotiation of discourses (Erickson, 1984; Gee, 1992), and meaning construction (Heath, 1982; Street, 1995). Below, I will describe those aspects that may contribute to deep investigation of literacy instruction situated in a specific teaching context, and the impacts of ESL students' diversity on how teachers construct communities for literacy learning and assist them with cognitive development.

My understanding of *negotiation of discourses* in literacy instruction starts with Freire's conceptualization of literacy. Freire (1978) defined literacy as an active phenomenon that involved "read(ing) the word and the world," and suggested that the power of literacy could be witnessed not only through people's skills of reading and writing but also through their capacity of applying those skills to work and to develop their cultural identity. In terms of literacy education in school, Erickson (1984) confirmed the power of literacy on shaping students' identity. He further pointed out the power negotiation in literacy education due to different ideologies (or interests) in school and at home. Erickson (1984) suggested:

> [Literacy], as knowledge and skill taught and learned in school, is not separable from the concrete circumstances of its uses inside and outside, nor is it easily separable from the situation of its acquisition in school as a social form and as a way of life. The school can be seen as an arena of political negotiation that embodies individual and group interests and ideologies. It is reasonable to expect that various kinds of literacies might represent a variety of interests and be embedded in a variety of belief systems (p. 525).

Erickson associated literacy with ideology and ascertained the co-existence of a variety of literacies in school. Gee's (1992) notion of primary and secondary discourse resembles Erickson's argument and suggests that "literacy is the secondary use of language"

(p. 25). According to Gee, primary discourse refers to oral language that human beings acquire from their primary culture. Secondary discourses extend the use of language in primary discourse. However, it is quite possible that language use in secondary discourse(s) may not be compatible with that in the primary discourse. Indeed, Gee argued that "all these secondary discourses involve uses of language, either written, oral or both that go beyond our primary discourse no matter what group we belong to" (Gee, 1992, p. 5). ESL students with diverse backgrounds may have to rely on their primary discourse when failing to master language use in secondary discourse. Within the secondary discourse or the school context, literacy teachers should not only help the students develop basic literacy skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, but also motivate the students "to use reading and writing to construct meaning from printed text, in ways that meet the requirements of a particular social context" (Au, 1993, p. 20). Therefore, how teachers help students to construct meanings in schools is one of the most important aspects as well as ultimate goals of literacy instruction (Smagorinsky & Lee, 1999). In other words, students' mastery of language may not necessarily lead to literacy proficiency, which also depends on their control and secondary use of language to meet their needs in a particular context.

My employment of sociocultural perspectives takes me toward understanding what secondary discourse ESL teachers attempt to build, how teachers negotiate the possible conflicts originating from ESL students' diverse primary discourses, what use of language is considered requisite and appropriate in this secondary discourse, and whether and how teachers help ESL students construct meanings in schools.

Theorizing teacher identity from a sociocultural perspective

Mead (1934) uses the term "self" to refer to the concept of identity, viewing "self" as a social being and positing that "self" derives from "the process of experience and activity" (p.135). Blumer (1996) suggests that, during the process of self-construction, a person

responds to things based on the meanings that arise from his social interaction with other fellows. Indeed, a person modifies his interpretation of meanings and response to things through "dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer, 1996, p.21). Accordingly, educational research demonstrates that teachers construct professional identity through their understanding of teaching, social (including personal and professional) experience, and interactions with others (Flores & Day, 2006; Taylor, 1989, 1994; Welmond, 2002; Wenger, 1998). As such, teacher identity cannot be defined as a circumscribed entity. Rather, in this study, teacher identity refers to: 1) teachers' understanding of their professional role as teachers, that is, "the way in which individuals think about themselves as teachers —the images they have of self-as-teacher" (Knowles, 1992, p.99); and 2) the ongoing and dynamic process through which teachers modify their interpretations of teaching and adjust their practice in response to the social, cultural and institutional changes. The definition of teacher identity enables a more specific understanding of teacher roles. More than this, it opens a fresh window through which we can see situated teaching practice.

Educators have demonstrated the rich potential of using teacher identity as an analytic tool for research in education (Gee, 2000; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Research on teachers' understanding and development of professional identity affords opportunities for educators to take an inquiring stance to investigate their teaching practices and gain insights that can further help teachers advance the effectiveness of their teaching practices, and deal with changes and implement new practices (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Briztman, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1996). Gee (2000) proposes four ways to analyze identity in a given context: nature identity, institutional identity, discourse identity, and affinity identity. According to Gee (2000), nature identity is biological, which a person has no control over; institutional identity is assigned by authorities within institutions; discourse identity is not "something one can achieve all by oneself," but is mostly determined by "the discourse or

dialogue of other (rational) people" (p. 103). In other words, discourse identity also depends on how other people in a given context interpret and interact with the person. Affinity identity refers to "(one's) allegiance is primarily to a set of common endeavors or practices and secondarily to other people in terms of shared culture or traits" (p. 105), and affinity identity "focus(es) on distinctive social practices that create and sustain group affiliations, rather than on institutions or discourse/dialogue directly" (p.106). Therefore, examining teacher identity can help address the question concerning "how identity is functioning for a specific person in a given context or across a set of different contexts" (p. 101).

Building upon Gee's work, Sfard and Prusak (2005) further suggested the operational potential of using teacher identity as an analytic tool for research in teacher learning from a socio-cultural perspective. Unlike Gee's emphasis on the state of identity in a given context (or across contexts), Sfard and Prusak focus on the discursive construction and reconstruction of identity. They argue that identity is "man-made and as constantly created and recreated in interactions between people" (p. 15), and is a "missing link in…the complex dialectic between learning and its sociocultural context" (p.16). Equating identity construction to story telling foregrounds the idea of using identity as analytic tool for educational research. Sfard and Prusak (2005) posit that analyzing teachers' narratives (or stories about themselves) may address the following questions: "why do different individuals act differently in the same situations? And why, differences notwithstanding, do different individuals' actions often reveal a distinct family resemblance?" (p. 21). Though it is powerful to address ambiguity and complexity of teacher experience (Bruner, 1990) and it allows teachers to reflect and reconstruct their identity (Gill, 2001), narrative can only provide data from the teachers' viewpoint (e.g., teachers' own interpretation of their interaction with others). According to Gee (2000), teacher's discourse identity depends on others' (rather than teachers' own)

interpretation. Thus, narrative can be one of the analytic tools, and the tools that can help to find out or generate others' voices should be considered (e.g. interview and observation).

Moreover, Gee (2000) and Sfard and Prusak (2005) agree on the rich potential of teacher identity as an analytic tool, but they focus on the state of identity or the process of identity construction respectively. With the notion of teacher identity in relationship with teachers' understanding of their professional identity, and teacher's interaction with others, I suggest that only through analyzing both teacher identity in a given context and the process of the discursive identity construction can we gain insight into how teachers learn to modify their teaching in response to dynamics in a multicultural setting.

Research Questions

With reference to important aspects of literacy instructions in a multicultural setting, I draw on sociocultural theory to approach my central question: *To what extent and how does English Language Learners' linguistic and cultural diversity figure in literacy instruction in ESL classrooms?* I see this question as an inquiry into a specific type of literacy instruction by underscoring the influence of ESL students' multicultural backgrounds on teachers' construction of a collaborative learning community for ESL students' literacy development.

In the review of literacy theories from a sociocultural perspective, I have argued that the effects of ESL students' diversity on literacy instruction are not only about building new, collaborative contexts but also about assisting ESL students to construct meanings in the new discourse. My conceptualization of literacy instruction in a multicultural setting has convinced me that understanding the effect of ESL students' diversity on literacy practices requires paying attention to how ESL teachers understand the diversity, what kind of secondary discourse that they intend to develop, and how the strategies that teachers employ have the potential to promote collaboration and meaning construction in the discourse. I have also argued for the importance of examining the political and school contexts in which ESL

teachers exercise their agency in a particular school site. I consider this dual focus necessary to unpack the complexity of the impact of ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity on literacy instruction and as an important complement to previous studies, in the hope that ESL classes in the elementary school could be a site of investigating the influences of ESL students' diversity on ESL teachers' understandings and design of literacy instruction.

In general, this study is an in-depth examination of literacy instruction in ESL classrooms that will ultimately benefit three groups. These groups include both pre-service and in-service teachers who require better preparation for teaching ESL students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and expect to develop their teaching repertoire in multicultural settings, teacher educators who intend to develop more effective professional programs to help teachers improve ESL programs and ESL literacy instruction, and policy makers who commit themselves to developing a democratic and equal learning environment for all students. Ultimately this study aims 1) to document a specific type of literacy instruction in a culturally and linguistically diverse context; 2) to determine the relative influence of students' linguistic and cultural diversity on teachers' perspectives about literacy instruction in ESL classrooms, if any; and 3) to provide insights for teacher educators to develop more effective professional development programs with a commitment to the improvement of ESL education as well as developing a democratic and equal learning environment for all students.

To accomplish those goals, I see the central question as an inquiry into a specific type of literacy instruction through underscoring the influence of ESL students' multicultural backgrounds on teachers' construction of a collaborative learning community for ESL students' literacy development. Four sets of sub-questions will be examined to address this overarching question: *To what extent and how does English Language Learners' linguistic and cultural diversity figure in literacy instruction in ESL class?*

1. How do ESL teachers understand the ESL literacy curriculum in their district and what is expected of them?

2. How do ESL teachers define linguistic and cultural diversity?

- What do they notice and try to learn about their students?
- What do they think their responsibilities are when teaching literacy to culturally and linguistically diverse students?
- How do they plan for teaching of literacy to their students?

3. How do ESL teachers describe their lessons and classroom activities in response to their understanding of ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity?

- What teaching strategies do ESL teachers adopt and why?
- What materials and resources do they use and why?
- What routines are used in the classroom to support literacy learning?

4. What preparation have the teachers had to teach ESL students?

- Formal preparation
- Professional development
- Other experiences

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the methods and context for the study. Chapters 3 – 5 present the findings of how ESL teachers describe diversity and its nuances in ESL class, how they have been prepared to understand the complexity of diversity issues in ESL class, and how they design and enact literacy and ESL practices in response to student diversity. Chapter 6 discusses ESL teachers' responsive teaching practice, its implication in teacher education that should be further researched, and the necessity of teaching literacy for diversity.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND CONTEXT

This dissertation is designed as a case study of two experienced, in-service ESL teachers' literacy instruction in ESL pull-out-push-in programs in an elementary school located in a university town in the Midwest. The case study design for education research has the potential to produce richly detailed descriptions and analyses of teachers' behaviors and beliefs, teacher-learner interaction, and classroom practices in multilevel and multicultural contexts (Gee, 1996).

I introduce this chapter with an overview regarding the research site, participants and setting. I then describe the process of data collection, and data analysis that focus on the process of generating themes for this study. Finally, I describe the limitations of the study as arising from the incomplete nature of cultural analysis.

Sketches of Participants and Setting

I start this section by introducing the school that was selected as research site for this study. As follows, I describe briefly the pull-out-push-in ESL program that RCES adopted. Following that, I sketch the background information regarding the participants, along with overviews of their teaching responsibilities.

Research site

Most research concerning multicultural literacy instruction focuses on teaching in response to students with specific cultural or linguistic backgrounds while neglecting the reality that teachers have to teach a group of students with diverse backgrounds—some of which even conflict with each other—at the same time. What I am interested in is how ESL teachers design and enact literacy teaching for a group of ESL students with diverse linguistic habits, cultural interests and learning preferences, and what kind of collaborative learning community ESL teachers attempt to build to help ESL students develop their literacy

competence. I wonder if one of the reasons that the extant research reports less productive and superficial interaction might be due to limited opportunities for ESL teachers to intervene given short class periods (usually thirty minutes per day) and large numbers of culturally- and linguistically-diverse students and the constraints of the ESL program model itself. Also, typical in-class collaborations are often restricted to classroom discussion or small projects where task completion might take precedence over students' engagement with or coordination of different cultural interests and linguistic habits. Furthermore, I wonder how teachers guide instruction and mediate collaboration in ESL classrooms when frequent variation appears among ESL students, especially in terms of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There is a precedent for research on the literacy learning of students from diverse backgrounds to inform literacy teaching in a multicultural setting:

> Because the school is a mainstream institution, instruction is carried out in ways following mainstream standards for behavior and reflecting mainstream cultural values. Students have difficulty learning in school because instruction does not follow their community's cultural values and standards for behavior (Au, 1998, p. 302).

By examining the possible effects of ESL students' diversity on literacy instruction in ESL classes, I hope to uncover how teachers incorporate different cultural values and linguistic habits in literacy instruction, and further facilitate collaboration and interaction among students and between teachers and students in a multicultural setting. Therefore, the research site is also the object of my study. Accordingly, I selected the research site through the following three steps. Watson-Gegeo (1988) identified three stages of data collection for ethnographic research in ESL: comprehensive, topic-oriented, and hypothesis-oriented. In the comprehensive stage, researchers work on "all theoretically salient aspects of setting…and conduct a broad spectrum of observations" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p. 585). The topic-oriented stage involves narrowing down the study topic within research interests through semi-

structured interviews, preliminary discourse analysis and topic-oriented observation of interactions or events in a specific context. Based on the initial hypotheses generated from the topic-oriented stage, ethnographers, in the hypothesis-oriented stage, further test those hypotheses and address research questions with structured interviews, in-depth observation and systematic discourse analysis.

I first started my site search in communities in southeastern part of a state in the Midwest, due to the convenience of these locations and their diverse student populations. I did not know any teachers or administrators from those schools in advance, and instead found their contact information on websites of the respective school districts. After expressing my research interests in ESL literacy education in multicultural settings through email, I received warm responses from twenty-three school districts. Then, for the past three and half years (2010-2013), I worked as a volunteer ESL teacher at the three elementary schools that provided full-time ESL programs for ESL Students in three communities, and communicated with district ESL coordinators and ESL teachers on a frequent basis. This process allowed me to engage in a broad spectrum of observations, and therefore served as the comprehensive stage that led me to propose my dissertation study. Specifically, I explored rhythms of school activities, mapped the schools and settings of the ESL classrooms (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), observed ESL teachers' classroom teaching, interacted with ESL teachers and ESL students, and collected official documents (e.g. ESL education policy) from school websites and administrators. Although differing from each other in terms of ESL program structure, staffing and demographics of ESL students, all teachers and school administrators suggested that teaching students with diverse backgrounds is a challenge for schools, classroom and ESL teachers, and shared their concerns regarding inadequate preparation for literacy instruction in this newly emerging setting.

This preliminary site search contributed to my dissertation study in three ways: 1) familiarizing me with the schools' contexts, especially the aspects which related to ESL education in a multicultural setting; 2) clarifying my research interests and formulating research questions; and 3) acquainting myself with the in-service ESL teachers, which was useful for strategically selecting participants and research site for my dissertation study.

The preliminary search, along with my academic curiosity and research questions, further refined my criteria for site selection, and suggested that the research site should have a diverse ESL student population, provide full-time ESL programs, and employ full-time ESL teachers for these programs. Therefore, I confined the potential research sites to three schools in three different school districts. Then, I explored the possibility of conducting my dissertation in those schools with ESL teachers and school districts respectively, and gained access to two of them. Since this is a case study with an ultimate goal to document literacy instruction that could exhibit teachers' behaviors and beliefs and collaboration among ESL students guided by mature learners in a multicultural context, I decided to work with River Cloud Elementary School (RCES) in a city in the Midwestern U.S., which has offered full-time ESL programs for more than ten years and has a larger, more diverse ESL student population than other school districts. In the following section, I give a brief introduction to RCES with a focus on ESL student demographics, ESL staffing, and ESL program structures.

Located next to a large university, RCES offers a number of services and programs to support ESL students, the most important of which is its pull-out-push-in ESL classes mainly offered by two full-time ESL teachers. Three part-time parallel professionals provide one-on-one support for ESL students if both classroom and ESL teachers think it is necessary. ESL Students in RCES amount to more than 25 percent of the whole student population. In 2010, ESL students in RCES came from 56 countries. Among them, Chinese and Koreans occupied the highest percentages. Since RCES is located in a university town, most ESL students are

the children of faculty, graduate students or staff working or studying at the university. ESL students at RCES come from families with relatively higher cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Most of their parents speak fluent English, although English is often not their first language. Most ESL student students' enrollment and length of study in RCES is based on their parents' affiliation with the university. For example, some parents came to the United States for doctoral studies, and their children may stay at RCES for about four to five years; some parents pursuing their Master's degrees will stay only two or three years, and some visiting scholars only stay in the U.S. for one semester, so their children have to leave with them in the middle of the year. Therefore, the transient nature of ESL student populations generally can be easily seen at RCES. This nature along with parents' high cultural capital affects the school culture of RCES. On the one hand, teachers and administrators face the challenge to accommodate ESL students into (mainstream and ESL) class anytime during the semester. On the other hand, ESL parents, most of whom hold master's or higher degrees, highly value education and admit the importance of parental involvement in children's schooling. In RCES, we can often see that parents of ESL students assist teachers to lead and develop cultural activities, and they always respond to teachers' feedback on their children promptly.

Obviously, the ESL student population at RCES demonstrates their diversity especially in terms of cultural, linguistic and family backgrounds as well as schooling history. From a socio-cultural perspective, they bring a wide range of knowledge bases into ESL classes, which inevitably construct a multicultural setting that can showcase teachers' understanding of ESL students' diversity and the influence of diversity on ESL teachers' designing literacy classes and developing guided, collaborative, interactive instruction.

In sum, my long-term involvement with RCES prepared me well with the knowledge of this school's ESL program structures. More importantly, the diverse ESL student

population and the long history of full-time ESL programs at RCES provided a large amount of information showcasing ESL literacy instruction responding to ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity in a multicultural setting.

Pull-out-push-in ESL program in RCES

RCES constructs their ESL curriculum under the guidance of the state of Michigan's ESL curriculum, and employs the pull-out-push-in instruction model suggested by the curriculum. Employing a pull-out-push-in model, Deb and Kelly pull ESL students out of their mainstream classes for 30 minutes on a regular basis (usually once every the other day). When needed or requested by mainstream classroom teachers, Deb and Kelly push themselves in the mainstream class and work side-by-side with the ESL student with special needs. Besides receiving ESL instruction from fulltime ESL teachers, ESL students can also get help from part-time parallel teachers. Furthermore, ESL students are pulled out from the regular class for 30 minutes for extensive ESL instruction in an ESL class. After that, the students are sent back to the regular class. At least once a month, Deb and Kelly go into the classroom (known as the "push in" feature of the program) and co-teach in the mainstream classroom with the classroom teacher, offering academic support for ESL students in the mainstream environment. Deb and Kelly are encouraged to offer help to mainstream teachers, and to initiate connections with ESL student parents proactively by the school district. These features of the ESL program in RCES are especially contributive to investigating social interaction guided by Deb and Kelly for the following reasons: 1) the 30-mintute pull-out session presents what the learning community looks like in an ESL literacy class through lenses such as classroom routines, teaching materials, assignments and classroom activities; and 2) the push-in session further discloses what extra assistance that ESL teachers suggest that ESL students need outside ESL classes (or in other words, what could not be provided in ESL classes), how ESL students' diversity figures in ESL teachers' decisions for offering

assistance in mainstream classes, how the influence of ESL students' diversity on ESL teachers' teaching in mainstream classes differs from that in ESL classes, and why ESL teachers choose to work one-on-one with some ESL students instead of others; and 3) the collaboration between the two ESL teachers (compared with those who work independently) provide additional channels to reveal their decision of literacy instruction in ESL classes.

Generally speaking, although Deb and Kelly chose the structure of pull-out-push-in at their own will, they noticed some constraints of this model including limited ESL teaching time, insistency of content and time conflicts with the mainstream class[2].

Participants

Two full-time, in-service ESL teachers from RCES were selected to participate in this study. In this study, I decided to work with two teachers because I was able to get more than one perspective regarding ESL literacy teaching in a multicultural context. The low enough number also allowed me to study teachers' understanding of diversity issues and their responding practices in depth. More importantly, the fact that the two ESL teachers worked as a team in RCES influenced my decision on selecting them as participants of the study. Through their collaboration and interaction, I was able to gain additional information regarding their decisions on designing and enacting literacy lessons in ESL class. The selection of participants was also based on the following criteria: 1) full-time in-service ESL teachers (rather than parallel ESL teacher, reading specialist working with ESL students); 2) the ESL student population in ESL classes is culturally and linguistically diverse; and 3) the ESL teachers indicated a preliminary willingness to participate in this study voluntarily. In this section, I provide brief sketches of the participants including family and educational

[2] Sometimes ESL students could not be pulled out from the mainstream class as scheduled because they did not finish tasks in the mainstream class.

background, teaching history, and responsibilities in RCES. These sketches were generated from field notes, interviews and artifacts that I collected for this study.

Deb

Deb Clarkson (pseudonym), in her mid 60s, is a Caucasian female who grew up in a middle-class family that highly valued diversity. For much of her life, she has been living in neighborhoods full of people coming from all around the world; her parents always hosted an annual diversity party in their house when Deb was a child. As Deb describes it, she especially enjoyed life stories that their neighbors shared during the party. While accompanying her husband who was a commander in the Army and had been moving on active military duty, Deb offered all kinds of assistance to military wives who could not speak English; she helped them to apply for their Social Security number, took them for doctor appointments, taught them how to drive and so on. Very soon, however, Deb realized that these service members and their wives would benefit more if the wives could master English. With support of her husband, Deb started offering informal ESL training for these military wives, and in her words, "to help them become more independent." Despite her success and enjoyment of teaching ESL (she initiated the first ESL class in the military base), Deb initially gained seven endorsements and taught geography, forensics, public speaking, literature and creative writing for middle and upper schools because of the higher possibility of finding a job around different military bases. In1985, the summer following her husband's return to their hometown, Deb started two part-time jobs as an ESL teacher. She taught ESL in a prestigious private elementary school, where most ESL students came from Japan. At night, she worked with adult ESL learners who were mostly Vietnamese refugees. Two years later, Deb decided to return to school, and gained her Master of Arts degree in TESOL from a well-known university. Afterwards, Deb accepted the offer from RCES as the first full-time

ESL teacher in the school district. Since then, she has been working in RCES for more than ten years.

Before Kelly, another full-time ESL teacher, was employed, Deb taught all levels of ESL classes by herself. The ESL student population then "was not so diverse as it is now," and were mainly from South Korea and Japan. With the proliferation of ESL students, RCES hired more ESL teachers and parallel teachers. Meanwhile, they asked Deb to take more responsibilities: providing monthly workshops of ESL pedagogy for all ESL teachers in the school district; leading workshops focused on teaching ESL students for teachers of all subject matters in RCES at the beginning of each semester; initiating semi-semester meetings regarding ESL policy and learning expectations with ESL student parents. Besides these required responsibilities, Deb, collaborating with Kelly, proactively developed several activities that aimed to arouse multicultural awareness at the school level. For instance, she designed and organized annual culture festival through which all students had an opportunity to show their heritage (e.g. music, clothes, and sometime food). Deb also launched a Morning Ceremony, encouraging ESL students to share knowledge of their native language with teachers and other students in RCES. Deb was described by those who worked with her as very knowledgeable, deeply caring, open-minded, and highly reflective. Deb highly valued all opportunities to explore and understand other cultures, and Kelly characterized Deb's strengths as building relationships with ESL students, especially newcomers. Deb proudly proclaimed herself a "scientist and artist", who teaches ESL students with "technical skills like in science" and with "art that (she) finely tunes it to individuals, not just their culture".

Kelly

Kelly Walker (pseudonym) is another full-time ESL teacher at RCES. Kelly is a Caucasian female who grew up in a middle class family that highly valued education. Kelly's brothers and sisters are all teachers. Kelly entered college as an education major with interest

in language arts. She started her career as a kindergarten teacher, and had about 12 years of experience of teaching kindergarteners. Though she enjoyed it, she did not see herself as working with kindergarteners for a long career. A good experience on a church mission trip of teaching ESL in Kosovo led to her interest to "learn other cultures, ways of learning, (and) views of world." Right after coming back to the United States, she involved herself in several other church missions that focused on offering free ESL services for immigrants of all ages. Kelly was amazed at "most of the time, how kids from other cultures who come to America have a love learning." She then decided to pursue her Master of Arts degree in TESOL because she liked language teaching and because she enjoyed the opportunity "to teach children who love to learn." Kelly first started her job in RCES as a part-time kindergarten teacher and part-time ESL teacher. One year later, Kelly applied for the full-time ESL teacher position. Since then, she has been teaching as a full-time ESL teacher in RCES for about six years. She remarked that other teachers in RCES were dwelling on "how impossible it is to teach ESL students (content knowledge) when they cannot understand (the teacher)". She, on the other hand, was excited, feeling sure that teaching ESL students with diverse backgrounds was harder than people thought, but was confident that she could handle challenges. Kelly described teaching culturally diverse students as "jumping into a fish bowl." Being "open-minded, sensitive, and diplomatic" is the key to success. It is hard but possible to "finally jump into the fish bowl after practices."

Generally speaking, Deb and Kelly worked as a team. They together designed ESL lesson plans, developed workshops for teachers of other subject matters and parents of ESL students, and led multicultural activities. However, Deb and Kelly always split responsibilities when it comes to two particular areas; Deb, as described by Kelly, has strong linguistic knowledge of other languages, and therefore Deb is always the one who handle newcomers who could not speak English; Kelly, on the other hand, is considered as a

technology expert, and mainly takes responsibility for designing and leading technology-assisted ESL classes. For example, when introducing vegetable to ESL students, Kelly designed a Smartboard-assisted lesson, and led the class with the assistance of Deb. Both Deb and Kelly found their collaboration is one of the most rewarding parts of their teaching career. In this study, I present Deb and Kelly as a pair instead of report each individual teacher's idea because I feel they are very compatible in their beliefs due to their close working relationship.

After receiving permission from the MSU IRB and the Department of Teacher Education, I pursued formal consent to participate from those ESL teachers at RCES, and permission from the school districts for conducting my dissertation study in RCES.

Data Collection

I employed three data collection strategies: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and artifact collection. Generally speaking, the study is based mainly on the following sets of data: 1) artifacts including the ESL curricula and related policies that guide ESL teaching, professional development materials, and related literacy-learning and -teaching materials and other references used in the ESL classrooms; 2) interviews with the ESL teachers; 3) four-period observations in the ESL classes during the spring semester of 2011 (see Table 1). Table 1 presents the matrix of data that I will collect for the study.

