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An English Learner as a Cultural Broker for Youth Interviews

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Abstract

In the field of student voice, listening is a notion that is made more complex when related to student participation and agency. To listen to who English learners are requires a reframing of these students against the deficit discourse that is often used to describe their linguistic competencies. Discourse analysis is employed to examine the translanguaging experiences of an adolescent English learner who assisted the researcher in interviews with his peers. This empirical piece asks the question of what researchers can learn when employing the use of students as brokers when conducting interviews. Translanguaging is considered an element of cultural brokering in this piece and emphasized as a method for engaging student voice in educational research.

Keywords

Discourse Analysis, Student Voice, Cultural Broker, Interviews, Translanguaging, English Learner, Listening

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An English Learner as a Cultural Broker for Youth Interviews

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In the field of student voice, listening is a notion that is made more complex when related to student participation and agency. To listen to who English learners are requires a reframing of these students against the deficit discourse that is often used to describe their linguistic competencies. Discourse analysis is employed to examine the translanguaging experiences of an adolescent English learner who assisted the researcher in interviews with his peers. This empirical piece asks the question of what researchers can learn when employing the use of students as brokers when conducting interviews. Translanguaging is considered an element of cultural brokering in this piece and emphasized as a method for engaging student voice in educational research. Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Student Voice, Cultural Broker, Interviews, Translanguaging, English Learner, Listening

Learning from student voices...requires major shifts on the part of teachers, students, and researchers in relationships and in ways of thinking and feeling about the issues of knowledge, language, power, and self. (Oldfather, 1995, p. 87)

In examining the term *student voice*, Cook-Sather (2002) described the implications for *listening* and what that might look like when engaging young people's voices. Cook-Sather noted the ubiquity with which it is used in the field of student voice highlighting listening via student participation, agency, and ownership. She also noted how the act of listening could inform a researcher's method for conducting qualitative research. This notion of *listening* to the linguistic ability of an English learner is of particular interest here, and to what can happen when student voice is amplified during interviews, particularly in multilingual classroom settings where differences between children's home and language are sometimes pinpointed as detrimental to student learning (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006). An *English-is-all-that-matters* approach can promote a deficit discourse blinding administrators, teachers, and school personnel to really hearing the linguistic abilities that multilingual learners bring into the classroom (Mitchell, 2012; Shapiro, 2014) or for students from getting heard through transformative practices (Fielding, 2004). Thus, the act of listening can play a nuanced role in shaping how school frames English learners.

Listening can also impact the interviewing process, the topic of the following empirical report, which focused on the cultural brokering of one young adolescent English learner during the research interviews I conducted with his multilingual classmates. Due to a personal interest in interviewing, Hassan (pseudonym) engaged in a type of peer brokering that helped to amplify the voices of the youth interviewees. He said:

To be honest I watch a lot of interviews on YouTube. I like technology. I watch a lot of stuff like that because I like learning about a lot of stuff, modern stuff, how to do it. (Hassan, personal correspondence)

Peer brokering is similar to cultural brokering, which is a practice specific to immigrant communities and has been defined as "bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or

persons to effect change” (Jezewski, 1990, p. 497). Cultural brokering is seen as more than a linguistic practice as “brokers mediate, rather than merely transmit, information” (Malsbary, 2014, p. 1315). As such, cultural brokering is used to foster belonging as well as resist reductive spaces in a classroom community (Malsbary, 2014). Cultural brokering can also be considered as communication that “takes action in the world” (Orellana, 2009, p. 26) as opposed to adults who prefer to push forward certain ideas and concepts. This action in the world represents the agency of children to see the world through their lenses. Using this broad definition to describe the kind of brokering that a young adolescent English learner used in an interview is the focus of this report.

The original qualitative case study on digital storytelling that I conducted with young adolescent English learners over 8 months in one middle grades classroom did not originally include a youth participatory component, such as YPAR (Youth Participation Action Research). YPAR is a research method that employs student voice by including students in the development of the interview protocols or process (Mirra, 2016; Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015). However, upon using discourse analysis to examine the student interviews that I conducted to explore their digital storytelling projects, I noticed Hassan’s role during these interviews. In order to more deeply understand his peer brokering role, I posed the following questions: In using discourse analysis to re-listen to EL student interviews, what linguistic affordances did having a young adolescent cultural broker offer during the student interviews? In what ways, did Hassan enhance the interview responses of his multilingual peers? So much of my researcher interpretation was used to examine and evaluate student talk during the interviews, and this time I wanted to explore how having an English learner might enhance the student interviews. While these questions evolved from the broader original research question related to English learners and digital storytelling, I did not have to submit an additional ethics review. As such, this subset of questions centered on Hassan’s participation during the interviews with his peers. What follows is the conceptual framework I used to understand the theories related to student voice and the use of discourse analysis for examining how cultural brokering is used to enhance student identity during an interview.