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection

Observations	Semi- Structured Interviews	Artifacts
Literacy instruction in ESL classrooms conducted by full-time ESL teachers in each school site 2 periods of 1st graders; 2 periods of 3rd graders 30 minutes/period	ESL teachers (pre-interview) Curricula Understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity Descriptions of lesson plans and classroom activities Professional development ESL teachers (post-interview) Questions about observations and preliminary pre-interview results	State/district/school ESL curricula ESL lesson and unit plans ESL teaching materials Support materials (e.g. ESL resources on district/school websites) Observation field notes Handouts

Interview data was collected from full-time ESL teachers before, during, and at the end of the data collection period. After receiving permission from the MSU IRB to conduct the study, I first interviewed the two ESL teachers before the classroom observations to become familiar with their ESL class structures, teaching context and ESL and literacy curriculum for the semester (see Appendix A: Interview: ESL Teacher). During the observation, I explored teachers' understanding of ESL student diversity through their description of the ESL student population, their ESL teaching responsibilities, professional development and so on. In the interviews concerning teachers' descriptions of ESL curricula and professional development, I actually looked at those documents with the teachers after asking interview questions in a more general way. Throughout data collection, I had informal conversations with the ESL teachers, with the option of formal interviews when it seemed advantageous. I also conducted individual interviews at the end of the data collection period to verify the preliminary results that I found about which aspects of the two ESL teachers resemble and differ from each other in terms of literacy instruction responding to cultural and linguistic diversity in ESL classrooms.

I observed and took field notes about literacy instruction in ESL classrooms to identify, in action, how the teachers carried out their practice and compare it to what they said about their practices. I also kept a journal to record my impressions of what happened during each session and to reflect on the interactions. I made notes in my journal the same day as I observed the ESL teachers teach 1st and 3rd graders. The observation data allowed me to look for consistencies and discrepancies across what teachers did and said, especially their descriptions of teaching strategies, classroom routines and lesson designs.

Other artifacts such as lesson and unit plans, ESL teaching materials, assignments for ESL students and handouts for parents were also be collected during the process of interviews and observations. I discussed those artifacts with teachers after the second and

third interviews (see Appendix B: Interview – ESL teachers (2nd interview, Beliefs of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, and Appendix C: Interview – ESL teachers (3nd interview, Literacy instruction in ESL Classroom), and asked them questions about their design and use of those materials in a more specific way.

In summary, who did I interview and what did I observe? How did the interviews and the observations help me address the research questions? To address the first research question, aiming to understand ESL teachers' understanding of ESL curricula and the expectations of those curricula, I needed to interview ESL teachers with a focus on their interpretations of the ESL curricula, addressing issues of ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity. The artifacts such as state and district curricula offered a good amount of information about the policies guiding ESL teachers' understandings of cultural and linguistic diversity and lesson designs to address the diversity issue (See Table 2). Table 2 also presents the data I collected for understanding the formal and informal interventions and professional development that ESL teachers received to better teach culturally- and linguistically-diverse ESL students. The bulleted items in Table 2 show what I learned from each source of data, and further identifies the data I collected to address the third research question: "How do ESL teachers describe their lessons and classroom activities in response to their understanding of ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity?

Table 2

Matrix of Data Collection

Data Collection / Research Questions	Semi-structured Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
1. How do ESL teachers understand the ESL literacy curriculum in their district and what is expected of them?	1. Pre-interview with ESL teachers (1st interview) • Goals of literacy instruction in ESL classes • Educational experiences of ESL students • Assessment of ESL literacy learning • Teachers' involvement in curriculum development	NONE	1. Federal ESL policy 2. State ESL policy of Michigan: state ESL curriculum 3. District/school ESL curricula 4. ESL lesson plans distributed by the district (if any) and developed by teachers 5. Schools' annual reports
2. How do ESL teachers define linguistic and cultural diversity?	1. Pre-interview with ESL teachers (2nd interview) • Ideology of ESL instruction • Literacy lesson planning • Materials used for different components of literacy instruction in ESL classroom • The differences in materials used in literacy instruction between ESL and mainstream classes • The differences in teaching literacy to diverse students vs. a relatively mono-ethnic student group; ESL student vs. American peers 2. Post-interview with ESL teachers	1. General literacy teaching and learning process in ESL classrooms 2. Enactment of responsibilities as ESL teachers described in pre-interviews 3. Teachers' use of teaching materials 4. Teachers' interactions with ESL students 5. ESL teachers' interactions with ESL students 6. ESL teachers' interventions	1. Materials and tools used in ESL classes 2. Collection of children's literature used in ESL classrooms 3. Classroom decorations 4. ESL literacy lesson plans 5. ESL students' workbooks 6. Workbooks / assignments that ESL teachers prepared for students 7. Materials /resources ESL teachers used to get to know ESL students

Table 2 (cont'd)

3. How do ESL teachers describe their lessons and classroom activities in response to their understanding of ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity?	1. Pre-interview with ESL teachers (3rd interview) • Collection of children's literature • Choices of teaching materials, tools and contents • Processes of lesson/unit design • Implementation of class activities • Basic strategies of teaching ESL literacy strategies for teaching culturally diverse students • Pros and cons of those strategies • Pedagogy for teaching linguistically- and culturally-diverse ESL students • Understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy • Concerns of culturally responsive pedagogy 2. Post-interview	1. General literacy instruction processes in ESL classrooms • Lesson structure and form • Organization, task and activity • Routine and rule • Phonemic awareness • Vocabulary development • Spelling and writing • Reading comprehension 2. Assessment of ESL students' progress	1. Materials and resources used for literacy instruction in ESL classrooms 2. ESL lesson plans 3. Activity materials (e.g. teaching guide; tools used to facilitate instruction, ESL students' learning materials) 4. Materials and tools used in ESL classes (required by the state or school) 5. Field notes of observation
4. What preparation have the teachers had to teach ESL students?	1. Pre-interview with ESL teachers (1st interview) • Formal and informal preparation experiences • Professional development • Other experiences	NONE	1. Professional development materials 2. Teachers' own readings for professional development

Data Analysis

I employed an illustrative case study design for this study. According to Yin (1984), a case study is particularly valuable for "investigating situations in which the researcher has little control over the events that occur in the real-life context," and a case study approach "encourages sensitivity to changes in the context" (p.5). To construct "cases" of ESL literacy instruction in a particular school context, I coded artifacts, interview data, and observation data through three phases.

I initially adopted a coding strategy to generate a "general accounting scheme not content-specific but that points toward the general domains in which codes will have to be inductively developed" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57). I marked all field notes, interview transcripts and artifacts that show ESL teachers' references to ESL students' language and cultural diversity. For example, as I read field notes from an observation of an ESL literacy class, I coded the minutes where ESL students introduced their home languages as Student-Linguistics, meaning the students were showing linguistic diversity. For interviews, if the teacher illustrated a particular multicultural event, that portion of transcript would be coded as T-Culture, meaning teachers were enacting a culture-related practice. For artifacts, I coded based on what and how artifacts reported on. Some artifacts (e.g. materials that were used in the professional development workshops that teachers participated) were examples of interventions that teachers experienced and would be coded as PD-ESL teaching strategies. This initial coded scheme allowed me to group all of a particular type of diversity, interventions and interaction into one place. I then could look for patterns in those types of diversity and intervention in relation to literacy instruction.

Then, I determined each ESL teacher's notion of student diversity by considering patterns in their interviews and teaching artifacts. I identified certain characteristics of diversity they mentioned and how those characteristics vary. For example, in an interview, I

coded a portion of the text as “imposed learning styles” when the teacher described how ESL students displayed a preference for certain learning styles because they were only exposed to that particular kind of style. This characteristic of diversity was irrelevant to their culture. In other words, this type of diversity that ESL students exhibited could happen in any culture. This characteristic of diversity fell under the category of “cross-culture Student Diversity and Literacy Disciplines” along with two other codes at the same level of hierarchy: “regional differences” and “diverse choices in daily life”. These characteristics allowed me to see contrasts among different kinds of diversity and intervention. I compared the teachers’ notions of student diversity and found that they were the same, perhaps because of their long-term collaboration and shared professional development opportunities.

Next, 1.I investigated how the teachers enacted their complex notion of student diversity in designing and implementing language and literacy instruction, by analyzing patterns among the data sources, including classroom observations. My theoretical framework suggested that I would have two sets of “general accounting scheme” codes, which I did. The first set targeted the information concerning teachers’ perspectives of ESL students’ literacy skill base (see Figure 2). I coded the field notes, artifacts I collected and interview transcripts for the kind of statements representing ESL teachers’ perspectives of ESL students’ language and cultural diversity, the influence of diversity on their design of literacy instruction and their decisions in choosing teaching materials and instructional strategies. For example, in an interview, I noticed a portion of text that the teacher described how some ESL students from China always tended to participate in discussions while some were quiet all the time, and how unreasonable it was to stick a “shyness” label on all Chinese students. I coded this portion of text as “human variability,” showing the teacher understood the complexity of diversity issues and attempted to interpret diversity issues beyond cultural constraints. The second set aimed at information regarding teachers’ instruction and

promotion of collaboration among ESL students. I coded all three data sets for statements about how ESL teachers teach, with the focus on teachers' interaction with students and contents, and teachers' intervention of students' interaction with peers and contents, and their guidance and promotion of collaboration among students. For example, from the field notes, I labeled a portion of the text as "Building the relationship between language and object" when the teacher encouraged all ESL students to share their experience and understanding of "policeman" before introducing the concept of policeman in an American context. The second set of data served the study in two other ways: 1) by providing additional information concerning teachers' understandings of ESL students' diversity and their different skill bases (see Figure 2), and the power of policies for building literacy learning communities for ESL students with different needs; and 2) by triangulating the first set of data about ESL teachers' description of diversity through the lens of their choices of instructional strategies and teaching materials.

Employing the two sets of data, I then compared the shared beliefs about ESL education within a particular school context with what really happens in the ESL classroom, and at the same time sought out recurrent themes and statements that represent and construct differences in teachers' perspectives of diversity and its influence on literacy instruction (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). With this elementary coding system, I began to see the influence of ESL students' linguistic and cultural diversity on literacy instruction that led to further pattern identification, and developed assertions about how ESL students' diversity figures in literacy instruction in ESL classrooms. For example, in an interview, I coded a portion of the text as "linguistic features of home language(s)" when the teacher described how the sentence structure of Japanese was different from that of English and how the differences resulted in the ESL students from Japan made mistakes in his writing. This type of diversity influenced teachers' interpretation of mistakes that ESL students made in literacy learning. In addition, I

sought alternative ways (both visual and text-based) to display data that allowed me to develop patterns and propositions and connect sets of statements that might be considered preliminary findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984). These propositions pointed me inductively toward particular theories or concepts for explaining the data.

Limitations of the Study: Incomplete Nature of Cultural Analysis

In this section, I analyze the nature of cultural analysis that influences the study design. Intrinsic incompleteness is the nature of cultural analysis (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Geertz, 1973; Taylor, 1871). Perceiving the incomplete nature of cultural analysis is significant for this study for three reasons: 1) the conceptualization determines the exploratory nature of this study, and suggests that the purpose of the study is not to search for exhaustive elements of literacy teaching and learning in a particular culture (or school context); 2) the conceptualization helps me avoid overgeneralizing culture (or standardizing culture in Geertz's [1973] words); and 3) admitting this nature helps me to confine the study to an appropriate scope within which I can manage the study design and address the research questions.

The incompleteness mainly results from the possibly infinite contexts in which literacy instruction is situated (Taylor, Anderson, and Au, 2000), the large number of people (or groups of people) involved in creating, passing down, executing and modifying the instruction, and the infinite artifacts (such as stories, tools or other symbolic representations) that contribute to the teachers' development of secondary discourses. For example, Cole (1996) argued that "a teacher gives a lesson, which is shaped by the classroom it is a part of, which in turn is shaped by the kind of school it is in, which in turn is shaped by the community, and so on" (p.134). Analysis of literacy instruction also involves several other larger contexts (i.e. school and community). Bruner's (1996) notion of "intersubjectivity" resembles Cole's argument and suggests "human functioning is always situated in a context"

(p.161). To unpack the complexity of classroom instruction, people should first understand the contexts of teaching and learning, and then the larger context in which teaching and learning happens (Bruner, 1996). Geertz (1973) explained why cultural analysis is incomplete and proposed how ethnographers could deal with this unavoidable issue:

> Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right. But that, along with plaguing subtle people with obtuse questions, is what being an ethnographer is like. There are a number of ways to escape this -- turning culture into folklore and collecting it, turning it into traits and counting it, turning it into institutions and classifying it, turning it into structures and toying with it. But they *are* escapes. The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as . . . essentially contestable. (Geertz, 1973, p. 29)

Geertz argued that cultural analyses are neither used to draw arbitrary conclusions from a particular culture nor to standardize cultural phenomena. The purpose of examination and interpretation of a particular type of literacy instruction is not to study school but study in school (Geertz, 1973, p.22). Ideally, research studies based on cultural analyses are supposed to be an elaborative venture in thick description, are conducive to broaden people's understanding of human discourse, and are in search of others' meaning in the researchers' own terms.

Geertz's argument of cultural analysis laid out a general framework that I used in my analysis of literacy instruction. In this dissertation, I applied Geertz's framework to a study concerning the discursive practices of in-service ESL teachers in RCES. I did not examine

literacy instruction in response to ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity simply by documenting the artifacts (e.g. school policy, educational tools, lesson plans) or observing teaching and learning process in classrooms. My goal is to better understand and interpret teachers' behaviors in a particular school discourse. The thick description of the in-service ESL teachers from two elementary schools aims to present ESL practices in contexts, and to make their practices meaningful to outsiders.

Based on the main themes that emerged, I organized my findings to chapters that represent three main themes. In the next chapter, I report my findings for the first theme: teachers' nuanced description of diversity in ESL classes.

CHAPTER 3

TEACHERS' NUANCED DESCRIPTION OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, ESL enrollment in American K-12 schools has increased rapidly. I also showed that the educational setting in American public schools was further complicated by ESL students' birthplaces and schooling history. Seventy-four percent of ESL students were reported born in the United States but spoke a language (or languages) other than English at home. Most ESL students started schooling in kindergarten or first grade in the United States, but twenty-six percent of ESL students coming to the United States started formal education in American schools at later ages (Batalova, 2006). I also detailed in Chapter 1 how previous studies recognized linguistic and cultural diversity among ESL students, and the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of literacy learning (i.e. instructional strategies, teaching materials and parental involvement).

However, in today's multicultural classes, teachers are not just attending to ESL students one by one. In reality, teachers are confronted with a group of students who have different linguistic and cultural knowledge, diverse (and often incompatible) learning preferences, and sometimes conflicting learning needs simultaneously. How teachers understand the complexity of student diversity and its relation to their classroom practices determines the effectiveness of the guided practices and collaboration among students, and thus the effectiveness of ESL students' literacy learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In this chapter, I draw on Vygotsky's concept of the skill base to consider diversity issues not as something to be neglected, thereby unintentionally reducing and negating its impacts on classroom practices, but as something that is inevitable, and which can be the basis for initiating guided instruction and collaboration in class. This layer of socio-cultural theory allows us to purposefully reframe ESL student diversity as an opportunity and foundation for responsive literacy instruction.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of two ESL teachers' understandings of student diversity through underscoring how these understandings are related to students' intercultural diversity. Next I describe how teachers' understanding of diversity moves beyond the intercultural level, and attempt to discuss and distinguish diversity and its nuances. In the final section of this chapter, I revisit the issue of ESL student diversity in a multicultural setting and its potential for being used as a teaching resource.

Intercultural ESL Student Diversity and Literacy Discipline

Both Deb and Kelly suggested that ESL students brought intercultural diversity to school, including their home language(s), linguistic knowledge, and ESL- and literacy-learning experience. Intercultural student diversity was strongly tied to the respective culture of ESL students' native countries, and was relatively unchangeable. Under most circumstances, the teachers were able to incorporate students' intercultural diversity directly to classroom practices such as setting up class goals, choosing teaching materials, and structuring ESL classes with consideration of ESL students' English and literacy proficiencies.

Home language(s) and dialect(s)

Deb and Kelly suggested that ESL students brought diverse home language(s) into the ESL class. This aspect of student diversity could be seen through three lenses: what language or languages and dialects students speak; how proficiently they speak, read and write in those language(s); and what languages their family members use. Deb and Kelly both pointed out that language diversity among ESL students was complicated by language policies in their home countries, and resulted in students' diverse linguistic skills.

According to students' enrollment reports in the academic year of 2010-2011, forty-seven languages and dialects were represented in RCES. Kelly argued ESL students' nationality might not indicate what languages they use at home. In fact, since some countries have more than one official language (e.g. Canada, India, and South Africa), it can be hard to

predict ESL students' home language(s) based on their nationality. Some ESL students might not necessarily speak their home country's official language(s) at home. For example, in RCES, some ESL students from India spoke Punjabi at home. Some students were already multilingual before learning ESL in the United States. It was quite common that ESL students, especially those from Africa, were able to speak more than one or two languages besides English. For example, Deb pointed out that ESL students from Malawi usually spoke three languages: Chichewa, English and French. While ESL students' nationalities did provide a degree of information about their language backgrounds, Deb and Kelly understood that the information might be misleading or not thorough enough for them to know their students' complete backgrounds. Deb and Kelly thus carefully identified ESL students' nationality and languages. They revised the enrollment form so that it now required ESL students' parents to submit more detailed and accurate information regarding their children's linguistic backgrounds: what language they used at home, in their home countries, and during previous informal and formal schooling in both the United States and their home countries. In all levels of ESL classes, Deb and Kelly asked their students to share their language background with their peers through oral self-introduction in English. At the same time, students were encouraged to point out their home countries on the world map. Deb suggested that this was an important opportunity for ESL teachers to learn students' language backgrounds from sources besides the reports of the students' parents.

In addition to using parent-provided information and students' self-introductions, Deb and Kelly were both self-motivated to learn about ESL students' home languages and argued that developing linguistic knowledge of foreign countries was critical for them to know ESL students' English and literacy proficiency. For example, both teachers felt "amazed" and "challenged" by teaching an ESL student from Bhutan this academic year. Neither Deb nor Kelly had ever taught a student from this country before. It was also the first time that they

learned about this country. Deb and Kelly proactively sought reading materials related to Bhutan and its language, Dzongkha. Rather than learning how to speak the language, Deb and Kelly intended to learn about linguistic features of the language. Deb argued that this linguistic knowledge of the language contributed to her understanding of the mistakes that the student made in English. Besides acknowledging ESL students' diverse language backgrounds, Deb and Kelly also admitted their limited knowledge of foreign languages. Both teachers agreed on the advantage of knowing foreign languages in teaching ESL students. Deb expressed her desire for "know[ing] every kid's language and know[ing] what they want to learn." Kelly expressed a similar desire "in a real ideal world, I could speak every language that the child does." They want to learn more about many languages, but recognized the inability to study every language that students brought into ESL classes.

Furthermore, Deb revealed that ESL students came to school with not only diverse languages but also "dialects that I (the ESL teacher) never heard." For example, ESL students from China used (i.e. spoke and wrote) Mandarin in public, but tended to speak different dialects at home (e.g. Shanghai dialect). Due to the dramatic phonetic differences among those dialects, ESL students from different parts of China sometimes were not able to understand each other. For example, Deb pointed out "Cantonese has six tones[3], but there are only four tones in mandarin". Students' dialects influenced their pronunciation in English as well. Kelly suggested that she could understand ESL students from the northern part of China better than those from the south. Clearly, ESL students' diverse language and dialect backgrounds affected communication among students as well as between teachers and students. Deb and Kelly both noticed the existence of diverse languages and its influence on

[3] Theoretically, Guangdong Cantonese has seven tones while there are six tones in Hong Kong Cantonese.

students' literacy development, and they tended to rely on their teaching experience to understand diverse languages that ESL students brought to class.

Linguistic features of home language

Deb and Kelly suggested that one of the main motivations for collecting accurate information about ESL students' language backgrounds was to learn the linguistic features of ESL students' home languages. Getting to know ESL students' linguistic backgrounds was a must for Deb and Kelly to design and deliver ESL and literacy lessons. Deb explained that her familiarity with linguistic features of ESL students' heritage language(s) or dialect(s) helped her better understand what aspects of English language knowledge ESL students need to "spend more time on." Deb argued that teachers should be alert to these contrastive features even when ESL students' native languages share enormous similarities with English:

> Sometimes languages are close enough together that the student doesn't see the difference and yet the difference is very important (Spanish vs. English, German vs. English). In some languages, it's placement of words. It could be adjectives and placements. In some languages, adjectives are modified and in English we don't modify adjectives. Some of them don't modify verbs. Some of the languages do modify verbs. So they [ESL students] are always looking for that spot in a sentence to change. Or some languages are position-tied…English has prepositions, but Japanese has postpositions. They often put an American preposition after the place where we would put it before: Not "I go to the store", (but) "I go to store to."

Deb suggested that linguistic features of students' heritage languages led her to design ESL literacy lessons with particular attention to the linguistic features of English that students might miss in their native language(s). Additionally, although both had taken linguistics course during their graduate studies of TESOL, Deb and Kelly demonstrated different levels of expertise in general linguistic knowledge. Deb suggested that her foreign language

learning experience contributed to her sensitivity and increasing interest in linguistics. With relatively limited knowledge of linguistics, Kelly tended to rely on Deb's expertise, and acknowledged that she "benefited a lot from Deb's expertise of foreign languages." Accordingly, when dividing the tasks of ESL literacy lessons, Deb always took the lead. Kelly otherwise took the main responsibility for selecting corresponding teaching materials and helping ESL students accomplish their tasks. Deb and Kelly's attentiveness in gathering additional information about ESL students' prior language experience was quite applicable to their lesson design, exposing the invisible interdependence of ESL teaching and the diverse linguistic skills that students brought into class.

Diverse academic experiences

Educational researchers have paid close attention to ESL students' academic experience from different perspectives: ESL students' interactions with teachers and their mainstream peers (Frizten, 2011), their experiences of learning different subject matter (Collier, 1995; Duff, 2001), and the involvement and influence of local communities on ESL students' schooling experiences (Perry, 2008). However, most studies focused on ESL students' ongoing schooling experiences in the United States while ignoring those in their native countries. Indeed, researchers suggested that children's language proficiency in their first language predicted their development of second language (August & Hakuta, 1997). Additionally, literacy learning is a process of sociocultural participation, and what and how ESL students learned literacy in their native countries adversely affected their expectations, needs and ways of learning literacy in American educational settings (Gay, 2010; Howe, 1999). Deb and Kelly argued that ESL students' diverse academic experiences were especially significant in multicultural classrooms, and emphasized the importance of distinguishing ESL students' pedagogical experiences from their learning styles. Both ESL teachers further suggested that ESL students possibly developed certain learning styles

because they only had access to particular types of pedagogy or learning resources. Interpreting students' learning styles with cultural insights might assist teachers to help ESL students overcome the constraints due to the limitations of their pedagogical experience in native countries and further achieve their learning potential. The following section illustrates how Deb and Kelly explored the diverse pedagogical experience among ESL students.

ESL learning experiences

Both Deb and Kelly pointed out that ESL students had diverse English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning experiences before they came to the United States. As part of the enrollment process, ESL students' parents were required to fill out an "English Language Student Profile and Language Plan" form, through which Deb and Kelly could get information such as child's length of English instruction. Statistically, the forms showed that the length of time that ESL students received formal EFL (and/or ESL) education varied from one to four years before they enrolled in RCES. Both ESL teachers relied on this information as one of the most important guiding principles for grouping ESL students into different levels of ESL classes. For example, Kelly pointed out that they tended to group ESL students from countries in East Asia such as China, Korea and Japan into one class because those students started EFL learning at earlier age and were usually "stronger in English." In the meanwhile, RCES also received ESL students from the Middle East, Africa and Haiti who had very limited or no EFL learning experience before they came to the United States. Therefore, ESL students' nationality became an important indicator for Deb and Kelly to start exploring students' language and literacy learning experience and ability. They always took students' nationality into consideration while grouping them into different levels of ESL classes. For example, in three entry-level ESL classes, students in Class A were mainly from China and Taiwan; those in Class B were mostly Indians, Pakistanis and Iranian; the other class was full of students from South Korea and Japan.

Besides the diverse length of English language learning experience, Deb suggested what and how ESL students were previously taught led to their differing academic achievements and literacy development. In other words, the length of prior EFL education did not necessarily mean ESL students would reach similar educational outcomes as their American peers since some of their EFL pedagogical experiences intrinsically differed from that in an American setting, as Deb described.

> Speaking usually develops first, for people who have not been exposed to English, but many of our students from China have been actually studying (written EFL) since first grade…I wouldn't call it reading…because they don't necessarily understand what they're reading, but they can read it very well…they just need time for speaking and with (constructing) language meaning…because when it is something out of a textbook, it is not the same as trying to interact with a person.

Reading in English had been much talked about in some ESL students' native countries, but little reading instruction aimed to help ESL students construct meanings. ESL students were taught to read passively and to focus on answering assigned questions on tests. Deb found that ESL students from Asian countries tended to believe that there was only one correct answer to a question. This finding is consistent with what Ajay (2008) found, that this group of ESL students had rarely been taught to interpret English-language reading materials with their own experience in their native countries.

These examples of ESL students' English language learning experiences varied beyond the time that they had invested in EFL learning in their native countries. Their funds of knowledge of the English language were relevant to what and how they had learned EFL. Both Deb and Kelly noticed nuances in ESL students' weaknesses and needs in language learning. Teachers' sensitivity to students' pedagogical experiences provided a new venue for school administrators to reexamine the enrollment form for collecting information about ESL

students' language learning experience. Additionally, students' diverse pedagogical experience showed that ESL students came to class not only with diverse levels of English language knowledge but also diverse foci for ESL learning.

Literacy learning experiences

Similar to ESL students' EFL learning experiences, Deb and Kelly found that they learned literacy in diverse ways as well. The factors that influenced their literacy learning were: the age that they started literacy learning, what literacy knowledge they learned in their home countries, and how they had been taught literacy. Deb and Kelly found that literacy instruction in ESL class was further complicated by the strength or weakness of students' ESL skill base. To ensure that ESL students received and understood teachers' direction and instruction correctly, both ESL teachers were forced to scaffold their directional language and strategies even when ESL students' literacy ability satisfied grade expectations.

ESL students started their formal literacy learning at different ages, which complicated their readiness for learning literacy in American schools. Deb summed up the complexity of ESL students' literacy learning ages:

> Like Finland, children don't start to read until eight or nine years old…their kids made huge progress though because they have been working on readiness for so long, that when they read, it goes faster. I've found that true with Russian children as well, they read at a later age than we do.

To be more specific, Deb argued that the age at which ESL students started to learn literacy was related to their readiness for developing skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and meaning construction that met the requirements of a particular social context. Kelly confirmed Deb's statement and further suggested that even when ESL students started literacy learning at a similar age as their American peers, the concepts and knowledge of literacy that they received in their native countries might be different from that in the United

States. For example, Kelly found that "ESL students from Brazil learn cursive writing at first grade… A third grader (in my class) literally does not know how to print because they've taught him cursive (in Brazil)." Realizing ESL students' diverse literacy learning experiences made Kelly alert to ESL students' behaviors in ESL class, even basic things like "their command with a pencil." Obviously, ESL students were required to learn how to use what Cole (1996) referred to as different tools to help them develop their literacy proficiency including textbooks, school buildings and utilities, computers, and educational tools/software. Learning literacy at different ages therefore influenced children's mastery of literacy skills but also their proficiency with using various tools for literacy learning.

Besides those who learned different concepts and knowledge of literacy in their native countries, there were students coming to ESL classes with a similar knowledge base of literacy to their American peers. However, their different levels of ESL proficiency complicated the literacy instruction process. This diversity led to the urgency of building vocabulary for ESL students so they could understand teachers' instruction. Kelly uncovered her concerns about ESL students' misunderstanding of instruction: "…sometimes I think they get it (but) they're like, some of the basic things they don't know what it means. And I have to backtrack and talk about the vocabulary: what does it mean when the teacher asks you this? " Accordingly, both ESL teachers focused their literacy instruction for this group on building vocabulary. ESL teachers gave directional language instead of content knowledge the higher priority in their ESL literacy class to satisfy this group's particular learning needs. As suggested by Deb, the ultimate goal of this strategy was to help ESL students "function like a normal grader in their classroom and be able to do everything a normal grader can do." Deb and Kelly understood the importance of both "learning language" and "learning through language" (Halliday, 1987) in terms of ESL students' whole language development. Their

experience further showed English language development is one of the most important steps for ESL students' literacy development, especially when learning literacy through language.

In addition, both teachers found it challenging to teach ESL students who had no ESL, literacy or schooling experience in their native countries. Those ESL students mostly came from refugee families and lacked basic content knowledge of language and literacy. For example, in the entry-level ESL class for kindergarteners, Deb and Kelly "recruited" a ten-year-old ESL student from Sierra Leone as a helper. Every morning, the child was pulled out of his fourth-grade class for half a day to develop "basic phonemic awareness and letter recognition" with kindergarteners. This example shows that ESL students' diverse schooling experiences challenge age as the traditional grouping strategy. ESL teachers had to adjust the structure of the ESL class and carefully choose content knowledge appropriate for ESL students' knowledge base instead of their age.

In considering ESL student diversity and its impacts on ESL literacy instruction, students' diverse academic experiences were the most complicated aspect. On the one hand, these differences in experiences impacted ESL literacy instruction in several ways including choices of teaching materials, structure of ESL classes, assessment of ESL students' performances, and the use of instructional language. On the other hand, ESL students' prior academic experiences were the most hidden and complicated aspect of diversity, which teachers might easily neglect and which they were not able to easily figure out within a short time frame.

Diverse choices in daily life

Deb and Kelly understood that ESL students came to school with diverse choices in clothes, preferences for food and commitment to religion. Both ESL teachers took students' diverse choices in daily life as the basis for designing literacy lessons, not just because for ESL students it was possibly what most familiarly framed their school experience, but also

because it tended to be neglected in multicultural education. This was true whether they were looking to educational research in order to simply make students feel inclusive in school, or seeking guidance on how to improve ESL students' achievement. Merely to identify lists of ESL students' sources of knowledge that were historically developed at home – even if the knowledge indicated students' specialty – was a bit like cooking a complicated dish with all of the ingredients available but without the recipe—which is the key to cooking and reproducing a dish effectively.

Both Deb and Kelly understood that ESL students' diverse experiences of daily life varied with the locations where they came from, and this aspect of diversity impacted the scaffolding process in literacy instruction. Deb argued that the clothes people wore and how they wore them disclosed information of local weather, crops, and other geographic characteristics that closely influence ESL students' daily lives. Kelly described how some ESL students from Africa might not have seen cold-weather accessories, while other students had limited experience with fabrics such as silk. Therefore, in the lesson focusing on *clothes,* Deb and Kelly brought in different kinds of clothes and displayed them on the classroom table. ESL students were encouraged to touch the clothes, and even to try on the accessories such as gloves and scarves. In the intermediate-level class, Deb and Kelly raised a caterpillar in their classroom for several weeks to teach students vocabulary related to insects. They required the students to draw pictures of a caterpillar during its development into a butterfly based on their own observations, and then learn the related vocabulary. In addition, Deb and Kelly found that even when ESL students and their parents knew the language (words or expressions) for certain foods, they might not know what the food was since they did not have any experiences with such food before. So, Deb and Kelly took pictures of the food and uploaded them to their school website, helping ESL students and their parents understand the meanings of foods with visual aids. These examples manifested that both teachers understood

only when a word was associated with an experience (or entity) people were then able to develop corresponding "thoughts" of the language and then use the word appropriately (Richard, 1937). They chose pictures as tools to help ESL students gain experience that the word referred to, and construct meaning for the word.

In addition, Deb suggested that the culture of the American educational setting being a stark contrast to the cultures of ESL students was not the only reason for them feeling "being out of control in their life." The changes in weather and diet, limited access to TV programs from their native countries, and lack of books in their first languages all might lead to their experiencing frustration in the new learning environment. Apparently, Deb and Kelly understood that diversity existed in terms of ESL students' choices in daily life. They did not simply ask ESL students to follow mainstream American preferences. Instead, both ESL teachers attempted to scaffold ESL students' diverse preferences in daily life and to relate classroom practices with their preferences. Deb and Kelly's description further showed diversity in ESL classes displayed at different levels: ESL students' values and beliefs developed in their native countries, and their behaviors learned or modified in the United States, including how and what they learn, eat and wear in this new country.

In general, Deb and Kelly suggested that they brought intercultural diversity into ESL classes, and affirmed its impacts on classroom practices of language and literacy. This intercultural diversity could be seen at three levels (Cole, 1996): the diverse language(s) and dialect(s) that ESL students used at home, language and literacy policy (regarding both first language(s) and English), and tools used for language and literacy learning. These examples show that both ESL teachers used intercultural diversity as teaching and learning resources at the instructional level through helping ESL students to develop literacy skills that they missed in home literacy practice, offering more literacy learning experience or opportunities that were ignored or forbidden in ESL students' home countries; and providing additional

tools that assist ESL students to achieve literacy learning goals required in an American educational context. Both ESL teachers' understanding of intercultural diversity allowed them to facilitate literacy instruction through thoughtful cultural translation (Li, 2008). However, they disclosed that they were confronted with the challenges of getting accurate information regarding this aspect of diversity, especially students' prior EFL (and ESL) and literacy learning experiences. Both Deb and Kelly attempted to employ this aspect of diversity as an opportunity to analyze students' behaviors with cultural and linguistic insights, and further uncover their real learning needs.

Intracultural Student Diversity and Literacy Disciplines

Deb and Kelly found that ESL students had intracultural diversity, including imposed learning styles, regional differences, socio-economic status and human variability. Although this category of diversity was tied to ESL students' home cultures, teachers did not take ESL students' respective cultures into account when designing literacy lessons. Under most circumstances, both teachers tended to respond to this category of diversity by providing ESL students with more language and literacy learning opportunities or pedagogical experiences. At the same time, through ESL students' intracultural diversity, Deb and Kelly realized the complexity of student diversity and argued that ESL students developed certain learning styles because they only had access to these types of pedagogy or learning resources. Interpreting students' differences in learning styles with collective insights might prevent teachers from seeing students' learning potentials, and may lead teachers to overlook individual variability and regional differences, and the influence of intracultural factors such as gender and personality.

Imposed learning styles

Learning styles are defined as the ways in which individuals receive, interact with, and process information (Nieto, 2000; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer & Bjork, 2009). Some

previous studies concentrated on cultural, ethnic, and racial differences in ESL students' learning styles (Ainslie, 1998; Cole, 1996). Although admitting ESL students brought diverse learning styles and cultural values, Deb and Kelly argued that some ESL students passively developed certain learning styles regardless of whether or not the learning style was the best way for them to learn. To be more specific, Deb and Kelly explained that some learning styles were dictated to and imposed on ESL students by their previous teachers, prescribed curricula, or standardized tests (in eit her their native countries or the United States). In general, Deb and Kelly agreed on the diversity of ESL students' learning styles and further suggested that expanding the ways of learning was necessary for ESL students to strengthen their existing learning capacity, to remedy their inadequate knowledge, and to discover their learning potential.

Deb and Kelly both noticed that some ESL students "did not like reading" because they had no access to books. Deb showed me ESL students' reading logs with pride, but she pointed out that very few ESL students came to borrow books when she and Kelly first built up their library particularly targeted at ESL students. Both teachers found that on the one hand ESL students, especially those from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Haiti, did not have the habit of reading books outside class. On the other hand, Chinese, Korean and Japanese students wanted to borrow books, but their parents tended to categorize those books as extracurricular reading that would not benefit their children's academic learning. Deb and Kelly then spared no effort to help some ESL students develop learning habits as well as learn how to select "appropriate and fun books" to read. They also explained to ESL students' parents that they carefully selected those books from classic reading programs that aimed to help their children to meet with the grade expectations of literacy learning. Deb and Kelly understood ESL students' limited access to learning resources might lead to their lack of experience in certain learning styles. Rather than to treat ESL students' diverse reading

habits as the way they learned literacy, Deb and Kelly tended to offer more opportunities and options for students, and have ESL students themselves to decide what would be a "comfortable and effective" way to develop literacy skills.

Deb and Kelly suggested that ESL students' limited access to learning tools was another factor that resulted in their diverse learning preferences. Kelly recalled "Tom [pseudonym] looked so uncertain and uncomfortable when I first asked him to sit on the carpet." Deb explained that ESL students like Tom used to be taught in a teacher-centered manner in China, and they did not know what to do "once they became the center of learning." Similar to Tom, Shalani from India also had problems learning while sitting on the carpet. Deb found the little girl could not stop touching the carpet. The little girl told Deb that she was not allowed to sit on the classroom floor and would be punished for doing it. Deb and Kelly had to explain to her that sitting on the floor in a circle would be convenient for teachers to see every student. Both teachers also encouraged Shalani to "learn how to interact with teachers and students when sitting on the carpet." Kelly further pointed out that some ESL students were disadvantaged because "they were never taught that way." For example, Kelly explained that some Chinese students seemed "too shy to express their ideas in public" because they were not encouraged to do so: in their previous schools, some had to gain permission before expressing their ideas; some were warned of the importance of "practice[ing]" before delivering a public conversation; some were not allowed to "challenge teachers" in class. Deb argued that those principles deprived ESL students of learning power and thus constrained their learning potential.

In addition, Deb and Kelly pointed out that even some ESL students' parents realized the limitation of their children's previous English learning experiences. They proactively urged teachers to extend their children's learning styles through focusing on different aspects of language learning. For example, some Chinese parents asked Deb and Kelly to help their

children “to learn as much oral language as they possibly can.” Chinese parents preferred their children to be less focused on the reading and writing because “they understand the deficiency of their child in really communicating in that language.” Deb also explained that Chinese students were not tested on listening and speaking skills in their major exams in China, and thus most of them received very limited instruction on developing those two skills. Obviously, the standardized tests forced this group of ESL students to develop test-taking skills at the expense of their whole-language development. Both Deb and Kelly noticed the impacts of mandated tests on ESL students’ development of learning styles, and attempted to extend their focus of language learning.

In general, both teachers understood that ESL students favored different ways of learning, and Deb and Kelly showed their appreciation for students’ multiple intelligences. At the same time, both teachers shared their concerns of those learning styles’ effectiveness, and argued, as did Ladson-Billings (1994), that presenting more learning styles and resources to students and encouraging them to explore the most effective way of learning were significant for empowering students in class. Through empowering ESL students’ learning, Deb and Kelly intended to help them to develop a broader socio-cultural consciousness that allowed them to reflect on and critique their existing learning habits.

Regional differences

One of the most consistent, and least expected, aspects of student diversity that Deb and Kelly noticed were regional differences that existed among ESL students from the same country or ethnic group. Kelly pointed out that regional differences were mostly an invisible diversity with which ESL students maintained resemblance and variety. Both Deb and Kelly conceded that it took “way longer” for them to recognize the existence of regional differences among ESL students. However, this “diversity within a culture,” as defined by Deb,

constantly challenged the effectiveness of the teachers' design and enactment of literacy practices with collective insights.

Deb and Kelly talked about ESL students' regional diversity in a number of ways. The most contrastive difference was the fact that ESL students from the same country spoke different languages and dialects in different regions. For example, Kelly was "confused" when seeing that some Chinese students talked to each other while others seemed "quiet and intimidated to join their conversation." Kelly then asked me to help her figure out what was happening among those students. Through observing those students' conversations, I found students from Shanghai (China) preferred to speak in the Shanghai dialect instead of Mandarin, and students from other regions of China could not communicate with them because they did not understand the Shanghai dialect. Deb also noticed that Mexican students from less developed areas usually spoke indigenous languages such as Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya. Therefore, when attempting to understand the influence of ESL students' native languages on their English language development, Deb and Kelly focused on their regional languages, and suggested that simply analyzing ESL students' national languages might lead them in "a wrong direction."

Another regional difference that Deb and Kelly found was exposed as the imbalances in regional development including unequal distribution of educational resources and different grade expectations. In an entry-level ESL class for first graders, students displayed different interests in Kelly's description of *birds*, although this group of ESL students came from South Africa. Kelly found that one student kept playing with the plush stuffed red robin, while other students paid close attention to how Deb and Kelly structured the description of the bird. After class, Kelly started a serious conversation with the boy with the question "why were you interested in the stuffed bird?" The boy suggested that he was amazed by the color of the bird and the sound "a toy could make." Kelly then realized that the boy had never

played with stuffed animal and the colorful bird distracted his attention. As Deb suggested, most ESL students from South Africa came from English-speaking families, who were usually categorized as middle or upper class. In recent years, RCES has been receiving ESL students from all regions of South Africa due to the development of their government-sponsored study abroad program. Deb found that ESL students from South Africa "received different instruction" in terms of their learning materials, student-teacher ratios, and even "different expectations on their achievement." Similar to the United States, most other countries have had imbalanced development in different regions. It would not then be surprising to see "ESL students from China who had studied in the same grade did not sustain similar grade achievements," according to Kelly. Deb and Kelly's *birds* experience showed their accumulated knowledge of regional differences helped them clarify a confusing event that could not be simply addressed with collective insights at the national level. Both teachers further suggested that this aspect of diversity made them determined to promote equal learning opportunities among all ESL students, "at least during their [ESL students'] stay[s] in the U.S." as suggested by Deb.

These examples illustrate that the increasing and rapidly changing ESL student population from all around the world expanded Deb and Kelly's understandings of diversity in the ESL classroom. With increasing diversity among ESL students from the same country or ethnic group, both teachers realized factors other than cultural values influenced ESL students' learning preferences or achievements equally or even more than what was previously thought, including regional differences and imbalanced development within the same country. Deb and Kelly's observation affirmed Nieto's (2000) findings that economic factors overpowered cultural values in terms of students' learning:

> …the working class may differ from the middle class not only in particular values and practices but also in economic resources. The reasoning behind the hypothesis that

> social class is a more important influence on learning than ethnicity is that the intellectual environment and socialization of children in the home may be due more to economic resources than cultural resources (p.142-143).

ESL students' learning preferences and needs varied with their access to economic resources. In other words, Deb and Kelly's view of student diversity went beyond cultural constraints and was complicated by the social and economic factors within a culture. Accordingly, analyzing ESL students' learning only with cultural and collective insights did not help Deb and Kelly identify students' needs, and might possibly result in misinterpretation of students' behaviors. In addition, the pull-out-push-in model in which Deb and Kelly tended to group ESL students from the same country in one class sometimes seemed to prevent them from seeing the hidden differences. However, both teachers' continuous efforts to explore intracultural diversity among ESL students contributed to revealing the hidden curriculum, avoiding stereotypical judgment on students' behaviors, and providing equal learning opportunities for all students.

Human Variability

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, to prepare teachers for working with a diverse student population, three primary lines of educational inquiry have emerged: linguistic studies investigating children's second language acquisition and development (Cummins, 1996; Freeman, 1998); educational studies analyzing specific cultural models and learning needs and styles of ESL students with specific cultural backgrounds (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2000); and studies focusing on content-based English language teaching and learning (Au, 1994, 1998; Fradd & Lee, 1999; Stoddart, Pinal & Canaday, 2002). All of these inquiries emphasized ESL students' particular cultural or ethnic backgrounds. The findings were widely advocated in professional development programs and resource books (Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Deb and Kelly

found these studies especially helpful when they had very limited knowledge of ESL students from a particular ethnic group. However, they always noticed exceptions to those findings in their ESL classes.

Deb and Kelly considered ESL students as individuals who developed their own ways, needs and preferences for learning that interacted with their previous and current learning contexts. Both teachers suggested the diversity reflected ESL students' differences as human beings, and emphasized the importance of literacy practices responding to students' individual ability. Deb described literacy practices in response to student diversity as the combination of art and science:

> It's an art and a science. There are technical skills like in science that need to be in place, it is also an art that you have to finely tune it to that individual, not just their culture. No blanket methods apply to everyone. Sometimes your science is faulty …more and more, art is required.

Kelly also used the metaphor of jumping into a fish bowl to suggest the necessity of considering individual factors:

> It's like jumping into the fish bowl from a high place. Meaning that it is harder than people think. It's hard but not impossible. There's so many cultures and so many different ideas and so many ways of looking at it and you have to be open minded and sensitive and diplomatic.

When designing ESL and literacy lessons, both teachers tended to respond to ESL students' individual diversity through differentiating classroom practices based on their personal language literacy learning needs. Deb and Kelly thus argued that teaching ESL students should be intrinsically similar to teaching American students, attending to their individual variability rather than culture-related diversity (regardless of intercultural or intracultural diversity).

The PD they experienced provided stereotypes that the teachers did not embrace. Deb and Kelly broke down those stereotypes by paying close attention to the learning needs of their students. Learning from some professional development programs and readings, Deb and Kelly knew that African students often had stronger auditory skills because they had been living story-telling communities. Asian students were usually categorized as good readers and writers, but needed more speaking and listening practices in English. However, one contrastive case that Kelly described was about a Japanese boy who had phenomenal auditory skills but needed more practice for reading and writing: "I had a Japanese student last year, and his auditory skills were phenomenal. You could tell him things. You read him things and he could tell you everything about it. But if you asked him to read it or write it, he could just not do that very well." Deb also pointed out that not all Chinese students are good at math. Some students from South Africa demonstrated excellent mathematical skills when doing an "item exchange" game in ESL class. Deb and Kelly revealed that identifying the knowledge and skills that ESL students culturally developed alone would not lead to substantive improvement in designing effective literacy lessons for ESL students, if such information was not accompanied by profound changes "in what we (teachers) believe students deserve and are capable of learning" (Nieto, 2000, p. 245).

Conclusion: Using ESL Students' Diversity as Literacy Instruction Resources

Both ESL teachers demonstrated their tolerance and respect for student diversity. Like Alexander (2001), who found that "caring was expressed overtly in the language and behavior of most of the American teachers, and their discourse was peppered with terms of affection, especially with the young English children" (p. 361), I too saw that Deb and Kelly attempted to build up a caring learning environment for ESL students, sometimes effectively and sometimes not as expected. The caring nature was not particularly surprising given the structure of the pull-out-push-in model. For all ESL students, they were pulled out to attend an

ESL class that was designed as a buffering zone for them to get extra assistance with language and cultural knowledge. Both ESL teachers purposefully created a more relaxing learning experience for ESL students, thus providing them with more time and space to get ready for mainstream classes.

In addition, Vygotsky's thesis that the forces of history, culture and social context impacted human activities and led to very different consequent skills that children brought to school was supported by Deb and Kelly's descriptions of ESL student diversity from the three levels that I have investigated so far: intercultural and intracultural diversity and human variability. Deb and Kelly affirmed that ESL students' cultural diversity played a decisive part in teachers' enforcement of multicultural awareness at the school level, and in selecting teaching materials, setting up literacy learning goals and interpreting mistakes. At the same time, both teachers felt challenged by their lack of knowledge of ESL students' home language(s) and the culture of their home countries. Their limited knowledge prevented them from communicating with ESL students and getting to know their learning needs and habits as thoroughly as they would have liked. Intercultural diversity, especially linguistic diversity, impacted communication between teachers and students and their parents, their foci of language and literacy learning in school, and collaboration among students. Highly regarding the knowledge of ESL students' language backgrounds would contribute to teachers' interpretation of the mistakes ESL students made with linguistic insights as well as designing linguistically responsive lessons.

However, ESL students' intercultural diversity was neither unitary nor monolithic, and intracultural diversity such as socio-economic power could significantly moderate or even counteract cultural control. Both teachers suggested that understanding diversity issues only with collective insights might lead teachers to overestimate the influence of culture on literacy teaching and learning. Students from the same ethnic group sometimes might demonstrate

similar learning styles, but they were not necessarily the best ways for them to learn. In addition, knowledge of intercultural diversity of ESL students from a particular ethnic group was necessary to help teachers design responsive activities, especially when teachers had limited knowledge of ESL students' backgrounds, but insufficient conditions for effective ESL student learning. Teachers were expected to tailor activities to meet students' individual preferences, needs and talents. When applying research-based strategies to classroom instruction, both teachers cautiously took human variability into consideration. Deb and Kelly agreed that it is human variability rather than intercultural or intracultural diversity that matters in their design of ESL literacy lessons. Both teachers' highlighting of ESL students' individual differences also demonstrates that effective instruction should not only be collectively responsive but also individually responsive. In short, responsive ESL instruction calls for us to look beyond ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity and draw upon students' individual sources of knowledge.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITY OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

With increasing numbers of ESL students enrolled in American elementary schools, teachers' awareness of diversity issues receives intensive scholarly attention. In most teacher education programs nowadays, pre-service teachers are required to take multicultural coursework that aims to prepare them for teaching diverse student populations (Gorski, 2009; McNeal, 2005; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). A wide range of professional development opportunities is also provided to extend in-service teachers' understandings of diversity issues (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Knight & Wiseman, 2006; Minaya-Rowe, 2004; Ray 2009; Reyes 2002; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010). However, the notion that the majority of teachers are unprepared for teaching students with diverse backgrounds is a prevalent one in the United States (Florio-Ruane, 2001; NCES, 2002a, 2002b; Nieto, 1992, 2010; Sleeter, 2001), and it is linked with the perception that elementary teachers in the United States come from relatively homogeneous linguistic and cultural backgrounds and need to learn more about knowledge of other cultures (Sleeter, 2001). Researchers further pointed out that most teachers' attitudes toward and responses to ESL students' "inappropriateness" are quite similar especially when students' behavior goes against teachers' expectations or mainstream norms, although students come to school with all kinds of diversity (Cuban, 1989a; Kliebard, 1986; Lee, 2004; Shultz, Florio & Erickson, 1982). These views complicate the assumptions behind teacher homogeneity and student diversity in American schools (Ducharme, 1993), and suggest that teachers do not pay attention to ESL students as unique individuals (Fu, 2010) but focus "on multiculturalism more generally" (Kiger and Manning, 1997, p. 641). Indeed, researchers have demonstrated that teachers' knowledge of teaching diverse student populations is still in the formative stages (Jiménez, 1997). Even more critical is the fact that

teachers' increased awareness of diversity issues might not necessarily lead to (proactive) changes in language and literacy instruction (Guillaume, Zuniga-Hill, & Yee, 1998).

In addition, previous research on teachers' awareness of student diversity focused nearly exclusively on their knowledge of other cultures (Castro, 2010), than how to unravel the complexity of diversity issues in class. As the previous chapter showed, from Deb and Kelly's point of view, three layers of student diversity including intercultural diversity, intracultural diversity and human variability were interrelated with each other and impacted ESL literacy instruction together. Certainly knowledge of other cultures played a profound role in helping teachers to work with diverse student populations, but it seems unlikely that this was the only issue at play. Thus, teachers' inability to unpack the complexities of student diversity would severely hamper their ability to apply their knowledge of diversity to classroom practices. Yet it was of particular interest that previous studies did not draw attention to how teachers tended to explore the complexity of student diversity.

In this chapter, I investigate both ESL teachers' recollections of, reflections upon, and implicit theories about their prior explorations of student diversity. I also document the formal interventions explicitly intended to help them understand and teach diverse student populations. The goal of this chapter is to identify and clarify common difficulties ESL teachers, in particular, face when getting to know diversity issues in terms of their exploration of ESL students' diversity, interventions of the local community, and involvement of ESL students' parents. This chapter also aims to determine the relative influence of ESL student diversity on ESL literacy instruction, and to provide insights for teacher educators to develop more effective professional development programs committed to deepening teachers' understanding of diversity issues as well as developing a responsive, democratic, and equal learning environment for all students.

Starting Point of ESL Student Diversity Exploration

Deb and Kelly used enrollment surveys that they collected from ESL students' parents before classes began as the main reference for their preliminary exploration of ESL student diversity. ESL students' performances on federally and state-mandated assessments (e.g. ELPA) together with district curricula and general Grade Level Standards provided additional information to guide both teachers' explorations of ESL student diversity, especially ESL students' English language and literacy proficiency. This following of scripts varied with teachers' experiences or familiarity with ESL students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in general. Sometimes Deb and Kelly relied heavily on assessment reports, ESL policies and state curricula, and whatever information ESL students' parents spelled out in the survey (e.g., students' language proficiencies, intensity of using English at home, and schooling experiences in their home countries and/or in the United States), and then used the information as a guide to group students into appropriate ESL classes and design literacy lessons accordingly. Sometimes Deb and Kelly referred to their own linguistic and cultural knowledge, and reevaluated ESL students' assessment results and the enrollment information provided by their parents, especially when they were familiar with a certain culture or language that ESL students brought to class. In either case, the teachers suggested that district curricula and Grade Level Standards were the baseline for them to determine whether they should extend their exploration of student diversity. It is quite obvious that policy has determined the depth of Deb and Kelly's exploration of student diversity although both teachers realized the complexity and importance of student diversity in literacy instruction.