Theories of Brokering Language and Expanding on Student Voice

Translanguaging and Cultural Brokering with Early Adolescents

Several scholars (Canagarajah, 2011; García, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Orellana & García, 2014) describe the critical implications that the term *translanguaging* has for theory and practice in multicultural and multilingual classroom settings. For García and Wei (2014), translanguaging is a dynamic process whereby multilingual users employ various linguistic competencies and draw upon the particular setting to mediate the different semiotic resources for understanding and communicating. Code-switching has been used to mostly illustrate the linguistic competencies that bilinguals use with varied sophistication to navigate their surroundings to construct understanding. However, language or cultural brokering has also been defined as a form of navigating language and connecting students with the community (Malsbary, 2014). A dearth of seminal research exists in the area of language brokering even though the phenomenon of children serving as translators and interpreters for their non-fluent parents and relatives has existed for many years (Morales & Hanson, 2005; Tse, 1996). Historically, language brokering was defined as interpretation and translation performed in everyday situations by bilinguals who had no special training (Tse, 1996). Child brokers from many different countries and languages were described as demonstrating many tasks related to language and literacy that required them to mediate language and to make decisions (Harris & Sherwood, 1978; McMillan & Tse, 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). According

to Antonini (2010), early studies recognized the increasingly important role of bilingual children who performed translating activities without any special training in translation and interpretation (Cambridge, 2002; Harris, 1980; Harris & Sherwood, 1978).

In contrast, there have also been studies describing the negative side of child language brokering particularly in psycholinguistic studies (Love & Buriel, 2007; MacSwan, 2017) that point to parent and child affinity. Children who serve as the primary language brokers in their families acculturate to the community more quickly than their parents for whom they broker creating intergenerational tension. Child language brokers also feel the undue stress and anxiety from brokering difficult situations that they are unprepared for such as a hospital setting and discussing a parent's illness (Martinez, McClure, & Eddy, 2009). Looking for an approach that addresses both the psychological dimension of cultural brokering and parent child affinity (Ekiaka-Oblazamengo, Medina-Jimenez, & Ekiaka Nzai, 2014) may help to overcome the many benefits that center on the child as language and cultural broker.

Orellana's work explored the particular nature of childhood and considered how the presence of a child's eye could further enhance the work of adults (2003; 2009; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003). She established the social construction of childhood to further distinguish between the work of adult and child language brokers. Recognizing that there could be other terms to describe the work of child translators, such as *language brokering* or *family interpreting*, Orellana coined the "word *para-phrasing* by using the Spanish word *para* to emphasize how translation work is used *for* real purposes and *in order to* accomplish social goals" (2009, p. 26). Furthermore, Orellana marked the prefix *para* to represent the imbalance of power between what child translators do and what is perceived as professional or legitimate work thus emphasizing the tension of viewing children's work as a valid contribution to society.

Although some view language and cultural brokering with caution as a practice for children, there are also benefits because of the recognition students may receive for their linguistic talents. Brokering also fosters an element of belonging in school that many new students crave (Malsbary, 2014). In the classroom, these communicative and linguistic skills serve to leverage the identity of child language brokers (Coyoca & Sook Lee, 2009; Griffith, Silva, & Weinburgh, 2014; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2003), because their teachers and other school personnel seek out their expertise for mentoring peers and interpreting for others.

Student Voice in Educational Research and Reform

The field of student voice lends a useful framework for examining the dynamic of multilingual speakers in an interview process. Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) there has been an international, increased attention to including student perspective in a wide range of matters pertaining to schooling and education from student voice in higher education (Bergmark & Westman, 2015; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Seale, 2015) to student consultation (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Kane & Maw, 2005) and youth civic engagement (Angell, 2004; Mitra, Serrierre, & Kirshner, 2014). However, in any relationship or work context in which adults seek the advice of student voice the voices of the less powerful are prone to becoming appropriated (Fielding, 2004). According to Fielding (2004), adults would consult students for their viewpoints and opinions, but they would ultimately misinterpret, or worse, would misappropriate students' words. The very languages researchers used to represent their participants were value-laden, therefore no descriptive discourse could ever be value-free. Instead, Fielding suggested a dialogic model of student voice that involved co-constructing and co-interpreting data fostering a reciprocity that benefitted both student and researcher/teacher.