ESL student profile and language plan

Deb and Kelly's exploration of ESL student diversity in RCES often started with the *English Language Student Profile and Language Plan* form that ESL students' parents were required to fill out before their children's enrollment (see Appendix D). A number of sections

in the form were designed to help Deb and Kelly explore ESL students' literacy-related diversity, which included students' ESL and EFL learning history, schooling experiences in the United States and their home country, and background information about family members currently living with ESL students (e.g. their nationality, language(s) spoken at home, level of English proficiency). Through the enrollment form, Deb and Kelly were able to sketch a picture of ESL student diversity in RCES. However, both teachers disclosed that they were very cautious about and suspicious of the information that ESL students' parents provided, and further argued the importance of critically analyzing the information for drawing pictures that were able to reflect ESL student diversity as it actually was in RCES.

Deb and Kelly often noticed that parents of ESL students tended to misinterpret the purposes of the form, which led them to share invalid, inaccurate and sometimes false information about their children's academic history. For example, as part of the form, ESL students' parents, upon their children's enrollment, were required to report how long their children had studied ESL (and/or EFL) and how proficiently they were able to speak, read and write in English (i.e. barely, good, and fluent). Deb and Kelly regarded this information as one of the most important criteria for grouping students into appropriate ESL classes. At the beginning of ESL students' enrollment, Deb and Kelly had to rely on parents' descriptions to ascertain ESL students' language proficiency because the school (and school district) only provided language and literacy assessments twice every academic year. ESL students whose enrollment in RCES depended upon and varied with their parents' date of arrival in the United States often missed the fixed assessment dates. Deb and Kelly noticed the constraints of the standardized assessment and parents' report became the main (and mostly the only) resource for them to evaluate students' language and literacy proficiency. However, both teachers later found out that parents' descriptions sometimes failed to reflect ESL students' real language and literacy proficiency. Some ESL students who were grouped

into advanced-level ESL class could barely follow teachers' instructions. Kelly suggested that these parents obviously did not share authentic information with the school. After cautious communication with the parents, Kelly was shocked to find out some of them reported misleading information on purpose. Some parents were concerned that teachers would look down on their children if they had relatively low ESL proficiency. Some parents, in light of their experiences in their native countries, misinterpreted advanced-level ESL classes as those only targeting talented students. They assumed their children would be treated as "good students" and receive "better instruction" as well as "more intensive language support" in the advanced class. As a result, parents' misunderstanding of the concept of advanced-level classes led teachers to misplace ESL students, and thus inevitably impeded the students' language learning progress. Deb and Kelly were forced to take the section regarding "students' ESL proficiency" off the form. Accordingly, they then grouped ESL students based on parents' reports about their children's formal language, literacy and schooling history. Deb and Kelly's reaction demonstrated their critical reflection during the process of exploring student diversity. It also disclosed the constraints and inflexibility of mandated tests.

In addition, Deb and Kelly pointed out that the form might conceal the complexity of ESL students' linguistic backgrounds. Deb argued that ESL students' nationality might not disclose the information about what languages ESL students used at home. In fact, since some countries have more than one official language (e.g., Canada, India, South Africa), it can be hard to predict ESL students' language choice in light of their nationalities: some ESL students might not necessarily speak any of their country's official languages at home. For example, ESL students from India might speak Hindi, Punjabi or English at home. Some students in RCES were already multilingual before learning English in the United States. It is quite common that ESL students, especially those from Africa, are able to speak more than

one or two languages besides English. For instance, Deb pointed out ESL students from Malawi usually spoke three languages: Chichewa, English and French. While nationalities, to a certain degree, provide information about ESL students' linguistic backgrounds, Deb and Kelly argued that this kind of information might be misleading and sometimes was not thorough enough for them to get a complete picture of ESL students' linguistic backgrounds. Deb and Kelly thus carefully distinguished ESL students' nationalities from languages. They revised the enrollment form so that it now requires ESL parents to submit more detailed and accurate information regarding their children's linguistic backgrounds, including what language(s) they use at home now, in their home countries and during previous informal and formal schooling (in both the United States and their home countries). Understanding the complexity of ESL students' linguistic backgrounds led both teachers to reflect on existing enrollment forms, and take further action to improve the process of collecting information about ESL students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Deb and Kelly's care in gathering additional information about students' language experiences, and efforts they made to extend their exploration of student diversity in ESL class, demonstrates their awareness of the complexity of linguistic diversity. In the meantime, Deb and Kelly, with their cautious and reflective investigation of students' linguistic backgrounds, became actively involved in revising existing administrative materials related to ESL education at RCES.

Guidance of educational policy

Both Deb and Kelly reported that federal ESL education regulations, state policies for teaching ESL students, and district curricula guided their understandings of student diversity. They suggested that for ESL student diversity it would not matter whether the student was of Chinese or Korean or Mexican or German origin, and indeed, because of mandated requirements of grade expectations for ESL students' achievements, it would be impossible for either teacher to make distinctions regarding ESL student diversity. While complaining

about certain constraints of policies (e.g. report cards, inflexible test dates), Deb and Kelly argued that school district curricula play a key role in teaching (or showing) them how to deal with ESL students, especially when they themselves had limited knowledge of students' cultural (or linguistic) backgrounds. In the meantime, as will be discussed below, Kelly was confused about her role as part of diversity that had been intentionally ignored by policies. Therefore, she was forced to conceal her own religious beliefs when exploring her students' diversity.

Deb and Kelly argued that mandated policies set up boundaries for their explorations of ESL student diversity. Both teachers proactively explored ESL students' diverse expectations about language and literacy learning when students' expectations accorded with mandated policies or advanced their learning to achieve grade expectations. Under these circumstances, Deb suggested that she had responsibility to bridge the gap between the requirements of the ESL curriculum and the students' diverse needs.

At first, Deb did not equate ESL students' literacy learning needs to their American peers'. She tended to leave spaces for them to explore their own interests and needs while prescriptively explaining her own and the school's expectations to both ESL students and their parents. For example, in a parent meeting, a parent from Taiwan felt anxious about her child's integrity. Whenever the child was asked about afterschool assignments, he mostly said that teachers did not assign any homework. The mother was worried that the child was lying to her because in Taiwan elementary students spent three hours on average doing homework after school. Deb explained to the mother that in the United States teachers seldom assigned afterschool homework for elementary students. However, the mother was not relieved by this explanation. Instead, she suggested homework was important since students need more practice for their academic achievement, and parents could also learn what and how their children had been doing in school. Deb seriously considered the parent's

advice and adjusted students' homework assignments. Afterwards, ESL students were required to read the books they created in class to their parents to complete their in-class activity. In addition, Deb set up a small library in her class, where students could borrow books, tapes, CDs and even board games for the purpose of English language learning. Besides filling out public checkout forms, Deb and Kelly required ESL students to develop their own reading catalogue and record what books they borrowed from the library, and to share the catalogue with their parents on a regular basis. Parents were then able to track their kids' reading activities through the catalogue.

These examples show that ESL students and their parents had various expectations of teachers and the educational system in the United States. Although admitting the importance of satisfying ESL students' respective learning needs, Deb argued that helping ESL students make progress towards grade expectations was "the No.1 task and responsibility for [an] ESL teacher." Kelly shared a similar viewpoint with Deb, and further argued that ESL teachers should give ESL students' academic achievement the highest priority:

> So our basis of understanding is going to be learning English because everybody has to know that…they have to know what is socially correct. They have to know what they need to know to stay in that grade level, and [to] be able to perform. There are so many things they have to know, so we really have to decide what's most important at that point for that student's needs. And for all of the students, they need to learn English. They have to, or they are not going to survive in the classroom. That's our job, to get them to be able to survive [until they do] not need our help anymore, [and] are able to stay in that classroom and learn all the things the other students will be learning.

When both teachers thought about student diversity in relation to language and literacy learning, student achievement came to them more readily than responsive instruction.

Deb and Kelly's responses to interview questions signaled that language and literacy were foundational for learning in all content areas. Therefore, if ESL students did not gain or achieve adequate proficiency in English to learn academic content, the teachers would not be doing their job. Deb and Kelly were, after all, very aware of how policies shaped their understanding toward ESL student diversity. When faced with divergence of views on education, both teachers gave language and literacy learning, grade expectations and survival skills the highest priority. Both ESL teachers emphasized the importance of helping students achieve curriculum requirements, and such understanding served as their boundaries for exploring diversity issues among ESL students. Deb and Kelly's descriptions reaffirmed the compelling arguments of previous studies in favor of the guiding roles of policies in classroom instruction (Agee, 2006; Kjaer, 2004). Teachers conducted classroom practices based on their own understanding of teaching, and tended to develop hybrids of their own sense of effective practices and required policies (Florio-Ruane, 2002; Kersten & Pardo, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Deb and Kelly's literacy practices in response to the guidance of ESL policy also demonstrated their accountability in the process of school governance, but they tended to avoid sharing their voices in the input (i.e. participating in choosing appropriate assessment tools) and output (i.e. revising existing ESL program structure) of the ESL education governance (Kjar, 2004)

Teachers' critical reflection on ESL education

When reflecting on their language and literacy teaching history, Deb and Kelly found political continuities mirrored a many-layered presence in schools. Often such layers reflected waves of immigrants, the multicultural working environment of the United States, and changing educational settings. Both teachers agreed that the changing demographics of the ESL student population had been the rule, especially in the past decade in RCES. In the

last ten years, Deb and Kelly have been faced not only with groups of ESL students with diverse backgrounds, but also changing diversity among ESL students.

The demographics of ESL students enrolled in RCES had varied almost every year recently. In the academic year of 2010-2011, ESL students from forty-seven countries on five continents attended RCES. Among them, ESL students from China and Brazil were greatest in numbers. Chinese ESL students accounted for 11 percent of the ESL student population. Deb suggested that the composition of the ESL student population had been varying with immigrant waves to the United States as well as the outreach programs of Midwest Universities in their state. When Deb first started teaching ESL in the 1970s, most ESL students came from Vietnam, and then Poland. ESL students from Pakistan comprised the largest percentage of ESL student population in the 1980s through the beginning of the 1990s. ESL students from South Korea were the largest group of ESL students in the early middle 1990s; by the year of 2000, though, Deb found that students from South Korea were no longer the largest ELL population although their numbers had been stable since the mid-1990s. Ten years ago no Chinese students studied in RCES unless they came from (or through) Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the past five years, however, a large number of ESL students from Mainland China had enrolled in RCES.

Another significant fact concerning ESL students' demographics is that the ESL student population in RCES now is much more diverse than that of ten years ago. Deb found that collaborations among universities and research centers worldwide brought students and scholars to Midwest University from all around the world. Due to the strong affiliation of RCES with the University, the ESL student population accordingly grew larger and more diverse. In addition, according to Kelly, some ESL students in RCES nowadays possess dual citizenship due to the dramatic increase in global immigration in past decade (Castles & Miller, 2009; De Haas, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Additionally, although Deb and

Kelly both noticed the changing demographics among ESL students, Deb apparently knew more detail of the changes in the past fifteen years than Kelly, due to her longer ESL teaching history in RCES.

Teachers' multicultural experience with ESL students

Deb and Kelly's multicultural experiences and formal and informal ESL teaching experiences profoundly shaped their exploration of diversity issues in ESL class. Their similar experiences such as living in multiracial neighborhoods, traveling around the world, assisting ESL learners of different ages for a wide range of purposes, and teaching ESL courses in K-12 schools, church or the continuing education center, were factors that resulted in their history and current nature of caring about ESL students, curiosity about different cultures, sensitivity to ESL students' diverse (academic and life) needs, and willingness to learn about new languages and cultures. Conspicuously absent from the list was any mention of the religious diversity that Kelly herself brought into ESL class.

Deb proclaimed herself as a lifelong learner of cultures, and displayed a disposition toward thoughtfulness and reflection that led to her openness to diversity and motivated her to adjust classroom practices. Deb's interests in others' cultures could be traced to her work with military wives forty years ago:

> I think I first came in contact with a multitude of second language learners when my husband was in the military and I was asked to help [foreign-born] Navy wives make adjustments or become more self-sufficient so that their husbands would be freed up. And in the beginning, I worked with some wives who needed to get a driver's license or needed to find the doctor or dentist in the community and they came from you know, the Philippines or Asia or other countries where they had met their husbands. I think that was a contact I enjoyed.

This experience drove Deb to realize that ESL learners' educational backgrounds were diverse "in every possible way" and she "had to make great adjustments in teaching" at times. It was also true that Deb displayed a high degree of "sympathy for the struggles of ESL learners." That tendency continued in her ESL teaching in formal educational settings. That is, making every ESL learner feel safe, comfortable and protected was crucial in her definition of a successful ESL class, and a caring learning community was significant to effective ESL learning.

Deb conceded that cultural learning contributed to her professional growth and made it possible that personal enjoyment occurred at the same time. She pointed out that learning from ESL students was not a burden but a benefit for ESL teachers. Through working with ESL students, she was able to "meet people from all over the world and learn about their culture firsthand," and enjoy "traveling without the hassle of packing a suitcase." This opportunity ensured that Deb could enhance her understanding of ESL student diversity in situated context in an enjoyable and meaningful manner.

Similar to Deb, Kelly had numerous opportunities for helping new immigrants in the neighborhood where she grew up, teaching one-on-one ESL courses for refugees in church and teaching EFL courses for adult learners while she was living in Kosovo. However, compared to Deb's experience with ESL learners in a variety of educational settings, Kelly mostly gained her multicultural experience from church missions besides her formal ESL teaching in elementary schools. Kelly's extensive personal and professional experience in multicultural settings generally prepared her to develop a wide range of pedagogical approaches for teaching diverse students. It was true, however, that Kelly brought a necessary element of diversity into the school, but most schools had not found a way to benefit from her presence as part of diversity. In spite of the fact that school curriculum promoted multicultural education for ESL students at personal, instructional and institutional levels,

Kelly felt she was left out as part of diversity in the school. Kelly stated that policy prevented her from talking about or doing anything related to her religion. Teaching from the perspective of her religion was completely forbidden in RECS or any other schools that Kelly had worked at. Kelly was confused and disappointed that her religious beliefs (and other teachers' religious beliefs) were excluded from multicultural education. As Kelly explained:

> …We are learning about all of these cultures and leaving mine behind…I'm a Christian, and I feel like my values are being left out because we have to learn about everyone else's. You know, we're learning about Muslims, we're learning about Hanukkah and we're learning about Kwanzaa. Whatever happened to the birth of Christ is going away. And that's what I grew up under. I feel like it's taken a full circle and now we're not allowed to talk about Christ. Yet the Muslims and the Jewish can share theirs. And the Africans can share theirs. Christians…is going to a place that nobody knows anymore because we're learning about all of these other ones. And I'm not saying we shouldn't learn about other people's cultures. It's just I have one too.

Apart from understanding divergence and respecting for diversity among ESL students, Kelly pointed out the extent to which she could share her culture and religious beliefs "mattered to [me]." She thought everyone being sensitive to each other's culture and religion was the basis of "an equal society." However, she was not allowed to share her beliefs in class. She was warned by her colleagues if she did so or even "said these things" she would be criticized for "pouring out personal agenda to teach [ESL students] her way of thinking." For the Christmas unit, Kelly was not allowed to decorate her class with a Christmas tree or any ornaments related to Jesus. She could only teach ESL students about Christmas traditions such as food, colors and some songs. Kelly argued that Christmas was mentioned everywhere including TV commercials, and she was confused why she was not allowed to celebrate the holiday or share knowledge of Christmas with ESL students from a

Christian perspective. She also suggested that Christmas was originally a religious holiday, and her sharing would provide ESL students with "authentic knowledge of Christmas." Kelly's description showed the perplexity of teacher as a cultural member in a multicultural setting. She was suspected of carrying out religious acts in a secular educational setting – this in spite of the fact that her students were encouraged to share and commit to their religious beliefs in school. Although sharing strong similarities in understanding diversity issues in a multicultural educational setting, Deb and Kelly seemingly held different attitudes toward the fact that they were part of diversity in the class. To be more specific, when talking about her own diversity, Kelly focused on religious beliefs while Deb seemed unaware of the diversity that she brought into the ESL class.

Like the students, teachers brought their own unique linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds to their classes, but their input of this knowledge was restricted by the school policy. As with Gee (2000), I found that teachers' understandings of themselves as members of the multicultural classroom were assigned by authorities within institutions and depended on how other people in a given context interpreted and interacted with them. In this case, policies also guided Kelly's understanding of diversity issues, and constrained their further exploration of herself as part of diversity in multicultural settings. Because ESL teachers also came to class with "historically accumulated and culturally developed" backgrounds and knowledge as ESL students did, they were part of the diversity in ESL classes. But most schools did not find a way to deal with teachers' diversity. Teachers' cultural (and/or religious) presence was excluded on purpose from the inclusive, multicultural community that the school intended to build.

Ongoing Exploration of Diversity Issues

Deb and Kelly relied heavily on scripts (e.g. language profile, assessment results) to explore diversity issues when teaching new ESL students. After interacting with students for

a while, both teachers started to adopt new strategies to extend their exploration of diversity issues. However, both teachers still faithfully tried to help ESL students to meet Grade Level Standards, as prescribed in the district curriculum for mainstream students. Policies and ESL students' performances toward the Grade Level Standards served as boundaries for ESL teachers' exploration of diversity issues. Mainstream teachers and ESL students' parents reinforced this message. Under the pressure of educational policies, Deb and Kelly favored teaching strategies to improve ESL students' academic performance over means to further their exploration of diversity issues.

During this ongoing process, Deb and Kelly's philosophies of seeking deeper understandings of diversity issues began to diverge. Deb, who called herself a "surgeon," still relied heavily on her own linguistic and cultural knowledge or attempted to learn new knowledge when she was not familiar with the linguistic or cultural backgrounds that certain students brought into ESL class. She believed that teaching ESL students with diverse backgrounds was like doing brain surgery. According to Deb, the brain is the most complicated and delicate organ of a human being, and brain surgery required doctors to have extensive knowledge of the brain as well as exquisite surgical skills. Likewise, Deb suggested that it was important for teachers to gain as much linguistic and cultural knowledge about ESL students as possible. When applying the knowledge to ESL classroom practices, teachers, as emphasized by Deb, should be alert to the nuances of the knowledge under different contexts. In contrast, Kelly described exploring ESL student diversity as "jumping into a fish bowl," which was not impossible but took repeated practice, including things such as adjusting "jumping angles" and "starting points." Kelly emphasized the importance of trying out different strategies and reflecting on each trial. Kelly further argued that teachers should not expect to find one "best practice for all ESL students" since the shape or size of each bowl usually differed from the others. Only after analyzing and understanding the

relationship among the factors leading to each success were teachers able to find a way to jump into fish bowls of different sizes. Although Deb and Kelly used different metaphors to describe the complexities of ESL student diversity and responsive instruction, they both agreed that exploring student diversity was an ongoing process. They used quite similar strategies to explore and unpack the complexities of diversity in ESL classes and keep themselves updated with diversity issues in multicultural settings that included communication and collaboration with ESL students' parents, learning from ESL students, participation in various professional development activities and reading extensively.

Collaboration with ESL student parents

Just as a number of factors can ease or impede teachers' exploration of diversity issues in ESL class, parents' interventions also play a significant role. At the top of the list are parents' initiatives to communicate with teachers. The relative absence of parents' initiatives had been linked to teachers' misinterpretations of ESL students' learning needs and progress and parents' hidden expectations of schools. By the same token, parental involvement had long been regarded to be a key resource for teachers to explore diversity issues across cultures, to communicate with students especially when they had limited knowledge of English, and to extend knowledge regarding ESL students' diverse learning needs. However, both ESL teachers found that, coupled with their reluctance to share, ESL student parents' misinterpretations of American educational norms complicated teachers' exploration of diversity issues among ESL students.

Deb and Kelly paid close attention to parents' understandings and expectations of literacy teaching and learning. As Deb pointed out, ESL literacy was a result of "a joint consult with the ESL teacher, the classroom teacher and the parents." However, both ESL teachers found that, similar to their children, ESL students' parents also tended to interpret literacy education in light of their own experiences. For example, in a meeting with parents

from Taiwan, Deb and Kelly shared their observations of the student's progress. Kelly told the parents "Rick has been making good progress in writing…we are requesting a reading specialist for him [to gain extra assistance with his reading development]." The parents nodded and showed their appreciation for Deb and Kelly's "care" about their son's progress. However, the following morning, Deb and Kelly received an email from the father who was deeply worried about his son's progress because he was assuming that only students with low IQs needed extra help from reading specialists. Both ESL teachers were surprised at the parents' misinterpretation, and initiated another meeting with the parents. After discussing the concept of "reading specialist" with Deb and Kelly, the parents finally understood that the purpose of the reading specialist was not to categorize their son into a low-performance group but to offer more intense reading assistance for improving their child's literacy performance. Although the parents' different understanding and interpretations of literacy education resulted in unnecessary worries about their children's learning progress, Deb and Kelly afterwards showed their appreciation of the parents' proactive intervention, and considered it as a reliable resource to reflect parents' (and quite possibly children's) understanding of and responses to literacy teaching.

Deb and Kelly further suggested that parents' intervention was critical for them to discover parents' expectations for literacy teaching and learning. For example, Deb and Kelly suggested that parents' expectations varied with the length of their intended stay in the United States. ESL teachers could not possibly predict parents' expectations for literacy instruction if they failed to disclose them, as reported by Kelly:

> Sometimes Chinese parents come for a year and they want their children to learn as much oral language as they possibly can, and are less focused on the reading and writing because they understand the deficiency of their child in really communicating

in that language, versus a parent of a child who has come here to live forever, they really have to catch up on their reading and writing and to progress through the grades.

It was quite obvious that parents' expectations were not necessarily in accordance with those of schools. Only with parents' input were ESL teachers able to recognize ESL students' diverse learning needs. Kelly argued that knowing "what ESL students and their parents wanted [from American schools]" was especially important for exploring diversity issues among ESL students who intended to stay in the United States for only a short term. Deb pointed out that this group of ESL students aimed to learn academic knowledge and, more importantly, to gain more extensive life experience through studying abroad. Deb and Kelly's joint description of parents' involvement showed that educational expectations went beyond cultural boundaries, and teachers could explore territories other than cultures for student diversity related to language and literacy education. Obviously, ESL students brought both diverse learning styles and new learning needs and expectations. Unfortunately, Deb and Kelly both pointed out that the school did not offer any assistance for them to deal with the changing and complicated expectations.

In addition, parents' interventions not only contributed to Deb and Kelly's familiarity with a particular culture or group of ESL students, but also to motivating them to analyze diversity issues across cultures. Kelly referred ESL teaching as "an exchange of knowledge," and suggested that she had learned extensive cultural knowledge as well as diverse worldviews from ESL students' parents. Kelly was amazed at how differently people lived around the world, and her view of ESL teaching changed as her knowledge of other cultures expanded. Therefore, when she noticed that ESL students did not respond to her teaching as expected, Kelly did not jump to a quick conclusion. Instead, she first applied the knowledge that she learned from the parents to the current case, analyzing and listing possible reasons for and solutions to the issue. For example, at the beginning of this semester, a Pakistani girl

enrolled in RCES and started her first class with Deb and Kelly. Before the class, the girl's parents kindly reminded Kelly that their daughter might not have good manners sometimes, and she tended to ignore others when being greeted or talked to. The parents were frustrated because they had tried every means they could think of to correct their child's behavior, but in vain. Kelly observed the little girl for several classes, and found she was polite, well behaved and mostly productive when required to finish the task independently. The girl did not seem collaborative or responsive when doing team projects. Based on Kelly's previous experience, Asian girls were usually more comfortable working with other girls, so Kelly grouped the Pakistani girl with other girls. However, the new grouping did not work out as usual. In this circumstance, Kelly did not give up or jump to the same judgment as the parents. On the contrary, she kept seeking other possibilities while encouraging other students to play with this girl. Unfortunately, the girl still seemed subject to changing moods and did not show too much progress in courtesy. One day, when Kelly happened to talk about the health system in Pakistan with another ESL student's parent, she was surprised to learn that most infants did not go through a hearing screening test when they were born. Kelly then asked the girl's parents' permission and took the girl for a hearing test. It was discovered that the girl had lost 80 percent of her hearing in one ear and 40 percent in the other. The little girl got her first pair of hearing aids, and her "courtesy problem" was accordingly resolved. Since then, ESL parents were asked to report their children's health history as part of the enrollment process.

Inviting parents' intervention was a fundamental strategy for exploring diversity issues as other than peripheral. It is hardly a coincidence that parental involvement has been a resource center for teachers to get to know ESL students. It was not implausible to suggest that teachers develop knowledge of student diversity through viewing parents' responses to the imperatives of forms in the realm of education. In addition, both teachers' analyses of

parental involvement showed that they were able to apply knowledge of a particular culture to the exploration of others that might share relatively similar features or symbolism in their cultural (or social) behaviors.

Learning from ESL students

Deb and Kelly admitted that active interaction with ESL students led to increasing sensitivity to diversity issues in RCES. In spite of showing excitement and proactive involvement as culture learners, both teachers expressed their frustration with being alienated from the learning community and losing power as authority figures due to their limited or lack of knowledge of ESL students' first languages. Deb and Kelly further showed their desire for learning more foreign languages to communicate with ESL students and intervene in student-student communication and interaction in a more effective way. Deb and Kelly suggested that they were able to receive firsthand information of student diversity through communicating with ESL students. However, language obstacles sometime impeded the channel of information exchange between ESL students and teachers.

Under these circumstances, Deb referred to herself as an "outsider" in the class: ESL students with similar linguistic backgrounds in the same ESL class talked with each other in their first language, and the teachers were not able to decode what they were talking about. For example, both Deb and Kelly established an English-only policy in their ESL class. They allowed an exception only when an ESL student could not express themselves in English, and the student was then allowed to ask their peers for help in their first language. Deb and Kelly regarded the exception as an opportunity for using ESL students' first language to help their second language development. In several classes, I witnessed some ESL students abusing this policy, but neither teacher noticed the students' misbehavior. For example, in an advanced ESL class, when five Chinese students, two boys and three girls, were independently working on their essays with the given topic "my school", one boy did not know how to express "课外

活动时间 （kè wài huó dòng shí jiān, break or recess)" in English. He asked Deb whether he could ask his peers for help. Instead of giving permission immediately, Deb took out the boy's vocabulary book[4], and suggested that he look for the vocabulary in the book first. The boy searched in the book for a while, but still could not figure out the right expression. Then, Deb allowed the boy to ask his peers in Chinese. The boy asked one of the girls about the expression for "课间活动时时间." The little girl then asked the boy whether he referred to shorter or longer breaks. The boy was confused because in his hometown, the length of the breaks between classes was the same. The girl came from a metropolitan city in China. In her school, they had ten-minute break between two classes, and after two consecutive classes, they usually had a twenty-five minute recess. The differences suddenly grabbed the interest of all of the Chinese ESL students, and they started to debate issues concerning regional and educational discrimination in China. Deb did not notice that the discussion among Chinese ESL students had gone off on a tangent at first because she had limited knowledge of Chinese. She did not intervene in their discussion until she noticed the boy raised his voice. Deb was disappointed that this group of ESL students violated the English-only policy in her class, and argued that she could manage the class better if she knew more Chinese. In this small learning group, ESL students with more advanced English proficiency temporarily took over the responsibility of guiding their peers without teachers' intervention. Deb (and Kelly) automatically became passive witnesses to interaction among ESL students. Obviously, the language barrier prevented Deb from effectively participating in the learning community with her ESL students (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) argued that students construct sophisticated and effective learning through interaction with mature learners. Deb understood the importance of her intervention in ESL students' cognitive development, and felt uncomfortable that she was an illiterate outsider who lost the guidance role in ESL class.

[4] Every ELL in RCES is required to make a vocabulary book for their ESL class.

In addition to being challenged in their role as the guide (or authority) in ESL class, Deb and Kelly found language barriers between themselves and ESL students led to their struggles with the complexity of diversity issues in many ways, including how to address ESL students' diverse responses to instructions, how to communicate with ESL students who had zero knowledge of conversational and academic English, and how to encourage ESL students with limited English knowledge to express ideas in class. Kelly suggested that these issues were strikingly salient, especially when teaching newcomers. For example, Kelly read the book *My Valentine's Day* to five ESL students in an entry-level ESL class. During the reading, Kelly looked at a Mexican student from time to time, intending to make sure that the boy followed the story. Most of the time, the boy looked into Kelly's eyes while nodding his head politely. In light of the boy's body gesture, Kelly assumed that he understood the story. However, when asked about the popular colors for valentines, the boy looked confused, and could not understand the question. Kelly then realized that the boy's body gesture conveyed the wrong message, and teachers should not judge a student's comprehension "simply through their body gesture or response to yes-no questions." Due to teachers' limited knowledge of ESL students' native languages, the teacher had to be cautious about reading ESL students through their body gestures. Under the circumstances, since language could not be used as a communication medium, achieving mutual understanding between teacher and ESL students called for other interventions[5].

Confronted with the challenges of language barriers, Deb expressed her desire for "know[ing] every kid's language and know[ing] what they want to learn." Kelly expressed a similar desire "in a real ideal world, I could speak every language that the child does." Deb and Kelly felt English language lost its power in terms of transferring knowledge, exchanging ideas, and building relationships in a multilingual class. In general, both teachers exhibited a

[5] The interventions and procedures will be discussed in the Instruction section.

strong desire to become speakers of minority languages, and suggested that the most effective way to communicate with ESL students was through using their own languages. Nevertheless, this means of diversity exploration disclosed both teachers' "frustration" and "lack of confidence" especially when they felt incompetent to serve ESL students (USDE, 2012).

Professional development opportunities

As ESL teachers, Deb and Kelly were required to participate in a series of professional development activities. In those workshops, many assumed that teachers had very limited knowledge of ESL education policy, multicultural education, and ESL assessment. Although generally holding positive attitudes toward professional development activities, Deb and Kelly suggested that those workshops were typically less approachable or helpful than others. On the contrary, they showed their particular interests in workshops focusing on differentiated instruction and designing language and literacy learning materials. Both ESL teachers' preferences for particular types of professional development activities suggested they needed not only assistance in exploring diversity issues but also with practical teaching strategies that could be adapted to use in multicultural classes.

Deb and Kelly suggested that knowledge of ESL assessment methods, culturally-responsive pedagogy, and other cultures and languages was crucial for ESL and literacy teaching in a multicultural setting, but the aforementioned knowledge was insufficient for exploring diversity issues. Both teachers believed that ESL students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, were similar to mainstream students in the United States in that they had multiple intelligences, learning demands and curves, as well as varying responses to different teaching strategies. Holding the belief that American students' backgrounds (e.g., family socioeconomic status) were as diverse as their ESL peers, Deb and Kelly suggested that workshops regarding how to design, initiate and conduct differentiated instruction were helpful for them to learn how to identify, and thus respond to, ESL students' diverse needs.

Deb pointed out that the most inspiring and pragmatic workshops were those that helped her with selecting and creating language and literacy teaching materials that could be used for any student population. Those workshops seemed particularly helpful for Deb to start with new ESL students as regards their diversity. For example, Deb learned from a workshop about how to encourage ESL students to express their ideas through other means besides speaking and writing. As described by Deb, ESL students could draw, sing, read aloud, or write their responses in ESL class. In other words, the workshop inspired Deb to seek a wide range of opportunities for communicating with ESL students.

Furthermore, both teachers noticed that ESL students came to class with multiple issues, and wanted professional development opportunities that helped them to unpack the complexity of diversity issues. On the one hand, Kelly was eager to participate in workshops that guided her to "figure out exactly what those issues might be" and to "put resources behind it [those issues]". On the other hand, Deb had a strong desire to learn what kind of diversity ESL students brought to school as well as how to get access to student diversity:

> I would like to attend a workshop that helps us sort it [the complexity of student diversity] out. (If the) student doesn't acquire it at this time, what is the reason? … If they're not picking up on shapes of letters, is it spatial? Is it a language-processing problem? Is it a dyslexic problem? How do we address that? Without attaching labels, it can sometimes be difficult to find the right resources. Unless you hate to over-label because that sometimes prohibits broader thinking.

Although emphasizing learning practical teaching strategies, Deb and Kelly understood that there was no one best practice for teaching all ESL students. They were therefore interested in learning teaching strategies that could be tried out in their ESL classes, and understood the importance of contextualizing those strategies.

Moreover, Deb and Kelly pointed out that experiential learning opportunities deepened their understanding of diversity issues, especially of other cultures and ESL students' unexpected behaviors. Kelly shared how teaching abroad in China nurtured her sensitivity to ESL student diversity and led her to reflect on her role as a white American teacher. Kelly joined a university-sponsored ESL/EFL teaching program in China for two months, and described it as the most eye-opening experience of her life. Before teaching EFL in a Chinese college, Kelly participated in a six-week long workshop on Chinese culture offered by Midwest University. The workshop was intended to enrich teachers' knowledge of China including Chinese history, culture, language, and the Chinese educational system. Kelly said that this workshop was helpful in "painting a big picture of China" but she could not understand some parts of the picture until she actually started teaching in China. For example, Kelly first assumed that the workshop instructor was exaggerating Chinese people's enthusiasm for learning a foreign language when stating China was the largest English-speaking country in the world. However, after teaching and living in China for a while, Kelly discovered that English was a required course in most Chinese universities. College students in China were under great pressure to pass the College English Test (CET), the result of which determined whether undergraduates, regardless of their majors, were qualified to obtain a bachelor's degree. Besides being amazed by the popularity of English in China, Kelly was also surprised to find that EFL teaching and learning in China is focused on skills to pass English tests rather than the communicative functions of English. Kelly's observation motivated her to advocate rich communication and interaction in English for Chinese ESL learners in RCES. Moreover, such acts illustrated Kelly's continual and reflective exploration of ESL student diversity and its influence on her design of ESL literacy lessons. Kelly's successful experience in China further inspired her to proactively seek other international

experiences. In the past few years, Kelly had participated in three teaching abroad programs, and taught adults EFL in China, Kosovo and South Korea.

Unlike Kelly, Deb did not attend any study abroad programs for professional purposes. However, she has extensive multicultural and international experience. Deb emphasized that her traveling experience was the most important factor for helping her to understand and explore diversity issues in RCES, and suggested that living in other cultures was more powerful than learning knowledge from print sources. Through activities such as trying exotic foods and communicating with local people, Deb was able to gain first-hand information of the culture and then interpret ESL students' behaviors in the local context. In addition, Deb pointed out that learning from print sometimes led her to misinterpret ESL students' behaviors based on her own experience and beliefs while being disconnected from students' reality. Deb's experiences in other countries not only extended her understanding of other cultures but also motivated her to reflect on her existing knowledge of other cultures.

Personal readings

Deb and Kelly considered personal reading as a main resource to help them "stay current" on diversity issues. These readings included but were not limited to refereed journal articles, news, and novels. Deb and Kelly tended to extend their understanding through an interdisciplinary system that viewed diversity issues in relation to theories of second language development, knowledge of cultures, and foreign language learning. Eventually, the readings evolved into discussions with other teachers, collaborations with people in the local community, and communications with parents. These post-reading activities added powerful ways of enhancing teachers' understandings of diversity issues: critical reflection on readings followed by possible adaptation of theories to local classrooms. In light of this on-going, reflective activity, Deb and Kelly's exploration of diversity issues continued to be opportune with respect to ESL literacy instruction.

Compared with Kelly, however, Deb was a critical reader. Deb was particularly suspicious about culture books written by authors not coming from the area being discussed, and thought "it's the white man's idea of what that culture is and sometimes it's not an accurate portrayal." Therefore, Deb joined a multicultural book club that was initiated by local K-12 teachers and supported by the University. Every month, the book club assigned a book about a certain culture to both teachers and people "from that area." In the monthly meeting, teachers had opportunities to discuss the authenticity of the book with an invited speaker. For example, since I am Chinese, I was invited to read the book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon,* share my viewpoint on the book, and respond to teachers' questions. During the meeting, Deb raised several questions including how little girls were treated in China, whether a character such as the Old Man of Moon existed in Chinese culture, and what symbols in the illustrations were mostly used in Chinese children's literature. When describing the importance of finding out the book's authenticity, Deb argued that gaining knowledge of a certain culture or ethnic group merely from books would lead to biases: "I think that some of the books that I grew up with, like *Seven Chinese Brothers*, and books like that, are really cultural stereotypes. And if that's what you grew up with, you maybe haven't examined it as carefully as you should." Deb therefore argued that culture stereotypes would prevent teachers "exploring further." Introduced by Deb, Kelly also joined the book club. Since the student population in RCES was quite diverse, Deb and Kelly often invited ESL students' parents to the meeting as volunteer speakers, which offered additional means of promoting communication between ESL teachers and parents. According to Deb, parents benefited from their participation through interacting with American teachers directly. More importantly, Deb and Kelly suggested that parents' participation played a key role in discussing readings with reference to their children's learning experience and concerns. Deb and Kelly's positive experience in the multicultural book club affirmed the results of previous

studies which argued that that effective professional development should be ongoing, collaborative and related to teachers' own experiences (Buysse, Castro & Peisner-Feinberg, 2010; Minaya-Rowe, 2004).

In addition, Deb and Kelly emphasized the impact of extensive reading on understanding diversity issues related to ESL and literacy instruction. Compared with Kelly, Deb presented a more detailed description of useful readings. In exploring different aspects of diversity issues in ESL classes, Deb highlighted the research-based articles on topics such as second language development, foreign language education, and instructional practices that were promoted in countries outside the United States. Deb argued that these readings advanced her knowledge of what and how her students might have learned a foreign language. In light of those readings, Deb was able to learn some new language-teaching strategies and to keep herself updated with "the best language teaching practices around the world [not just those promoted by American researchers]." Similar to Deb, Kelly also noted that "staying up with world news is helpful because then you know what's going on in other countries at this time." Accordingly, Deb and Kelly read many types of materials, "not just professional journals." For example, Deb subscribes to magazines such as the *New Yorker* and the *Smithsonian Magazine*. Deb and Kelly both like to watch international TV programs like NHK World and CBC News. Kelly argued that all those activities contributed to advancing her knowledge of diversity and keeping her up to date with current educational settings. As Kelly said:

> TV programs, domestic and international news, and magazines…helped us look at the world today and what it is going to be when our students grow up in twenty, forty, sixty years. What skills will we need for the future? And when you look at where the world is going and the skills that you need, it's not always the skills that I have or was taught.

Apparently, the power of extensive reading is its ability to move teachers out of a cycle of outdated knowledge without systematic and detailed training or study of new information. Deb and Kelly's extensive readings exploring diversity issues were akin to applying a catalyst that sped up changes in instructional contents and practices.

Conclusion

Deb and Kelly's explorations of diversity issues were in many ways unique to their personal and professional experiences and religious beliefs, although they collaboratively teach the same groups of ESL students in the same school. Despite those idiosyncrasies, similar patterns of diversity exploration, the factors that complicated their preliminary explorations of diversity issues, and the ways that they sought deeper understanding of diversity issues existed for both teachers.

Deb and Kelly's preliminary explorations of diversity issues started with the ESL Student Language Proficiency Plan, the guidance of the required language and literacy policies, and critical reviews of the changing demographics of ESL students in RCES, coupled with their multicultural and ESL teaching experiences. However, Deb and Kelly's first impressions were often at odds with the reality of ESL student diversity. This mismatch was evident in the discrepancy between ESL students' language proficiency as reported by their parents and their actual academic performance. In many cases, ESL students' parents failed to report vital information regarding their children's language proficiency. In addition, due to the inflexible dates of the semi-annual ESL screening assessment (e.g. ELPA, MEAP) and students' unpredictable enrollment dates, it was not unusual to see that ESL teachers had to group students into different levels of ESL classes based on their length of prior ESL study (as reported by their parents) instead of their actual language proficiency. The inaccurate information about ESL students' diverse linguistic backgrounds inspired Deb and Kelly to seek other means to explore the complexity of linguistic diversity among ESL students. In

like manner, policies including grade expectations of literacy and district curriculum rarely suggested that ESL students differed from their American peers, and this fact helped explain why Deb and Kelly tended to rely on the same grade expectations for mainstream students as a baseline for exploring ESL student diversity.

Despite those constraints, Deb and Kelly's personal and professional experiences with ESL learners, immigrants and other foreigners registered their understanding of ESL student diversity: caring, sensitivity to diversity, and intension to use student diversity as teaching resources. While understanding the importance of student diversity, Kelly was confused by the diversity that she herself brought into the multicultural settings. She did not receive any assistance for addressing her confusion. Accordingly, when exploring diversity-related issues and teaching in response to diversity, Kelly felt she had to purposefully ignore her own diversity, especially religious choices, at both school and class levels. Unlike Kelly, Deb did not pay close attention to and seemingly ignored the diversity that she brought into class.

In general, Deb and Kelly's experience showcased that teachers' positive and proactive attitudes were critical in exploring diversity issues (Manyak, 2007; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Ray, 2009). Although Nieto (2010) suggested that in-service teachers, especially those who had not acquired training to deal with diverse student populations in teacher preparation programs, seek professional opportunities such as attending language and literacy conferences, reading multicultural materials, and taking graduate courses, providing teachers with authentic contexts for exploring diversity issues outside ESL classes is key to successful professional development. In the following chapter, I will present Deb and Kelly's own nuanced description of diversity issues in relation to literacy practices in their ESL classes.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONSIVE ESL LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN ESL CLASS

The key principle of literacy education, from a socio-cultural perspective, is that regardless of students' backgrounds, their literacy learning process is intrinsically and profoundly social (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1994; Delpit, 1988; Duff, 2001; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Miller, 2000). Acknowledging the importance of literacy education responding to students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, some educators have further proposed culturally responsive pedagogy for teaching students with diverse backgrounds, and suggested creating student-centered and equitable learning environments that identify, respect and nurture the different cultures that students bring into classrooms (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1992, Lipman, 1995). Teachers are expected to initiate "instruction consistent with the values of students' own cultures and aimed at improving academic learning" (Au, 1993, p.13). Indeed, some researchers attribute ESL students' poor literacy achievement to the exclusion or limited use of their native language and culture in classroom, and to the enforcement of ESL language, and mainstream behaviors and interactions that prevail in American society (Au, 1998; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2005).

However, as discussed in Chapter 1, in today's multicultural classes, teachers are not just attending to ESL students one by one. They are confronted with a group of students who have different linguistic and cultural knowledge, diverse (and often incompatible) learning preferences, and sometimes conflicting learning needs, and unique personality simultaneously. Very few studies have examined how ESL teachers designed and implemented literacy instruction for ESL students coming from more than one ethnic group. In addition, there is reason to believe that possible mismatches (and sometimes conflicts) of interests do occur in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms due to ESL students' diverse preferences for learning. How teachers deal with student diversity determines the

effectiveness of the guided practices and collaboration among students, and thus the effectiveness of ESL students' literacy learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In this chapter, I consider student diversity not as something to be neglected, thereby unintentionally reducing and neglecting its impacts on classroom practices, but as something that is inevitable, and which can be the basis for initiating guided instruction and collaboration in class. This layer of socio-cultural theory allowed us to purposefully reframe ESL student diversity as an opportunity and foundation for responsive literacy instruction.

I continue the analysis of the impact of student diversity on literacy instruction by shifting my attention to instructional practices and strategies in a multicultural classroom. I begin this chapter with a discussion of specific instructional practices that Deb and Kelly have designed and employed to help ESL students develop basic literacy skills. Next I describe how instruction in meaning construction goes beyond the ESL class, and what strategies Deb and Kelly use to teach ESL students to construct appropriate meanings in an American context. In the final section of this chapter, I revisit pedagogy for teaching students with diverse backgrounds and the potential of using student diversity as a teaching resource in a multicultural educational setting.

Basic Literacy Skills

As discussed in Chapter 4, ESL students often have diverse prior language, literacy and general learning experiences, multiple intelligences and different personalities. Therefore, with regard to instruction of basic literacy skills in a multicultural classroom, Deb and Kelly especially struggled with issues such as how to teach students with diverse ESL proficiencies, how to incorporate ESL students' diverse educational experiences, preferences and proficiencies, how to ensure ESL students understand teachers' directions, instructions and demonstrations, and how to motivate them to speak out and share opinions in class. In their attempts to deal with these issues, Deb and Kelly developed many different strategies for

enacting discursive literacy instruction in response to the dynamics of diversity in their ESL classes. In general, both teachers adopted the following activities to help ESL students develop basic literacy skills: student books, entrance and exit oral surveys, and scaffolding instructional language. Through repurposing these traditional activities, Deb and Kelly invited all students to participate actively in literacy practices, and taught literacy with student diversity.

Using student book

Deb and Kelly created a series of student books that motivate students to develop basic language and literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, writing and speaking. Deb and Kelly always selected topics from the Grade Level Standards as the themes of student books, including the weather, shapes, plants, animals, festivals and life history. Regardless of ESL students' English language proficiency or grade level, all student books consist of three parts: sentences or short paragraphs (with blanks), spaces for drawing pictures, and an audience signature page. ESL students are expected to finish each student book in three steps: filling in the blanks with appropriate vocabulary, drawing pictures to further share their understanding of the sentences or paragraphs, and reading the book they have finished to others in or out of school.

First, ESL students are expected to fill in the missing words in the book. The activity of filling in the blanks involves ESL students' skills of phonemic awareness, spelling, reading and writing, comprehension of the sentences (or paragraphs) and applying knowledge of vocabulary and syntax to a particular context. Vocabulary development is considered to be a cornerstone in literacy learning (Proctor, Carlo, August & Snow, 2005). Deb and Kelly suggested that it is particularly important to offer ESL students additional opportunities to practice at developing their vocabulary to an appropriate level because of their diverse experiences of phonemic awareness, and knowledge of phonological and spelling rules of

their first or other languages (instead of English). When filling in the blanks with appropriate vocabulary, Deb and Kelly can confirm students' mastery of the focal vocabulary and grammar. For example, in the student book *Clothes* (See Figure 3). Deb and Kelly intend to help students learn vocabulary of clothing and accessories. While doing the student book exercises, ESL students have opportunities to practice singular and plural forms of nouns and verb tenses and changes. In addition, Deb and Kelly actively collaborate with mainstream teachers, and carefully select book themes that are simultaneously taught in mainstream classes. Thus, ESL students are able to receive more explicit instruction on the same content they are studying in their other classes, have opportunities to interact with the content in both mainstream and ESL literacy class, and practice vocabulary in a variety of contexts. The process of thoughtfully choosing possible topics for student books also strengthens collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers, and further contributes to developing a collaborative school culture in RCES. However, both Deb and Kelly pointed out that the collaboration in this activity was usually initiated by ESL teachers, while mainstream teachers only passively shared when requested.

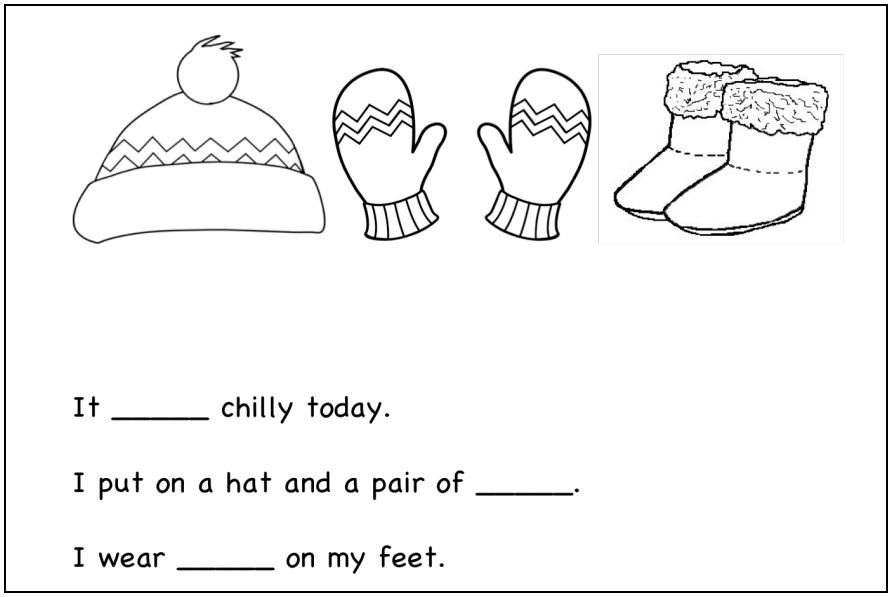

Figure 3. Student Book Example: Clothes.

Then, Deb and Kelly ask ESL students to draw pictures to show their understanding of the sentences or paragraphs in each book. Deb suggests that drawing is a universal language beyond words, and uses it as a stimulus for students to express their understanding of the texts in a non-verbal way. Drawing became especially important when ESL students had limited knowledge of English and were not able to report their progress to the teachers verbally. Through students' drawings, Deb and Kelly could identify whether they simply recognized the words or understood the meaning of the print. For example, Deb and Kelly created the book *My Five Little Valentines* for first graders. The book aimed to help ESL students to learn vocabulary of colors, numbers, and adjectives of emotion. Upon completing the first page of the book, students should know how to count to five, and how to spell numbers from one to five (See Figure 4). On the second page, Deb and Kelly did not leave any blanks in the sentences. Students were instructed to color the valentines according to the description (See Figure 5). On the third page, all adjectives were left out. Students had to use the valentines' facial expressions as clues and fill the blanks with appropriate adjectives from those that they had just learned (See Figure 6).

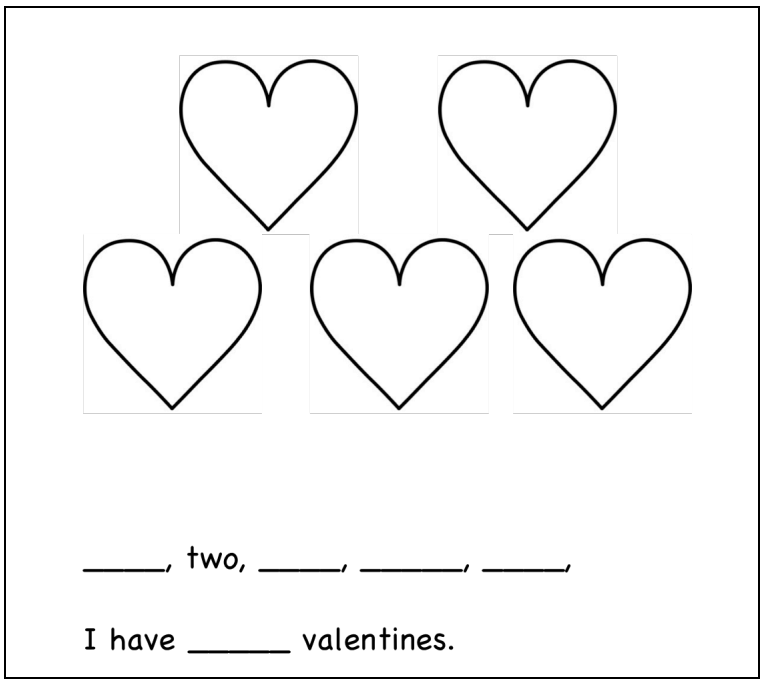

Figure 4. My Five Little Valentines: Page One.

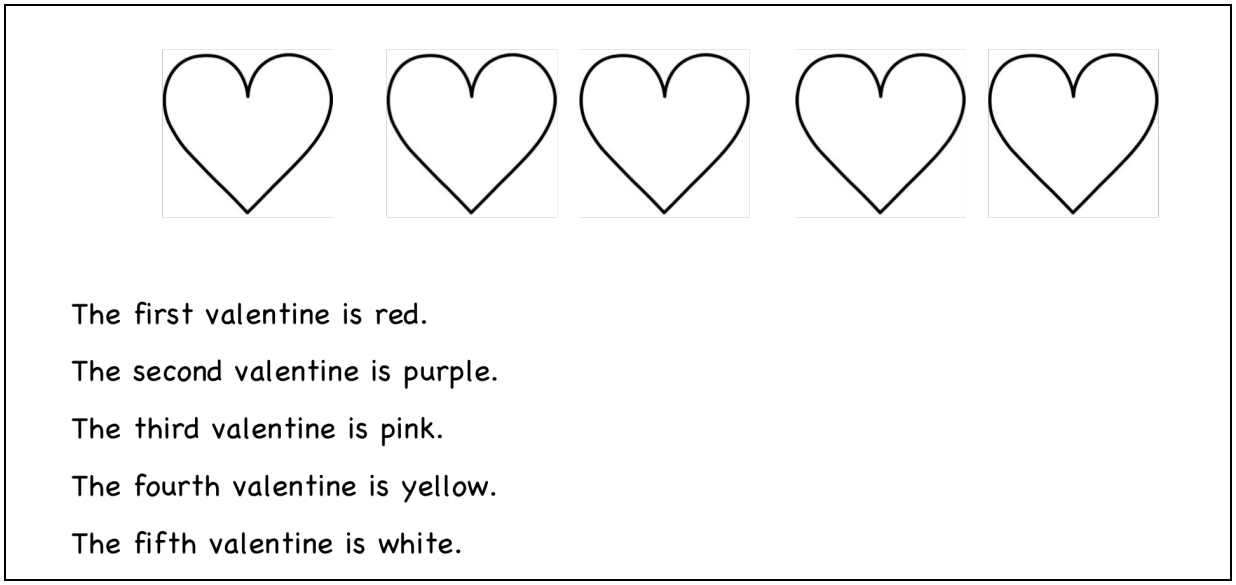

Figure 5. My Five Little Valentines: Page Two.

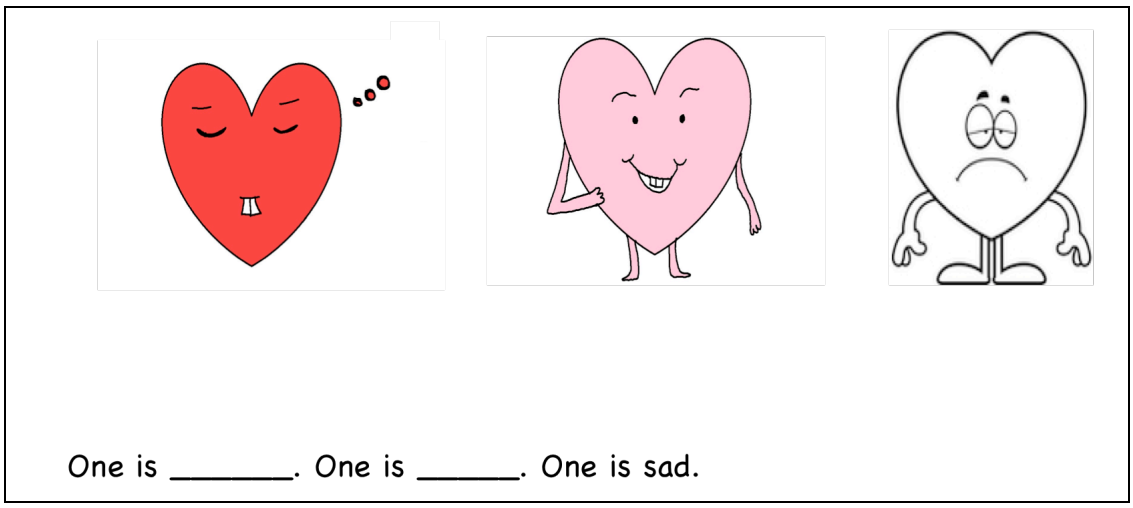

Figure 6. My Five Little Valentines: Page Three (For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation)

Deb and Kelly encourage students to make both verbal and non-verbal connection with the reading materials. Visual formats such as drawing and coloring were justified as evidence of students' comprehension of reading materials, and were significant tools for Deb and Kelly to assess ESL students' learning, especially when students lacked the necessary language knowledge to report their progress verbally. For example, when checking ESL

students' coloring the faces of little valentines on the second page, Deb and Kelly found that some students failed to relate the word "pink" to the correct color. Instead, they colored the valentines in orange. Through checking ESL students' non-verbal responses, Deb and Kelly were able to discover that some of them only mastered the spelling of the word and still needed assistance to comprehend its meaning.

After filling in the blanks and drawing pictures, ESL students were required to read their books to ten different people. ESL students were allowed free will to choose their audiences. For example, possible audiences might be ESL teachers, other ESL students, American peers in mainstream classes, classroom teachers, school administrators and staff (e.g. janitors), and students' family members. This task guided ESL students to practice academic speaking skills through reading the student book aloud repeatedly. They also had an opportunity for improving conversation skills since they were required to ask people to listen to their reading and to sign their books. In addition, parents were invited (by their own children) to be listeners for students' books, thus monitoring their children's learning progress on a regular basis. Therefore, besides developing speaking skills, ESL students, under the guidance of ESL teachers, expanded their literacy instruction boundaries to the school and community levels, and they were able to get access to guided literacy practice outside of the ESL classroom. However, as long as ESL students read the book to the audience verbally, they would be considered to have finished the task. Deb and Kelly did not give out any (verbal or written) guidance for the audience including how to give feedback to the student's reading (besides signing the book).

In sum, Deb and Kelly's design of student books and their related assignments obviously responded to their concerns of student diversity, and was rooted in three primary components: explicit instruction in vocabulary in terms of spelling, phonemic awareness, and phonological rules, careful assessment of ESL students' vocabulary development through

both verbal and non-verbal means, and building inclusive learning communities that encourage ESL students to share their writing verbally with others. Deb and Kelly repurposed the traditional literacy practices (i.e. drawing and reading to others) to help ESL students to overcome new learning curves in a multicultural setting such as the mismatch between vocabulary and objects (Richards, 1937) and communicative skills in English. Deb and Kelly emphasized that ESL students' literacy development was not driven by memorization of language rules or vocabulary but led by their initiative to use those language and literacy skills and willingness to connect with bigger community (e.g. mainstream class, school and neighborhood). In addition to helping ESL students develop basic language skills such as reading, speaking and writing, Deb and Kelly used the student book to scaffold the content that ESL students learned in mainstream class, assess their understanding through means other than language, involve parents in literacy instruction, and build up an inclusive learning community in RCES. The inclusion only stayed at the stage that aimed to make ESL students feel comfortable to share their work in a larger community. In this activity, neither Deb nor Kelly spent efforts to develop an inclusive community critically responding to ESL students' literacy performance.

Oral survey as routine activity

Deb and Kelly found that some ESL students did not have the opportunity to express their ideas in either mainstream or ESL classes for a variety of reasons (e.g. limited English, individual personality differences and large student-to-teacher ratios). However, some mainstream teachers tended to consider ESL students' lack of participation only as a culture-related preference (Palmer, Chen, Chang & Leclere, 2006). Deb and Kelly pointed out that culture is not the only reason that leads to ESL students' less frequent in-class participation. In general, ESL students are less motivated to participate due to individual personality characteristics, lack of language to express their ideas (or understanding of the instructions),

and relatively less sharing time granted by the mainstream teacher. In addition, Deb and Kelly argued that teachers' misassumption of students' lack of sharing would significantly impact ESL students' language and literacy development in terms of effectively tracking students' learning, gaining feedback from students, involving students of all levels of ESL proficiency in literacy learning, and identifying ESL students' real learning concerns. Therefore, Deb and Kelly designed and conducted oral entrance and exit surveys as routine activities in their ESL classes. However, in this activity, Deb and Kelly managed student differences by creating stable ability groups based on assessments of language proficiency but not literacy knowledge and skills. The strong focus on sharing time offered relatively equal learning opportunity for ESL students. It also resulted in Deb and Kelly paying less attention to student diversity, or in other words, not teaching in response to student diversity.

Before every ESL class, Deb or Kelly would go to the mainstream classes to pick up every ESL student. Guided by Deb or Kelly, ESL students lined up and walked together toward the ESL class. The other teacher usually waited for the group beside the classroom door, and greeted each ESL student one by one:

Student: "Good morning/afternoon, Ms. ***. Thank you for preparing for the class."

Teacher: "Good morning/afternoon, ***. Thanks for being ready for the class."

The teacher then asked students theme-based routine questions that varied with each group's English proficiency level. The theme-based questions for ESL students with entry-level, intermediate level and advanced level English proficiency were respectively about: date and time, weather and how they were feeling. For example, in an intermediate-level class, after greeting Kenny (a third grader), Deb started to ask him about weather.

Deb: "What's the weather like today?"

Kenny: "It's sunny."

Deb: "What was the weather like yesterday?"

Kenny: “It was sunny, too.”

Deb: “Thank you, Kenny!”

In an entry-level class, ESL students were allowed to respond to Deb or Kelly’s questions with the help of calendar or the paper clock standing in the corner of ESL classroom.

Kelly: “Good morning, Tom.”

Tom: “Good morning, Ms. Kelly.”

Kelly: “What day is today?”

Tom: “It is Monday.”

Kelly: “Thank you.”

At the same time, Tom pointed at the date on the calendar, and was then allowed to walk into ESL class. Kelly then proceeded to ask Emily the question about time.

Kelly: “Good morning, Emily.”

Emily: “Good morning, Ms. Kelly.”

Kelly: “What time is it now?”

Emily: “It is 9:30 in the morning.”

Kelly: “Thank you.”

Emily then adjusted the paper clock to nine thirty, and then walked toward her seat. Ali was then greeted by Kelly and asked what day tomorrow is. Although ESL students attending the same ESL class would be asked questions around the same theme (i.e. date and time), the questions were different from each other. Deb and Kelly’s strategy of involving a variety of theme-based sentences in an oral survey not only offered all ESL students opportunity to express ideas but also exposed different contexts to specify the conversation. In addition, the questions of the oral entrance survey were relatively easy. ESL students would not be “intimidated by those easy questions,” according to Deb. Given a particular amount of time speaking with teachers, ESL students would not avoid participating in the activity or be

worried about being interrupted by other ESL students. Furthermore, Deb and Kelly were able to monitor every ESL student's learning progress through their performance in this activity. As the semester went on, the routine questions became more and more difficult, and required of higher levels of vocabulary and more sophisticated sentence structure from the students. Deb and Kelly also regarded the oral entrance surveys as an incentive for students to review and share what they had already learned in ESL class with the teacher and other ESL students in a public setting. Deb argued that most ESL students did not have any opportunity to show what they had learned because of the larger student-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. ESL teachers should make full use of smaller class sizes and encourage ESL students to join the learning community in a proactive way.

Although sharing similarities with the entrance survey, the oral exit survey mainly focused on the assessment of ESL students' ongoing literacy learning. Five (or fewer) minutes before the class ended, Deb and Kelly required the students to line up behind the door, and then asked every ESL student a simple question related to the contents that they had just learned. If students were able to address the question, they remained in the same position in the line. If they were unable to respond satisfactorily, they were required to move to the end of the line, and prepare to answer a new question. For example, by the end of an advanced class focusing on the children's book *Mama, Where Are You From?*, Deb and Kelly asked the five ESL students to form a line, and asked them questions one by one.

Deb: "Kevin, which book did we read today?"

Kevin: "*Mama, Where Are You From?*"

Deb: "Thanks, Kevin. Lily, How many people are there in Mama's family?"

Lily: "Five. Mom, dad, two brothers and a younger sister"

Deb: "Thanks, Lily. Abu, how does Mama tell you where she came from?"

Abu: "She described food, chores and family reunion."

Deb: “Thanks, Abu. Sarah, how did Mama keep food fresh?”

Sarah: “Sorry…”

Deb: “Johnny, can you help Sarah with this question?” (indicating Sarah should move to the end of the line)

Johnny: “In the old fridge.”

Deb: “Thanks, Johnny. Sarah, what did Mama like to do as a child?”

Sarah: “[She liked] reading to the stuffed animal, skating, and playing with tadpole.”

Deb: “Thanks, Sarah.”

After all ESL students succeeded in answering a question, Kelly commented on their performance and then introduced the plan for next class: “Thank you for being such great learners. I’m very impressed by your attention to details and curiosity about other cultures. We are going to learn more about your cultures tomorrow.” Deb and Kelly wrapped up the class with comments on the students’ performances and a preview of the next class. Kelly emphasized the importance of contextualizing and specifying compliments for ESL students. Deb further pointed out that compliments were a significant part of instruction. ESL students should know “what specific areas they made progress [in].” According to Deb, telling ESL students that they did a good job in general does not help them construct meanings out of compliments.

Deb and Kelly employed entrance and exit oral surveys as listening and speaking exercises. ESL students were given equal opportunity to participate in the learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They were able to practice language and literacy skills with teachers’ guided questions and the assistance from advanced learners (Vygotsky, 1978). These activities also helped ESL teachers to assess students’ learning based on their real-time responses, and to design or adjust following lessons based on these assessments that focus primarily on basic comprehension questions. In light of ESL students’ oral sharing, Deb and

Kelly avoided possible mistaken assumptions about their learning progress. However, most questions that Deb and Kelly asked in a both entrance and exit surveys were those that aimed to help ESL students develop language skills rather than literacy skills with which ESL students were able to relate the questions to their person feelings or experiences.

Scaffolding how to use language to learn

Deb and Kelly both noticed that ESL students brought diverse linguistic and literacy competencies to ESL class. ESL students' diverse proficiency levels in English, development of first language skills, and literacy knowledge complicated the process of teachers conveying directions for tasks to the class. Deb and Kelly found that some students lacked basic vocabulary to understand the directions; some knew the vocabulary but still did not understand where to start with the task. Therefore, Deb and Kelly considered scaffolding the language of task directions as an important activity for literacy instruction. They adopted three main strategies to scaffold language that provides directions for completing tasks: interpreting the directions with easy words and questions, inviting students to reiterate the directions, and modeling tasks right after description.

Deb and Kelly found some ESL students were not able to finish a task because they did not understand the task rules. According to Kelly, some ESL students knew "what teachers were saying, but they didn't understand what to do." For example, in an advanced class, Deb and Kelly asked ESL students to write about "something that happened during Christmas break." However, some ESL students came back to Deb and Kelly with confusion: their family did not celebrate Christmas and "nothing happened in Christmas break." Deb and Kelly decided to break the prompt down. Kelly asked the students "you had two weeks off from school, you must have done something." However, some ESL students insisted that they did not go anywhere and nothing happened. Deb and Kelly then broke the question down "even more." Deb and Kelly asked those ESL students a series of questions: "What is a

moment that happened last week that you could put on paper? What did you do at that moment? Who else was there at that moment?" Guided by Deb and Kelly's questions, students started "writing something in response to those questions." Adopting the strategy of "breaking it [the prompt] down again and again into small chunks until they [ESL students] can handle bigger ones," Deb and Kelly succeeded in guiding ESL students to produce writing products related to their own experience.

In addition to breaking down task directions with easy words and questions, Deb and Kelly always invited ESL students, especially relatively advanced learners in the class, to explain the directions to their peers. In all ESL classes, Deb and Kelly allowed advanced ESL learners to explain the directions to their peers in their native languages. When doing group assignments (e.g. role play), teachers always asked the assigned group leader to repeat the task requirements to his/her group members first. Deb and Kelly also encouraged all students to reiterate the directions with guiding questions. For example, to help ESL students build vocabulary about animals, Deb and Kelly created a vocabulary matching card game. There were twelve cards in total, and each card was printed with an animal word that the students had just learned. Deb and Kelly held another set of twelve cards on which were printed images of the same animals. Deb first explained the game rules to the class:

> Let's play a card game. I will give you twelve cards. You will shuffle the cards by yourselves. Then, I will show you a card with an animal's image. You find the correct word to match the image and show me the card. Let's see who can find the most matching cards.

Although most students nodded their heads and seemed to have understood Deb's instruction, Deb and Kelly did not start the game right away. Instead, Kelly attempted to check students' understanding with several questions:

> Kelly: "Danny, do you know how to shuffle the cards?"

Danny: “No.” (while shaking his head)

Kelly: “Does anyone know how to shuffle the cards?”

Amy raised her hand, and volunteered to demonstrate. Kelly handed her the cards. Amy showed the class how to shuffle the cards. While watching Amy’s demonstration, Danny turned to me and murmured in Chinese: “I knew how to shuffle cards.” Obviously, Danny was confused by the word “shuffle,” not how to do the action. Kelly then asked another volunteer, Sharon, to model the game for the class. Kelly picked up an image card, and Sharon succeeded finding the matching word card. Afterwards, Kelly asked the whole class whether they understood the game rules. After getting positive feedback from all students, Deb and Kelly started the real game. With the assistance of advanced learners in ESL classes, Deb and Kelly enabled ESL students “to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (Wood, Bruner & Ross 1976, p. 90). The example also demonstrated that ESL students’ language and literacy development were heterogeneous. Their language proficiency did not necessarily predict their literacy proficiency, and vice versa.

As with Rodgers and Rodgers (2004), Deb and Kelly found that scaffolding literacy instruction was important to student learning. For language and literacy instruction in ESL classes, scaffolding the process of how to learn language was as important as how to use language to learn because ESL students had different literacy learning experiences and might not be familiar with the expectations of literacy tasks besides language barriers. In other words, ESL students’ zones of proximal language and literacy development are dynamic and diverse. Deb and Kelly revealed that scaffolding language used in providing directions for tasks helped ESL students to build up new vocabulary and academic expressions, and to make meaning out of sentences. In addition, when scaffolding task directions, Deb and Kelly were able to assess ESL students’ learning in a more accurate manner, and to avoid misinterpreting their learning curves.

Meaning Construction

Deb and Kelly described literacy instruction in ESL class as a continuous process that went beyond the basic literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The ultimate goal of literacy instruction was to help ESL students use language and literacy skills to construct meanings out of texts in school, at home and in larger community (Baker & Brown, 1984a, 1984b; Dyson & Genishi, 2011; Smagorinsky & Lee, 1999). Deb and Kelly pointed out that two broad sets of ESL students' diversity complicated their development of literacy instructional strategies in terms of helping ESL student construct meanings in different contexts: 1) ESL students attempting to use the same expression to indicate different objects; and 2) students understanding the words but not being able to make appropriate meanings in American contexts. Both ESL teachers respected students' diversity of needs in their daily lives, and considered it also to be a multicultural learning opportunity for them. However, ESL students' diverse interpretation of common concepts challenged literacy instruction in ESL class in terms of scaffolding common concepts that most American students learned at home, identifying common concepts that ESL students held different understandings of, and helping them develop understandings of common concepts in American context.

Building the relationship between language and object

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, Deb and Kelly pointed out that ESL student diversity could be found in their daily lives including differences in food, choice of clothes and commitment to religious beliefs. This diversity led to language barriers in their understandings of some common concepts in American daily life such as food and clothes. However, these common concepts were mostly ignored in the school curriculum and Grade Level Standards of literacy. Deb and Kelly decided to integrate content regarding daily life into literacy instruction, to help ESL students to build concepts of daily life, and then to guide them to relate language with experience.

Deb and Kelly noticed that most ESL students' life experiences were different from their American peers, and that they lacked basic language knowledge of daily life. This lack of experience also led to failure in using the language, constructing meanings, or communicating with their American peers. To address this problem, Deb and Kelly attempted to integrate language and literacy knowledge concerning American daily life into ESL classes. Besides printed materials, several other sources were used to make language and literacy learning of daily life more "meaningful, functional and useful," according to Deb. For example, Deb and Kelly designed a student book *In the Snow* to teach plural forms of nouns and the concept of changes in the verb "to be" such as "'isn't' and 'are' in a concrete way." Before introducing the book to the class, Deb and Kelly laid out a variety of winter clothes and accessories on the table: gloves, mittens, jackets, coats, scarves and sweaters. ESL students were encouraged to touch and even try on accessories such as gloves and scarves. Kelly pointed out that some ESL students had never seen snow or worn clothes such as coats or jackets before. Deb considered this activity to be an opportunity to "relate [ESL students'] language learning with authentic experience" and "to "prepare some ESL students for winter that they had never had." Winter clothes were displayed on the table throughout the week that was focused on the concept of plural and singular. Students had easy access to the clothes when they entered the ESL classroom, and were encouraged to practice the sentence pattern of "this is…" and "these are…" with either teacher's guidance:

> … then I brought the clothing out and said, "What do you say?" "This is the sweater I wear in the snow." Someone else would have to pick up and they'd notice a glove on the table, so they'd say "This is the glove I wear in the snow," or "These are the mittens I wear in the snow." So they have to use it…

Deb argued that language learning was just a pointless grammar activity if ESL students did not know how to relate what they learned to the real world. In addition to

clothing, Deb and Kelly found that most ESL students still had traditional food at home and mostly lacked experience of American food. The ignorance of American food led to ESL students' confusion when they attempted to order lunch food at home and when reading some children's books. Therefore, Deb and Kelly took pictures of lunch food and uploaded them to the ESL class website. They attempted to help ESL students construct experience of American food with the assistance of pictures and description of the food (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Snapshot of Online Lunch Menu at RCES.

These examples demonstrated that both Deb and Kelly understood that only when language was associated with an experience (or object) were ESL students able to develop

corresponding comprehension of the expression and then use the language (Richard, 1937). In many cases, ESL students' diverse experiences in daily life had disconnected them from some common concepts in American life. Deb and Kelly strove to help ESL students build experience with these concepts, and incorporated these concepts as important content into ESL literacy instruction. Both ESL teachers adopted strategies such as practicing real-world tasks and utilizing visual aids to engage ESL students in learning language related to American daily life. Through these activities, ESL students not only had opportunities to learn new vocabulary but also to gain access to social knowledge about American daily life that they were not familiar with from other sources.

Reconstructing meanings in American context

Deb and Kelly found that ESL students interpreted school and class rules as well as other social concepts in light of their experiences in their mother countries. Some misinterpretations inevitably resulted in classroom management issues, ESL students' confusion about teachers' feedback, and their misbehavior in an American context. When confronted with ESL students "reading the world" in an inappropriate way (Friere & Marcedo, 1987, p.25), Deb and Kelly always deconstructed ESL students' assumptions first, and then helped them to construct meanings in the new context.

Through critically reflecting on students' learning histories, Deb and Kelly succeeded in helping ESL students understand their classroom teacher's expectations. For example, a classroom teacher felt very disappointed by a Pakistani boy's misbehaviors. She tried to talk with him several times in vain, and then asked the ESL teachers for help. In the parent meeting, Deb and Kelly shared their concerns with the boy's parents. They found that the student used to be taught by male teacher in a boys' school. When conveying messages to the class, the male teacher always did it with stern face. If students did not obey the order, they would be punished physically. On the contrary, American teachers usually explained rules to

the student kindly with smiles, and the boy then thought the teacher was "playing a game" with him. The mismatching images of teacher authority and explanation led to miscommunication between the boy and his teacher, and made classroom management unpredictable and ineffective. Deb and Kelly analyzed the student's educational background. Apart from making use of this analysis to help the student understand new learning courtesy in the U.S., Deb and Kelly helped mainstream teachers dig out the real reasons for the student's misbehaviors.

This example also showcases the teacher collaboration in RCES. Student diversity prevailed in every mainstream class. Unlike loose collaboration among mainstream teachers (Goddard, Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, 2007), classroom teachers proactively sought help from ESL teachers, and often consulted them with ESL students' "courtesy" and behavior issues. At the beginning of every academic year, Deb and Kelly were always asked to deliver a workshop concerning ESL students to all mainstream teachers in RCES.

Furthermore, Deb and Kelly pointed out that ESL students' diverse interpretations of social concepts outside the classroom led to inappropriate behaviors in an American context. For example, both teachers pointed out that ESL students had different experiences of using bathrooms. Kelly described an ESL student from Sudan who thought "it was okay to use the bathroom outside in the recess playground." Since some girls from China only had experience with squat toilets, they did not know how to use standard American sitting toilets. Deb had to teach them two things: first, when using the toilet, people should sit instead of putting feet on it; second, it was safe to use the toilet. Although disagreeing on some ESL students' behaviors that were inappropriate in an American context and even embarrassed [in front of?] their American peers, Deb and Kelly did not rush to judge ESL students. Instead, they adopted the strategy of explicitly explaining the meaning of social concepts in the American context. Kelly argued that teaching ESL students about the meaning of social

concepts was important. Only when ESL students knew what would be "awkward" to their American classmates, and why it was awkward, and how to do "appropriate things," would ESL students feel comfortable and "included," and then would be willing to "be part of the school."

Additionally, Deb and Kelly found that ESL students had diverse interpretations of social concepts at the community level, and made efforts to identify ESL students' misinterpretations of common concepts outside of school. Both ESL teachers argued that these misunderstandings resulted in ESL students' slow adjustment to the local community.

> We have to teach different attitudes towards police…. In some countries, [they] are very afraid of the police… They tell me about the canings and the smacking…. We don't hit, but we do have expectations. We may say no with a smile, but we're serious. We don't play around. So we also try to teach different attitudes towards authority.

Deb and Kelly noticed ESL students had diverse understandings of some common concepts and attempted to construct meanings of those concepts in light of their experiences in their native countries. Although disappointed at their corresponding behaviors, both teachers understood the importance of helping ESL students reconstruct meanings of the concepts in the American context. The reconstruction was a must to establish an inclusive and comfortable learning community for ESL students.

In addition, ESL students' diverse interpretations of some common concepts not only challenged interaction between ESL students and their American peers and teachers, but also led to tension among ESL students themselves. Deb and Kelly found some tensions derived from historical and cultural factors in students' home countries. For example, Deb found that sometimes Korean and Japanese students disliked each other because of the Japanese occupation of Korea decades ago. A similar relationship could be found among students from India and Pakistan, and between Muslims and Christians. Moreover, ESL students' lack of

experience with diversity also led them to hold prejudices. In an entry-level ESL class, Deb was short of book and asked a Chinese girl to share the book with her classmate from Tanzania. The Chinese girl refused to do so because her Tanzanian classmate was too black. Deb did not criticize the Chinese girl. On the contrary, she made use of this event as an opportunity to explain why people had different colors of skin, how people would feel if they were treated differently because of their skin color and how people should respect each other's differences. Afterwards, Deb and Kelly purposefully pushed various kinds of collaboration between those two girls, who finally ended up as very close friends. Kelly suggested that ESL students should be alerted that they were also part of diversity although they brought diversity into school. Deb and Kelly used conflicts of student diversity as an opportunity to help students reflect on their own prejudices, promoting mutual understanding among ESL students.

No doubt linguistic, life and learning diversity among ESL students complicated Deb and Kelly's literacy instruction. Yet the issue was not simply with ESL students' first language or English language proficiency or familiarity with social concepts, but with how to relate the English they were learning with the concepts in an American context. Even if ESL students knew how to read, spell and write these words, they were not necessarily able to comprehend the word, make meanings out of the concept (Lee & Smagorinsky, 1999), or construct appropriate meanings in a particular context. Deb and Kelly included common concepts as important contents of literacy instruction. Such content or activities were rarely introduced in literacy class for mainstream students. Both teachers valued the diversity ESL students brought to class but pointed out the importance of understanding concepts in American contexts.

In light of their extensive experience of working with ESL students, Deb and Kelly listed the concepts that ESL students were most likely to make misassumptions about, and

always tended to expose and explicitly explain these common concepts to them. Similar to ethnographers' attempt to "make the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1986, p.121), Deb and Kelly strove to awaken students and teachers' minds to the visible but easily neglected cultural symbols in daily life. This also demonstrates that both ESL teachers not only paid attention to ESL students' diversity at an ideological level (Cole, 1996) but also recognized that literacy learning was not merely a cognitive progress but also a social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The practice required ESL students to perceive, analyze, relate and construct a language output in a new social context (Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978).

ESL Students' Ownership of Literacy

From a socio-cultural perspective, literacy learning and development occurs only when students participate in activities in their communities (Rogoff, 1994; Smagorinsky & Lee, 2000). The ultimate goal of literacy education is to help students gain literacy ownership, (Genishi & Dyson, 2011), developing a positive attitude and good habit of practicing literacy in school or other contexts (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Valencia, Au, Scheu & Kawakami, 1990). Deb and Kelly also agreed that ESL students' literacy development relied on their will to practice literacy in addition to mastery of basic literacy skills. They used four significant strategies to help ESL students develop positive attitudes and a strong will to use literacy: 1) recognizing and exploiting ESL students' language and cultural heritages at instructional and institutional levels; 2) using ESL students' (as well as their parents') diversity as a learning resource for all students; 3) taking an active approach to seek parent involvement; and 4) building and maintaining a friendly and inclusive reading environment in school.

Highlighting ESL students' diversity

Deb and Kelly pointed out that the first step in motivating ESL students to practice ESL literacy on their own was encouraging them to start with subjects that they were familiar with. Therefore, Deb and Kelly designed a series of activities that aimed to establish an

approachable setting for ESL students to use language or other tools (or media) to present their heritage to teachers and other American peers in RCES.

Deb and Kelly initiated morning ceremonies in RCES. Every morning before the regular school day began, all students gathered in the school gym and learned how to greet each other in a foreign language from an ESL student. The ceremonies motivated ESL students to use English literacy skills to explain and share their heritage language with teachers and other ESL and American students. It offered an opportunity for ESL students to practice ESL literacy skills with something they were familiar with and made them feel valued in the school. Meanwhile, teachers, American students and ESL students from other countries all participated in the ceremonies as learners. For example, every morning, they gathered in the gym and learn how to say basic greetings in different languages from their schoolmates such "hello," "good morning," and "thank you." (This event will be described in greater detail below.)

Another school activity that Deb and Kelly initiated in RCES was an Annual Festival of World Cultures. The festival offered ESL students an opportunity to share their cultural heritage. Deb and Kelly noticed that most ESL students wore clothes similar to other American kids, but some ESL students wore clothes symbolizing their religious beliefs. For example, Kelly noticed that almost all Muslim girls wore hijab at school. In addition, Deb suggested that clothing contained large amount of information about local cultural, geographic and weather features. Accordingly, during the Festival, all students (including American students) were encouraged to wear their traditional clothes and have a parade to display their heritages. Through the parade, students and teachers in RCES could "watch a world fashion show without traveling all around the world," according to Deb. What clothes ESL students wore and how they wore clothes were usually ignored, although clothes were visible symbols of culture (Britzman, 2003). Deb and Kelly noticed ESL students' diverse

cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and succeeded in transforming the diversity into an educational opportunity for advancing teachers' and American students' cultural sensitivity. Hill (1991) argued:

> Conversations of respect between diverse communities…are the ones in which the participants expect to learn from each other, expect to learn non-incidental things, expect to change at least intellectually as a result of the encounter… In such conversations, one participant does not presume that the relationship is one of teacher to student (in any traditional sense of that relationship), or parent to child, of developed to underdeveloped. The participants are co-learners. (p. 284)

In RCES, neither teachers nor American students seemed to chafe at this expectation or feel constrained or challenged when learning foreign languages and cultures from ESL students. Both ESL teachers disclosed their respect for diverse cultures, desire for gaining diverse cultural knowledge for both professional growth and personal good, and intention to develop an inclusive learning community through exchanging cultural knowledge with ESL students.

Kelly further pointed out the diversity of the ESL student population as a representation of "what's happening in the world." Kelly argued that diversity was not only what American students were encountering in school, and but also would be a reality for their future work. School administration working with Deb and Kelly spared no efforts to manifest diverse learning (and working) environments for students (both American and ESL) and mainstream teachers through visual representations of students' diverse nationalities. In front of the main entrance of RCES, a Peace Pole was dedicated, welcoming all to the school with the message, "Peace to all who enter here," in eight major languages that were most commonly spoken by non-American students in RCES: Arabic, Chinese, English, Hindi, Korean, Spanish, Swahili and Urdu. Alongside the hallway, national flags of 47 countries,

which were home countries to current students, with their English names underneath were hung on the wall. On the homepage of RCES' official website, the link on the national flag would direct visitors to the corresponding wiki for the country which provides people with more detailed knowledge of other countries and raises multicultural awareness at the community level. Clearly, both teachers had been making conscious efforts to recognize ESL students' diverse nationalities and to share this knowledge with the larger community.

Deb and Kelly suggested ESL students were assets for RCES. "They [ESL students] bring out things you wouldn't believe, [and] an average American child wouldn't think about. They've never been there. They don't know what it's like", Deb argued. Both teachers attempted to help ESL students to identify and show their strengths and uniqueness at personal, instructional and institutional levels (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2004). In such a diversity-supportive learning community, ESL students felt safe and proud to express their ideas with the ESL literacy skills they learned.

Encouraging parents to take literacy ownership

Research shows that ESL students' literacy practices at home differ from literacy practices that are favored in school (Shultz, Florio & Erickson, 1982; Suarez-Orozco, 2000). ESL students' attitudes toward literacy practices and willingness to use literacy in different contexts are strongly influenced by their parents' behaviors (Edwards & McMillon, 2008). Deb and Kelly found the same phenomenon in their ESL classes. Both ESL teachers pointed out that encouraging ESL students' parents to take literacy ownership had been helpful in signaling patterns of home literacy practice. Moreover, the parents of RCES' ESL students mostly held undergraduate or higher degrees, and had relatively advanced English proficiency. With parents' proactive sharing, Deb and Kelly were able to identify ESL students' learning needs and progress. Therefore, to encourage parents to take literacy ownership, Deb and Kelly provided opportunities for ESL students' parents to develop basic

ESL literacy skills in a friendly and inclusive communicative community, to participate in designing and leading classroom and school activities (e.g. the daily cultural ceremonies), and to communicate about their children's life and academic performance with teachers on a regular basis.

Deb and Kelly, collaborating with the administration of RCES, built a friendly communicative setting for parents. For example, the school slowed down the speed of the electronic notice on the billboard outside the school building in order to help ESL students' parents read the messages more easily. Although they sent parents hard copies of letters or notices in English, Deb and Kelly always uploaded an electronic version to the ESL class website, and added the link of Google Translate beside the document in case parents needed translation services for understanding the notice. Besides these general initiatives that helped parents to read in English, Deb and Kelly also initiated one-on-one conferences with ESL students' parents every month. Before and during the meeting, Deb and Kelly "carefully choose words [in English], and make sure that the parents could understand them [the teachers] correctly." More importantly, Deb revealed the careful choice of language could prevent ESL students' parents from misunderstanding their children's learning progress and behavior in school. Deb and Kelly understood that parents, similar to their children, also tended to construct meanings for some common concepts based on experiences in their native countries. Deb and Kelly applied their observation of ESL students' literacy practices to the children's parents. Deb and Kelly's careful attention to ESL students' parents' understandings of educational concepts and efforts to help parents construct meanings of the concepts in an American context showed both teachers' beliefs in the importance of parent involvement in ESL students' education (Schecter & Cummins, 2003). Their responses further demonstrated that the two-way parent involvement could benefit ESL students' learning in a more effective fashion. On the one hand, both teachers took advantage of

parents' contributions and collaboration through traditional institutionalized methods such as parent-teacher conferences, newsletters or parents' report forms (Edwards, 2004), and then discovered students' real concerns and needs. On the other hand, teachers' generosity in sharing knowledge regarding educational concepts in the United States helped ESL students' parents interpret their children's school performances with the consideration of their current learning context, and further initiated more effective action at home to collaborate with the teachers, including providing authentic and accurate information.

Deb and Kelly also regarded ESL parents' diverse linguistic backgrounds as great resources to raise multicultural awareness in RCES. One of the most important multicultural activities in RCES was called the Daily Morning Celebration. Every morning, with all students gathered in the school gym, American students first read the Pledge of Allegiance. Following this, an ESL student from one country was selected, and was asked to show the group their national flag. Then, all students listened to that country's anthem before the ESL student taught the whole school (including teachers, American students and other ESL students) how to say "hello" (and other phrases – good morning, thank you…) in his/her native language. Usually it was the parents instead of the ESL students who provided Deb and Kelly with the language knowledge. One week before each country was selected, ESL teachers worked closely with ESL students' parents and assured that the ESL student from the particular country used his/her language correctly. Deb suggested that ESL students' parents were more likely to have advanced knowledge of their native languages than their kids, and were able to provide accurate knowledge and appropriate use of the language. Meanwhile, this activity opened a venue for parents, especially those who felt left out of their children's learning process because of their low English proficiency, to get involved in school activities. Obviously, rather than ignoring students' parents' diverse linguistic backgrounds or simply regarding those backgrounds as barriers, both ESL teachers

understood the importance of parent involvement in students' learning and further took initiatives to make use of parents' language diversity as resources to arouse multicultural awareness at school level (Gay, 2000).

Respecting ESL students' own choices in literacy learning

As made apparent through many examples shared thus far, Deb and Kelly disclosed that ESL students brought diverse literacy learning needs to school. They pointed out that ESL students' learning needs referred to not only what aspects of literacy skills ESL students needed to improve, but also what they wanted to learn and what kind of literacy they were expected to learn and use in their own community. Respecting ESL students' choices in literacy learning materials was critical to further motivate them to develop good reading habits, to practice their literacy skills, and more importantly, to promote a more equal and democratic learning setting for all students. Therefore, Deb and Kelly spared no efforts in collecting possible reading materials that might engage ESL students in reading, to present them with choices rather than force them to accept particular books, and to find out parents' expectations on literacy development. In ESL literacy class, Deb and Kelly always encouraged ESL students to choose "what they want to read" for the class. For example, at the very beginning of each unit, Deb and Kelly presented ESL students with several choices of children's books focusing on the same theme that are usually taught in mainstream literacy class (e.g. weather, school life, festivals), and then asked them to vote for their favorite book. Although ESL students only had a limited number of choices, Deb explained that the voting process was important for ESL students to develop a "sense of democracy." The voting activity also allowed all ESL students, regardless of their competence, to participate in the literacy learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). ESL students were then guided to develop the habit of speaking out about their own opinions (in English) in class.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, Deb and Kelly both noticed that some ESL students "did not like reading" for various reasons. For example, some ESL students, especially those from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam and Haiti, had very limited access to books and did not develop reading habits at home. Other ESL students, including Chinese, Korean and Japanese students wanted to read children's literature after school, but their parents tended to categorize those books as extracurricular reading that would not benefit their children's academic learning. Deb and Kelly set up a library targeting all ESL students regardless of their level of English proficiency. They even collected books in ESL students' native languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish. Deb and Kelly understood first language development has a significant impact on second language learning (Freeman, 1998). Deb further pointed out that book diversity and how to select "appropriate and fun books" were the keys to the library because the main purpose of setting up the library was to motivate ESL students to read after school. Books in their native languages made reading more accessible and enjoyable to ESL students. It also made it possible that students' parents who had limited knowledge of English could be involved in ESL students' afterschool reading activities.

Conclusion

Deb and Kelly's literacy instruction for ESL students involves three phases: development of basic literacy skills, meaning construction and ESL students' literacy ownership. Throughout the three phases, Deb and Kelly strive to implement instruction based on ESL students' learning strengths, facilitate literacy instruction with skillful cultural translations, collaborate with ESL students' parents, and give and receive authentic feedback on instructional interactions. Obviously, Deb and Kelly understand the complexity of ESL student diversity, value ESL students' multi-intelligence, appreciate communicative flexibility of literacy learning (Genishi & Dyson, 2009), and emphasize cross-cultural

understanding among all students (including mainstream students). They always analyze the mistakes that ESL students make in literacy learning with linguistic insight (Gee, 1990), and tend to "reserve the errors as an interpretation of the last resort" (Honer, Lu, Royster and Trimbur, 2011, p.304). While valuing ESL students' individual talents, Deb and Kelly attend to ESL students' personal learning and life histories. They attempt to engage ESL students' attention with experiences besides print (e.g., the clothing exhibition), scaffold student participation in learning activities, explore the meaning of concepts in the American context, and encourage family involvement in literacy activities. Deb and Kelly consider student diversity as a resource for literacy practices at the institutional, collegial, instructional and community levels, and use student diversity to bridge communication among different cultures, establish school-family collaboration, awaken multicultural awareness at the institutional level, revive teacher collaboration, and identify students' real learning needs.

In general, through analyzing Deb and Kelly's literacy instruction in ESL classes, I found that although both teachers regarded students' differences as a resource for teaching and learning, and had the goal of teaching *for*, as well as *with*, diversity, they did not achieve their goal. This occurred for following three reasons: 1) they had a complex but static notion of study diversity; 2) they did not frequently assess students' language and literacy learning, or use a variety of formal and informal assessments; and 3) they tended to simplify or Americanize literacy practice in ESL class. The teachers operated from a complex understanding of student diversity, and developed ways to repurpose traditional activities and assessments to encourage a diverse class of ELL students to participate actively in language and literacy learning. However, I also pointed to ways in which the teachers' culturally responsive instructional practices became classroom routines that did not change in response to student learning. While the teachers taught *with* (rather than *against*) student diversity, adapting curricular materials to engage students' complex identities, they did not teach *for*

student diversity; in general, the teachers did not search for evidence of ways in which student performances might challenge and exceed their expectations.

CHAPTER 6

RESPONSIVE LITERACY EDUCATION: TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY

The preceding chapters indicate that the diversity issue is complicated in Deb and Kelly's ESL classes. Deb and Kelly's design and enactment of responsive literacy practices demonstrate their cautious examination of diversity issues and thorough understanding of the impacts of student diversity on literacy teaching and learning. The issue that most American elementary teachers, teacher educators and policy makers are confronted with is that diversity has become the norm nowadays but the body of evidence on effective practices in response to student diversity remains relatively small. This study presents a comprehensive example of how to help teachers understand, examine, and make use of student diversity as a resource for responsive literacy instruction. The experiences of the two teachers who are the focus of this study, Deb and Kelly, should encourage other teachers to do likewise. This chapter presents several ideas collected from the discussions in Chapters 3-5, which provide ideas from Deb and Kelly's own exploration and experimentation that are worthy of further study in relation to implementing responsive literacy instruction and building a community that aims to teach for diversity.

Studying Diversity Issues: Lessons from In-Service ESL Teachers

Embracing the complexity of diversity in ESL literacy instruction

The two ESL teachers' exhibited a complex perspective on student diversity, and considered their own cultural backgrounds as a part of classroom diversity. However, the teachers did not regard classroom diversity as dynamic, and further created inflexible, and somewhat inappropriate ability groups for their ELL students, which were based their instruction on static and limited notions of each group's zone of proximal development.

While admitting the complex nature of student diversity and its influence on ESL literacy instruction, Deb and Kelly's nuanced description of diversity issues and responsive

literacy practices demonstrates their tolerance, respect and close attention to student diversity in ESL classes. The complex nature of student diversity is not particularly surprising given the increasing numbers of the ESL student population, the homogeneity of teachers and their limited experience with other cultures, and the incomplete nature of culture(s). In previous chapters, we have seen that Deb and Kelly believe in the importance of incorporating ESL students' diverse language and literacy skills when designing responsive ESL literacy practices. However, one of the most recalcitrant obstacles for Deb and Kelly is how to avoid simplifying diversity issues in class. An important step for future studies is to investigate ways to help teachers recognize and analyze the complexity of diversity issues at the instructional, institutional, collegial and larger community levels.

Historically, literacy education has focused on basic aspects including listening, speaking, reading and writing that can be applied within and across schools. However, from a socio-cultural perspective, researchers have pointed out the importance of social context in human development, and argued that effective literacy learning happens and develops in a collaborative, educational setting (Vygotsky, 1976). Surrounding teachers are reminders of language and literacy policies at the federal, state and school levels. In addition, there are matters of daily negotiation of language and literacy practices in increasingly complex ways both in school and at home.

Through listening, speaking, reading and writing, ESL students construct meanings from printed text to satisfy the requirements of a particular context. Although having attempted to maintain the balance of students' literacy achievement in school and their literacy practice in other communities (e.g. home, larger community and potential work environments), schools have not bridged the gap between standardized literacy instruction in school and changing (and diverse) demands for literacy skills outside school. This is unfortunate, as various social changes (e.g. globalization, increasing diversity in schools and

local communities, the demands for different literacy practices in school and at home) have increased the need for respecting and including a wider range of texts, different features of oral, written and visual communication and presentations, and diverse views of the world inside and outside school. These changes impose urgent demands on literacy instruction in terms of what we should teach as part of literacy for both mainstream and ESL students to help them satisfy the needs of literacy practices in school and in other larger communities (e.g. home, native county and global contexts). But it goes beyond that.

As shown in Chapter Three, ESL students have diverse pedagogical experiences of literacy. They have learned literacy differently from their American peers in terms of the contents, foci and instructional strategies that their previous literacy teachers preferred to use. Traditional efforts to support literacy development by reinforcing ESL students' learning in the way that American teachers have been taught are ineffective with regard to ESL students' transition to the new literacy learning context, adaption to new instructional practices, and American teachers' interpretations of their performances based on standards required in American educational settings. Therefore, understanding the complexity of diversity issues requires further investigation of pedagogical gaps among communities in which ESL students apply existing literacy skills and develop new ones.

Deb and Kelly also admitted they need assistance to understand the diverse skills that students bring into ESL classes. From a socio-cultural perspective, students come to class with different levels of cognitive development, skill bases and home practices which interact with teachers' personal and professional experiences in the current learning context (Vygotsky, 1976; Taylor, Anderson, Au & Raphael, 2000). Connecting teaching practices, curricula and literacy with students' skill bases is vital to teachers' effective conveyance of knowledge. Effective learning depends on how teachers understand the knowledge that students bring into class (Barton & Tan, 2009), and how teachers make use of student's

sources of knowledge that were historically accumulated and culturally developed in students' household (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2001). Teachers are expected to understand and utilize the students' psychological principles (Cole, 1996; Dewey, 1932) and knowledge resources (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992), and then to cultivate the students by relating abstract knowledge with the experience they have accumulated outside school. However, Deb and Kelly have grown up in similar backgrounds to most American teachers, and have been labeled as "white, middle class, female." As the composition of the ESL student population becomes more diverse, Deb and Kelly feel it is hard to understand or know well about every ESL student's experiences at home. In general, the differences in teachers' and students' life experiences, and teachers' limited knowledge about students' lives, can possibly prevent them from initiating effective instruction to stimulate students' learning. These realities suggest two broad issues to explore. How can teachers help ESL students learn through life experience when they are not equipped with enough knowledge about the students' lives? Or, how can they "fit [the instruction] in the dominant mode of growth in child" (Barton & Tan, 2009, p. 129)? This study demonstrates that these two issues have become the main barriers for Deb and Kelly to be able to understand and address diversity issues in literacy instruction, and require further investigation in future research.

In addition, in this study Deb and Kelly have shown that mainstream teachers' and students' attitudes exert powerful influence on their further examination of diversity issues related to literacy instruction in ESL classes. Deb and Kelly have suggested that emphasizing ESL student diversity at the school level helps mainstream teachers and students to understand diversity issues in a concrete way, and it also promotes an inclusive literacy learning community for ESL students in the school. However, mainstream teachers and students have rarely appreciated efforts such as those put forth by Deb and Kelly's to introduce better understandings of cultural and social diversity. As described in Chapter Five,

Deb and Kelly have attempted to build morning Foreign Language Ceremonies as a routine activity in RCES and integrate multicultural literature into RCES' literacy curriculum. According to Deb and Kelly, these activities serve two purposes: helping ESL students better understand themselves, and broadening mainstream teachers' and students' knowledge of other cultures. However, the study shows that mainstream teachers are also interested in having Deb and Kelly address their immediate concerns with ESL students' in-class learning (e.g. unwillingness in class participation, failure to follow teachers' directions) while appreciating the multicultural events that aimed to arouse multicultural awareness at school level. In addition, throughout Chapters Three, Four, and Five, we can see that Deb and Kelly's collaborations with mainstream teachers influenced learning opportunities in ESL classes. Therefore, studying how to involve mainstream teachers in helping ESL teachers to explore diversity issues is not only necessary but also requires examination in future studies to understand more fully about how collaboration between mainstream and ESL steachers will contribute to both parties' understanding of diversity issues, and how the collaboration will enhence responsive instruction in both mainstream and ESL class.

Diagnosing intercultural and intracultural diversity and human variability

Chapter Four presented Deb and Kelly's three suggested categories of student diversity that impact their design and enactment of responsive literacy practices: intercultural diversity, intracultural diversity and human variability. They affirmed that ESL students' intercultural diversity played a decisive part in their enforcement of multicultural awareness at the school level, in their selection of teaching materials, in their creation of ESL learning goals and in the interpretation of students' mistakes. According to Deb and Kelly, understanding intercultural diversity among ESL students is necessary for teachers to design responsive activities, especially when teachers have limited knowledge of ESL students' linguistic or cultural backgrounds. After all, the foundations of human existence can be

understood by "the development of a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of thought, a universal grammar of the intellect" (Geertz, 1973, p.350). By applying linguistics and generalizations of culture as a moral basis to analyze discourse such as schools, teachers may demonstrate more understanding about and respect for differences among students from various cultural groups. However, mere knowledge of culture-oriented diversity alone will not lead to effective literacy practices.

In addition, it is dangerous to analyze ESL students' behaviors on such a structuralist basis. Deb and Kelly's nuanced descriptions of diversity issues demonstrate that ESL students have difficulties developing English language and literacy skills in an American context, and even those from the same ethnic group need different types of assistance in language and literacy learning. For example, some ESL students are fluent in daily communication in English but fail to perform well in academic English (e.g. children of refugees); others may do well in school, though they seldom communicate with teachers or their peers because they lack cultural knowledge and are afraid to "say something inappropriate or wrong." Therefore, it is quite possible that merely focusing on culture-oriented diversity to analyze diversity issues (especially in school settings) would mislead teachers to another extreme – attributing the students' different behaviors (especially inappropriate behaviors) and learning deficiencies to the same causes while neglecting each student's unique background (or experiences) as well as his or her special needs. In other words, ascribing all of ESL students' diversity to culture will inevitably result in teachers' forming standardized and over-generalized judgments of student behaviors. For example, cross-cultural diversity such as socio-economic power could significantly moderate or even counteract cultural control. Students from the same ethnic group might sometimes demonstrate similar learning styles, but these are not necessarily the best ways for them to learn. So, this study demonstrates that understanding diversity issues with only cultural (and

linguistic) insights could lead teachers to overestimate the power of culture on language and literacy learning while neglecting other possibilities that can result in ESL students' low achievement.

In addition, through Deb and Kelly's design and enactment of responsive literacy instruction, we can see that they give human variety the highest priority. They start with intercultural and intracultural diversity to unpack the complexity of diversity issues, identifying possible learning needs or preferences of ESL students. Then, both teachers continue tailoring class activities to meet students' individual preferences, needs and talents. When applying research-based strategies to literacy practices in ESL classes, both teachers cautiously take human variability into consideration. What I see in Deb and Kelly's literacy practices makes me think that effective literacy instruction should not only be linguistically and culturally responsive, but also individually responsive. In short, responsive ESL instruction calls for us to look beyond ESL students' cultural and linguistic diversity and draw upon students' individual knowledge, skills, needs and talents. Lessons from Deb and Kelly's experiences suggest the need for further study of this issue with larger numbers of teaching in varied contexts.

Possible Attempts: Preparing Teachers for Diversity Issues in Literacy Instruction

Advancing responsive literacy instruction requires changes to elementary schools in the designing of ESL literacy curricula and in the preparing, hiring and training of in-service teachers. At the very least, it requires making good long-term calls for giving in-service teachers professional development training in better understanding and addressing diversity issues in ESL and literacy teaching. More ambitiously, it may well involve greater collaboration with other subject matter teachers in schools and greater attention to the problem of simplifying or over-generalizing diversity issues in schools. Moreover, insights from Deb and Kelly's experiences will benefit other in-service teachers in terms of helping

them to develop greater understandings of the complexity of diversity issues and further designing responsive literacy practices. Teacher educators need to be more serious about, and more ambitious in making use of, what is now all too often treated as a token multicultural education requirement for in-service teachers. The challenge is to incorporate more linguistic, macro-sociological, comparative and international education research into professional development activities to help in-service teachers to deal with diversity issues and to develop a deeper sense of professional identity as ESL teacher. In short, new work, in which many in-service teachers and teacher educators cannot yet claim expertise, will be demanded of both teachers and their ESL students. That is the challenge of embracing responsive literacy instruction, and its promise: the necessity of working on literacy development with our ESL students, subject matter teachers, ESL students' parents, policy makers and those who can become contributors amid the realities of an inclusive world in which diversity is becoming the norm (Genishi & Dyson, 2009).

As a means toward advancing collective efforts to articulate and enact responsive approaches to literacy, I include here selected activities from Deb and Kelly' literacy practices in ESL class that I have found helpful in preparing in-service teachers for diversity issues and suggest are worthy of further study in professional development programs. I share John-Steiner-and-Mahn's view that successful literacy practices are "distributed, interactive, contextual, and the result of the learners' participation in a community of practice" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 205), and believe a socio-cultural point of view provides a deeper understanding of and contemporary concern for literacy instruction, especially the impacts of multicultural communities on students' learning. Indeed, schools are part of a larger society in which ESL students' learning activities are situated. The dynamics and interdependence of individual development and social contexts further demonstrate the importance of looking at the impacts of social changes at both the macro and micro levels of student learning.

Therefore, with a socio-cultural stand, I believe that proposals for substantially improving ESL students' literacy achievements have to consider political, economic, and social (at both local and global levels) factors. Central to the aim of this section is conceiving of my work as a starting point for local reform initiatives in literacy education rather than as isolated activities that teacher education programs and schools may adopt to prepare teachers for simply working with ESL students with linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Judging ESL students' literacy achievement

In light of the complexities of ESL students' literacy proficiency, Deb and Kelly have begun to rethink how to judge students' literacy achievement in the American context. According to Deb and Kelly, judging ESL students' literacy proficiency is especially important. It determines how to divide students into appropriate ESL class levels (or groupings), how to identify their ESL literacy learning needs, and how to continuously follow up on their literacy development. Over the last several years, research has focused on using standardized literacy and ESL assessment tools to evaluate ESL students' literacy achievements. Such tools are important, because they support teachers in evaluating and understanding ESL students' literacy proficiencies in light of American standards. Yet these tools may not reflect ESL students' real literacy achievements, and may not necessarily help teachers to develop appropriate and responsive literacy practices.

As reported in Chapter Four, Deb and Kelly have suggested that standardized tests such as those used in their state have been reinforced as the main tool in RCES to judge students' ESL and literacy performance. They both have negative attitudes toward the tests, and have pointed out that the tests' validity has been undermined due to its inflexible testing date (compared to ESL students' dynamic enrollment dates), complicated directional language in each test section, and narrow focus on basic language skills such as spelling, vocabulary and grammar rather than meaning construction. In the meantime, students'

relatively low ESL proficiencies have prevented them from demonstrating their real literacy achievements on standardized tests. Consequently, Deb and Kelly's experiences suggest that teachers may need more opportunities to develop new understandings of and insights into ESL students' literacy achievements by joining standardized literacy assessments and Grade Level Standards with their own professional judgment. In this study, we saw that Deb and Kelly also relied on their more than ten- years of ESL teaching experience, living experiences in multicultural communities, experiences of studying abroad, and knowledge of EFL pedagogy prevailing in other non-English speaking countries to judge ESL students' literacy achievement. Deb and Kelly's descriptions and literacy practices fit with the literature of judgment from a macro-sociological perspective. Deb and Kelly's experiences demonstrate that it is necessary for professional development to include training in the school literacy practices of other countries. Such opportunities may enhance teachers' understanding of ESL students' literacy proficiencies and learning needs, help teachers to develop differentiated pedagogical content practices and diversity-responsive skills and to investigate ESL students' literacy development in American educational settings.

To be more specific, looking at Deb and Kelly's instructional practices of ESL literacy, I find their actions fit in Alexander's (2001) notion of judgment from a macro-sociological perspective. According to Alexander, two judgments exist in a classroom regardless of the country (or culture): differentiation and assessment. Differentiation refers to "the process of identifying differences in children as a basis for making decisions about where, what and how they should be taught" (Alexander, 2001, p. 356). As reported in Chapters Four and Five, Deb and Kelly followed the general guidance and practices of differentiation to group students into ESL classes of different levels, and to select appropriate teaching materials and activities for each class. They have also indicated that the workshop focusing on differentiated instruction was the most practical and contributive one for them for

understanding and teaching students with diverse language and literacy proficiencies in an effective way. However, after closer investigation of the issue of differentiation in a multicultural class, I find differentiated instruction in Deb and Kelly's class has been complicated by the fact that ESL students usually come to school with unique experiences of differentiated learning. For example, as suggested by Alexander (2001), teachers usually differentiate students by their age, ability, special educational needs, behavior, gender, and height. In most countries, teachers employ similar means to realize differentiation in class: time focused on certain students, attention that students received, and frequency of teachers' interactions with students. However, teachers from a particular country also have their own unique means to realize differentiation: subject and task (e.g. England), outcomes (also England), seating or grouping (e.g. India). In contrast to facile differentiation that leads to a limited recognition of "students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language and preferences in learning and interests" (Hall, Strangman & Meyer, 2011, p.2), differentiation with a macro-sociological viewpoint that involves sustained international and multicultural endeavors becomes a constituent part of responsive literacy practices that leads to the flexibility of literacy and ESL students' ownership of literacy. For example, teachers should be alert to what literacy skills students are expected to develop in other countries. Understanding differentiation from a macro-sociological perspective will contribute to building ability group in response to the complexity of ESL student diversity rather than merely basing grouping on their language proficiency. I would also suggest that future studies investigate how teachers might create more flexible ability groups in ELL classes.

Besides differentiation, both teachers also used formative and evaluative assessment tools including standardized tests, class projects and after-school homework as a follow-up to judge and improve ESL students' literacy achievement. Deb and Kelly have suggested that compared with formative assessment, evaluative assessment such as a standardized test is a

more judgmental assessment tool that consists of compliments or criticism. The result of evaluative assessment usually does not contain information that will improve students' understanding of their performance. In a multicultural class, interpreting the result of evaluative assessment becomes more complicated. For example, according to Alexander (2001, p. 370), teachers in America, England, India, France, and Russia interpret the following terms in their assessment differently: "development," "potential," "ability," "efforts" and "attainment." As reported in Chapter Four, Deb and Kelly also find that ESL students and their parents tend to confuse advanced ESL classes with classes in which ESL students will receive more attention than other ones (e.g. entry-level and intermediate level classes). The study again shows that Deb and Kelly have a macro-sociological view when judging ESL students' literacy development. I suggest we can include judgment from a macro-sociological perspective in professional development projects. Three questions that we can learn from Alexander (2001, p. 373) and use to help literacy teachers and teacher educators to closely examine accountability of judgment include: "What form does the assessment take? Who does the assessing? [And] what judgmental criteria are used?"

Understanding literacy practices in the context of globalization

Deb and Kelly's experiences suggest that in the past ten years of their ESL teaching in RCES and other elementary schools, they have witnessed social changes such as proliferation and diversification of the composition of ESL student population, and considerable fluidity and uneven demographics among ESL students in different regions. Although emphasizing the overwhelming impacts of ESL and literacy policies on their instructional practices, they also point out the issue of "how the [educational] systems gave ways to the social changes" (Kjaer, 2004, p.13). As suggested by Deb and Kelly, globalization is the root of all these social changes that bring new dynamics and challenges to the design and enactment of their literacy practices.

Deb and Kelly's reflections on the impacts of globalization on literacy instruction fit the literature of education and globalization. For example, from a macro-sociological perspective, Stromquist and Monkman (2000, p. 4) argue that globalization enforces "dissemination of democratic norms," "privatization of industrial production" and "high respect for industry and technology." These changes radically affect people's attitudes toward knowledge and education. They have further pointed out that globalization brings about both changes and challenges to old learning models, and that new learning and economic models attracted more "knowledge seeker[s]" (p. 11) to pursue their own personal good, while ignoring the public good, in a continuously-speeding-up knowledge cycle. Even worse, the state, under the force of globalization, began caring more about the coherence of the market and production than citizens' welfare or stark social inequalities. Accordingly, as a main source for helping students to realize their "economic well-being and competitiveness," educational systems have responded to these changes by shifting their focus from child-centered curricula to economy-centered vocational training, by directing the goal of formal schooling from serving the public good to chasing marketable commodities.

While admitting the importance of economic prosperity and technological innovation, researchers of international education also show their worries about the diminishing democratic spirit in education. As Deb and Kelly have described in Chapters Three and Four, due to globalization, more and more ESL students from a wider range of countries have come to study in RCES for different reasons. They and their parents hold diverse expectations on literacy learning in RCES. According to ESL students' parents, their children's literacy development should satisfy both Grade Level Standards and the particular literacy learning needs in each ESL student's motherland or local community.

Understanding literacy instruction in the context of globalization has the potential to contribute to teachers' insights on the complexity of diversity issues, possible mismatches

between traditional literacy practices and students' new urges for literacy learning, and further designs for responsive literacy practices. My study suggests that future studies regarding the influence of educational policy on literacy instruction should also consider social changes such as globalization that have not received adequate attention in educational policy thus far, and should investigate how might different professional development opportunities contribute to teachers' understanding of student diversity in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Examining teacher accountability in education governance

In my study, I find Deb and Kelly's accountability has been overemphasized at the instructional level but neglected at the institutional and policy levels. For example, ESL students in RCES have multiple resources that they can rely on to develop their language and literacy learning. The school provides them with libraries, computer laboratories, literacy consultants, and parallel teachers. In terms of resources, students seemingly have adequate opportunities and means to realize literacy development. However, in almost all these areas, professional groups and support staff including administrators, parallel teachers and parent teachers surround ESL students. Through three practical tools such as routine, rule and ritual (Alexander, 2001), Deb and Kelly also play dominant roles (or serve as head authority) in the governance of ESL classes as well as during the process of guiding ESL students to seek additional assistance with literacy development. As described in Chapter Five, routine is the governance that Deb and Kelly have enforced through habits in class. Once routine has been established, Deb and Kelly further the governance of ESL class by granting routine with explicit direction, which then become classroom rules. Students are expected (or required) to obey the rules. If they do not meet the expectations (or requirements), students will be punished. Ritual is the continuum of rule, and it stands for "a prescribed and established ceremony" (Alexander, 2001, p. 381). Eventually, as in the example of the Morning Culture

Ceremonies discussed in Chapter Four, rituals result in new routines in the classroom. This practice suggests an important question worthy of further inquiry. Will this kind of structure lead to the development of an inclusive and responsive learning environment? Indeed, in an inclusive learning community, ESL students are supposed to play more active, proactive, and participatory roles during the process of learning.

Furthermore, I find Deb and Kelly's teacher accountability has been challenged and even neglected by educational policy at the institutional level. For example, Kelly, in Chapter Five, suggested that she is forbidden to share their religious beliefs in ESL class. I can see in Kelly's account that her accountability has been constrained by her contract (or the responsibilities spelled out in policy). In addition, Deb and Kelly prefer to use traditional methods to develop teaching activities; they take Grade Level Standards with the highest priority, and try to help ESL students meet these with literacy requirements. However, American public schools nowadays are faced with rapidly changing student populations. Teachers are expected to take more active roles to provide equal and dialogic learning opportunities for all students rather than reproduce the old type of learning community. Unfortunately, related ESL and literacy policy prescribed Deb and Kelly's responsibilities. This constraint blinds researchers' and policymakers' attention to teachers' accountability in the process of educational governance, and sometimes stops teachers from exploring the complexity of diversity issues in multicultural classes. The neglect of teachers' voices also undermines the democratic accountability of governance (or effectiveness of educational reforms). Therefore, further research is needed to investigate how to help teachers become more active in policymaking, and to develop stronger voices in governance (and/or reform).

Developing teacher identity in a multicultural setting

Educators generally agree on the pivotal roles of teacher identity in learning to teach (Barton & Tan, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Richardson, 1996). The case of Deb and Kelly

also demonstrates that how they understand their professional identity as ESL teachers determines their learning to teach students with diverse backgrounds. For example, Deb and Kelly firmly believe that being open-minded, caring, and proactive in communication and interaction with other people in a multicultural context is a precondition for building a safe, inclusive learning community, which is linked directly with the effectiveness of student learning and central to developing strong relationships with ESL students. In Chapter Five, I reported that Deb emphasized the importance of valuing "ESL students' ownership of literacy." Being able to do this helped both teachers gain a sustained advantage of exploring ESL students' literacy learning needs and preferences, and facilitating students' emotional and academic development. Obviously, neither teacher considers herself as the only authority in literacy instruction. Both of them have been dedicated to establishing a "dialogic discourse" (Britzman, 1991, p.223) with other people, from which more opportunities for them to learn and explore diversity issues spring.

In addition, Deb and Kelly willingly learned from ESL students and their parents and mainstream teachers as a way to ensure deeper understanding of diversity issues and its complexity. It also shows, as I argued in Chapter 1, how their construction of professional development is not a static but dynamic process (Knowels, 1992). As reported in Chapters 3 and 5, they understand their responsibilities to help other people in the context, including ESL students and their American peers, mainstream teachers and parents, to develop multicultural awareness. Their attempts to involving these people in ESL literacy practices further demonstrates their strong desire and commitment to building an inclusive learning community at classroom, institutional and communal levels. For example, as described in Chapter Five, Deb and Kelly required ESL students to read their writing to ten audiences as part of their writing project. This activity, on the one hand, encouraged ESL students to build relationships with other people in the community. On the other hand, it offered an additional

channel for mainstream teachers and ESL student parents to keep updated with ESL students' literacy learning progress. All these examples show promise that developing a discourse identity in a multicultural setting prepares teachers for the complexity of diversity issues, the establishment of an inclusive learning community, and the responsiveness of literacy instruction. Clearly, relationships with others and their actions in building this kind of relationship in the context, which is labeled as discourse identity by Gee (2000), is important for Deb and Kelly to develop their self-image as teachers. Based on my study, I suggest we should take initiatives to foster more interaction and collaboration between ESL teachers and other people in the context.

Richardson (1996) suggests that the intervention of a teacher education (or professional development) program is relatively weak in helping teachers to develop professional identity because teachers' beliefs about teaching arise from their life history and student teaching. However, the case of Deb and Kelly shows their urgent needs of intervention in identity construction. For example, Kelly, in Chapters 4 and 5, expresses her frustration that she is not allowed to share her religious beliefs when teaching students about Christmas. Deb described, in Chapter 3, that they need a "more detailed, prescriptive" ESL curriculum to guide to what extent they can share American culture. Through these examples, I have noticed Deb and Kelly's struggles with "institutional identity" (Gee, 2002, p. 103). What I see makes me think it is necessary for future research and professional development programs to address the question about how ESL teachers understand the diversity that they bring to multicultural classrooms. In other words, how might teachers address themselves as part of classroom, school, and community diversity? How might different professional development opportunities contribute to teachers' understanding of diversity and possible ways to teach *for* diversity?

Final Thoughts: Teaching Literacy for Diversity

Confronting conventions of literacy education

To conduct effective literacy instruction in a multicultural setting, teachers need to take initiatives to challenge longstanding conventions and beliefs about literacy education and existing literacy practices for ESL students with diverse backgrounds. Although most pedagogical assumptions of literacy do not consciously or intentionally ignore diversity issues, nevertheless these issues are ignored. They are deeply embedded in the hidden curriculum (Synder, 1973). While these assumptions and practices have been demonstrated to be effective for mainstream American students regarding their literacy achievement, they can be powerful obstacles to developing a more effective, responsive, collaborative and democratic learning community for all students, especially underachieving ESL students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. What I saw in Deb and Kelly's literacy practices in their ESL classroom makes me think that the speculations based on these two cases would require further inquiry to verify: In what ways and to what extent should in-service teachers deconstruct and transform longstanding conventions of literacy education such as over-generalizing diversity issues in multicultural educational settings, simplifying cross-cultural and culture-oriented literacies and standardizing literacy assessment? These conventions of literacy pedagogy have to be recognized before we can remove the obstacles and move towards more responsive literacy instruction.

While diversity issues are complicated and responsive literacy instruction is desirable in multicultural classes, teachers do not have to wait for best practices to be prescribed for them before exploring diversity issues in their own class. Starting from research-based literacy practices and then adapting them to meet particular needs within a given classroom is very important. Deb and Kelly's descriptions, suggestions and practices of responsive literacy instruction described throughout this dissertation have been developed with their deeper

understanding of the complexity of diversity issues in their ESL classes. An important question is whether and how people from larger communities, including classroom teachers, school administrators and ESL students' parents, take initiatives and collaborate with ESL teachers to recognize ESL students' diversity and its influence on their literacy performance. This is especially important because literacy development happens in both ESL and mainstream classes, in school and at home. These initiatives may encourage all stakeholders to share their knowledge of student diversity and produce a more comprehensive picture of diversity among ESL students. For example, ESL students' parents may share and explain their children's pedagogical experiences of literacy that impact ESL students' literacy learning in the American context but do not show up in standardized test scores or other enrollment information-gathering forms. This may happen because previous research on teaching literacy to ESL students have focused on students' culture-oriented backgrounds while paying less attention to cross-cultural experiences and individual variability. This is a ripe area for future research.

Deb and Kelly's nuanced descriptions of diversity issues and responsive literacy practices demonstrate their tolerance, respect and close attention to student diversity in their ESL classes. Across the vignettes I also see how Deb and Kelly attend to the complex nature of student diversity and how they understand literacy instruction in a set of social spaces: school, home, neighborhood and global contexts. When teaching literacy, they offer ESL students opportunities to share what they have learned in these spaces. For example, they ask what language(s) they have learned in their motherland, what literacy skills they have developed in previous educational settings and need to further develop in the current one, or what aspects of literacy they want to strengthen in America, thereby broadening the criteria by which one can engage deeply in literacy. However, some of the new literacy skills that ESL students have developed in American schools are not evaluated in standardized tests and

are not considered as literacy achievements. Besides analyzing these social spaces to understand the complex diversity ESL students bring to school, Deb and Kelly include these spaces as necessary standards to assess students' literacy performances. The case of ESL students from China is a good example of how multiple social spaces have complicated ESL students' literacy achievement and evaluation of their literacy development. In school, teachers have strived to help ESL students develop basic literacy skills to satisfy Grade Level Standards while at home they have to use these skills to construct meanings that meet the expectations and requirements of the Chinese community. Therefore, culturally responsive pedagogies would recognize that zones of proximal language and literacy development are dynamic and diverse. We should recognize ESL students' ZPD of language and literacy as heterogeneous, as situation-specific (dependent on subject matter, audience, timing, etc.), and as changing, which is growing and diminishing even when they learn the same topic. Simply assessing ESL students' literacy performance in school may not predict their literacy achievement in other literacy communities. Besides the constraints on interpreting ESL students' achievement, standardized literacy assessments may also prevent teachers from noticing and appreciating the diverse genres of literacy that ESL students bring to school. The state in which this study took place has now adopted the new Common Core State Standards along with 47 other states as the next set of standards for holding teachers accountable. They are also to be studied and examined for whether they support or hinder ESL students' literacy development.

Progressing toward teaching for diversity

To progress towards teaching for diversity, we should keep it in mind that cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. Geertz (1973, p. 350) has suggested that culture is "the development of a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of thought, a universal grammar of the intellect." According to Geertz, culture can be generalized within boundaries,

and people in the same setting share similar ideologies. However, the more deeply we examine culture, the less complete it is. The intrinsic incompleteness of cultural analysis suggests that even within the same culture, diversity exits. Diversity issues are unavoidable both within and across cultures. In other words, even in a regular class full of students from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds, diversity is the norm. Accordingly, in a multicultural classroom, three broad types of diversity exist: within a given culture, across cultures and in individual differences. Therefore, teaching for diversity is not only a democratic call that aims to provide an equal learning opportunity for all students but also the reality that should be given more attention.

There is no doubt that unpacking the complexity of diversity issues is the first step to teaching for diversity. According to the argument above, teachers may fail to unpack the complexity of diversity issues in class if they did not take the learners' expectations, the teaching context, and students' social development into consideration. Then, what does unpacking the complexity of diversity issues in class mean to teachers? In my understanding, it does not mean that teachers are pushed to take on more burdens, responsibilities, and frustrations by themselves. On the contrary, what I have seen in Deb and Kelly's literacy practices is that unpacking the complexity of diversity issues in class provides opportunities for teachers to re-think their role as teachers, and recognize that they are not "experts" about everything (Britzman, 1991, p.227). Repositioning themselves in class would be helpful in avoiding over-generalizing or simplifying diversity issues, and to see "what reality is really like" (Gee, 2008, p. 5) in a multicultural setting. They are learners of the diversity that students bring into the class, explorers of the multicultural and multilingual teaching environment, as well as novices in newly emergent social events. It means teachers should not isolate themselves, but should take initiatives to interact and work collaboratively with and learn from other knowledge sources, including mainstream teachers who share

information concerning ESL students' performances in a regular class, ESL students who come to class with diverse but unique language and literacy skills, and parents who are willing to contribute to teachers' better understandings of students' literacy experience.

Another important part of progress towards teaching for diversity is to help teachers break the constraints of their own ideologies. I suggest that teachers should hold a linguistic view as a moral base to understand ESL students' literacy performances. According to Gee (1990, p. 21), linguistics matters in "explicating our tacit and removed/deferred ideologies." It is quite common for people to judge others' behaviors based on their own "primary generalization" (p. 17) while failing to seriously reflect on multiple viewpoints. It is the main reason why "overt and covert messages that devalue the culture, heritage, and identity of minority students" prevail in American schools (Huffman, 2001, pp. 25). Therefore, studying Deb and Kelly's practice has helped me see that it is important for teachers to be alert to the constraints of their own ideology by employing a linguistic framework to see what reality is really like when confronting others' different behaviors.

When applying linguistics as a moral basis for analyzing diversity issues, teachers may demonstrate more understanding of and respect for students' differences. However, it is still dangerous to analyze the students' behavior on such a structured basis. We can see in Deb and Kelly's ESL classes that students from particular ethnic groups need different assistance with literacy development, although most of them have difficulties in literacy learning. For example, some ESL students from Sudan are fluent in daily conversation but fail to perform well in academic English; some students from Japan do well in academic writing, though they seldom communicate easily with teachers and their peers because of their lack of cultural knowledge of communicating or interacting with others. It is quite possible that using a linguistic approach as a moral basis for diagnosing diversity issues in school may mislead the teachers to another extreme – ascribing students' different behaviors

(especially inappropriate behaviors) and learning deficiencies to a single cause while neglecting each student's differences in cultural backgrounds and individual ability as well as his or her special needs. Using a linguistic approach as moral basis to understand and respond to student diversity may result in teachers' forming standardized judgments of students' behaviors and performances. In my opinion, ESL students are not proficient in Standard English, not because they are incapable of learning it or their first language(s) is inferior to English, but because they have not been sufficiently exposed to Standard English and the necessary literacy skills needed in an American context. Therefore, progressing towards teaching for diversity is a must for teachers to deepen understanding of diversity issues and to identify students' real learning needs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

First Interview

Background

1. Where did you go to college? Major? What are your endorsements?
2. Briefly summarize your prior teaching positions, over the past ten years?
3. How long have you been teaching at this school?
4. How long have you held this current position?
5. Why did you decide to go into ESL teaching? What do you enjoy about teaching ESL? Not enjoy?
6. What are you strengths as an ESL teacher? Areas you'd like to improve upon, if any?

- *ESL Teaching Context*

7. Describe ESL program structure and ELL population in this school.
8. How do you see your roles/responsibilities as an ESL teacher in the school?
9. What teaching tools, materials or resources in the school or local communities do you usually use while teaching ESL?
10. What other contextual factors that you will take into account while designing and conducting ESL practices in this school?

- *ESL Curriculum*

(How do ESL teachers understand ESL literacy curriculum in their district and what is expected of them?)

1. What policies, curriculum or other artifacts are available guiding your literacy instruction in ESL classrooms?
2. What are the objectives/goals of the ESL education in your school district?
3. What educational experiences does ESL curriculum suggest you to provide for ELLs?

4. How does ESL curriculum suggest you to assess ELLs' literacy learning?
5. How does ESL curriculum address the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity?
6. What are the successes and weaknesses of current ESL curriculum according to your implementation experiences (in terms of educational goals, experiences and assessment)?

Professional Development

(What formal, informal and other preparation have the teachers had to teach ESL students?)

1. What experiences did you gain from teacher education program, other jobs or volunteer work, to help you grow as an ESL teacher?
2. What experiences did you gain from teacher education program, other jobs or volunteer work, to teach ELLs literacy, especially those came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?
3. Describe any formal and informal professional development activities you have attended addressing minority student needs.
4. List specific teaching skills/strategies/techniques that you gained from those formal and informal professional development programs, and how those strategies helped you to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.
5. What do you read to stay current in your field? Why do you choose those materials?

APPENDIX B

Second Interview

- English Language Learners

  (What do they notice and try to learn about their students?)

  1. What is your prior personal and professional experience with linguistic and cultural diversity students?
  2. Describe the changes in the student population during your tenure in the district. Have these changes affected your ESL instruction? If so, how?
  3. Please describe what and how you would learn about a student when a new ELL enrolled in your school/class.
  4. Describe how ELLs display positive/negative behaviors and attitudes in your class. Do these behaviors/attitudes differ from mainstream White American students? If so, please explain.
  5. Do you feel ELLs have different literacy learning strengths/weaknesses? Please explain.
  6. How would you identify ELLs' special learning needs?
  7. How would you accommodate ELLs' special learning needs in your design of a literacy class?

- Teaching Responsibilities

  (What do they think their responsibilities are when they teach literacy?)

  1. What qualities make up a good ESL teacher? Among those qualities, what are the most important ones in terms of literacy instruction?
  2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as an ESL teacher?
  3. What do you think your responsibilities are when facing different learning needs and styles of ELLs from diverse backgrounds?

4. What allows your responsibilities of teaching literacy to ELLs to be implemented?
5. What prevents your responsibilities from being implemented?
6. Complete the metaphor "teaching literacy to culturally and linguistic diverse students is…"

- Literacy lesson Design

  (How do they plan for teaching of literacy to their students?)

1. Please describe the general process of designing a literacy plan for ELLs.
2. What resources/materials would you rely on to design literacy lesson plan?
3. How do you choose content, children's literature, and classroom activities when designing the lesson plan?
4. What other key factors would you consider when designing a literacy lesson?
5. If you could design the ideal literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse ELLs what would it look like? Why is it good?
6. What are the differences and similarities in designing a literacy lesson for culturally and linguistically diverse ELLs, for monolingual ELLs, and for mainstream American students (optional) ?
7. Complete the metaphor "designing literacy lessons for culturally and linguistically diverse ELLs is…"

APPENDIX C

Third Interview

Literacy instruction strategies

(What teaching strategies do ESL teachers adopt and why?)

1. Describe how you think literacy instruction in ESL class should be. How does it differ from mainstream literacy class?
2. What are your strategies for teaching reading?
3. Describe strategies you usually adopt to teach listening and speaking in ESL class.
4. Describe strategies you usually adopt to teach writing in ESL class?
5. Describe strategies you usually adopt to assess ELLs' literacy performance.
6. Describe teaching events of reading, listening, speaking and writing you found challenging. What made them challenging?
7. What activities do you usually use in literacy instruction (or in teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening)?
8. Do you believe culturally responsive teaching? If so, please describe what culturally responsive teaching is, and how to enact culturally responsive literacy teaching.
9. How do you handle cultural diversity during literacy instruction?
10. How do you handle culture conflicts among ELLs or between ELLs and students?

Materials and resources

(What materials and resources do they use and why?)

1. What textbooks and other materials do you use for literacy instruction (i.e. literature, speaking, listening, phonetic awareness, and writing)?
2. Why and how do you choose those materials?
3. How do those materials help you address the issue of ELLs' culturally and linguistically diversity?

4. How do you include culturally relevant materials for literacy instruction (i.e. literature, speaking, phonetic awareness, and writing)?
5. How do you use those materials and resources to teach literacy?
6. What technologies do you use in the classroom? Any other materials would you like to talk about?

Classroom routines

(What routines are used in the classroom to support literacy learning?)

1. Describe the routine of a typical literacy class. How was it arranged and how did the arrangement help you to teach?
2. What are key factors influencing the routine of literacy instruction in ESL classroom?
3. When setting up classroom routines, did you take ELLs' cultural and linguistic diversity into consideration? If so/not, explain.

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