Drawing on the critique of student voice as monolithic and devoid of the social and cultural dynamics within which it is practiced, Arnot and Reay (2007) examined the nuance of student talk discourse. They argued that the key to analyzing the influence of student talk on education and reform “is not that voice cannot change power relations, but that shifts in power relation can change the voices” (p. 316). Student voice was necessarily influenced by the social, historical, and political settings in which they occurred. They further argue the need to explore how student talk is drawn into the classroom from the outside and how it is recontextualized and used in varied ways inside the school. Classroom discourse (Fairclough, 2014; Foucault, 1982) is often constitutive of power dynamics that exist between adults and students suggesting that student talk can sometimes be constrained by adult discursive practices as well as mediated by them. From an outsider lens, this power discourse on language is obscured through the rules, regulations, standards, and policies that are normalized and institutionalized in the school. Without acknowledging the influence that school institutions and practices have on the lives of students and teachers, researchers are unable to give a deeper account of their research participants (Fielding, 2004), and worse, may leave it to the researcher’s own interpretation. Since, according to Fielding, descriptive discourse can never be value-free, interpretation and representation are important factors for the researcher to consider especially when examining the situated social and historical contexts in which their student participants study and experience school.

A clear conception of what student voice could look like to redress the constellation of power relationships that exists inside and outside of schools is Cook-Sather’s (2002) concept on authorizing student voice. For example, Cook-Sather noted how constructivist teachers would “position students as active creators of their knowledge rather than recipients of others’ knowledge” (2002, p. 5). Cook-Sather noted the range of student perspectives that educational researchers drew upon within the larger policies and practices of school life, making more transparent the tensions and conflicts that emerge as student perspective re-informed such conversations in these examples.

Mitra’s (2001) work also examined the challenge of researcher perspective getting in the way of deeper understanding of student voice and investigated more authentic research methods that had policy implications for youth in the US. Fostering partnerships between adults and youth within a youth participatory action research (YPAR) invited young people to investigate their own lives using research as a tool for informed action (Mitra, Serriere, & Kirshner, 2014). This informed action became the key goal particularly for youth groups whose experiences had been marginalized in educational research. The following section describes the methodological framework for exploring student voice.

Methodology

Background Information: Listening as Entry to an English Learner Classroom

In this study I examined the cultural brokering experiences of one English learner (EL) student using discourse analysis (Gee, 2012; Wortham & Reyes, 2015). I focused on the interviews that Hassan and I conducted with his classmates, and I employed discourse analysis to understand how Hassan’s cultural brokering enhanced those interviews. These student interviews were part of a qualitative multi-case, 2-year longitudinal research study (Reyes, 2012; Reyes & Clark, 2013) on the digital storytelling benefits for young adolescent English learners in a Northeastern state of the US. The interviews took place in a grades 6-8 ESL classroom consisting of 14 English learners who were working on their digital story projects. Data included videotaped interviews of 6 participants including Hassan, 10 hours of videotaped observations in the EL classroom, two additional interviews with Hassan to analyze the

interview data, and interviews with the two EL teachers. This empirical piece reports on the interviews of two student participants, the two EL teachers, Hassan, and classroom observations. The interviews that Hassan and I conducted took place in a tiny office space in back of the EL classroom.

The *re-listening* to student data I had identified from the larger study represented the methodological dilemma that Fielding (2004) described as the voicing for others when doing research with students. While going over the data the more I reflected on Hassan's role during the interviews in relation to my role as researcher, the more I wanted to examine more deeply what Fielding described as the *dialogic encounter* or new opportunities for bridging these discursive sites. Fielding describes the role of those being researched to becoming agents of their own knowledge. They become "the agents of their own transformation: the silenced in becoming producers, analysts, and presenters of their own narratives, case to be the objects of their histories and knowledge" (p. 306). Listening led to understanding of how a co-constructed interview could lead to student voice.

I also used the theme of listening as a lens to emphasize the macro, or broader social and cultural implications on language and English language learning, the milieu in which my participants shared their narratives. I wanted to explore how power shifts could influence student talk (Arnot & Reay, 2007). The way that I arrived at this understanding originated from my interviews with Hassan's teachers, Ms. Sarah and Mr. Mack, whose emphasis on the role of listening in an EL class prompted me to further explore what that meant. Most notable was their view of discursive practices such as the digital storytelling as a tool for providing a mechanism for listening and reaffirming who their students were and fostering an environment in which English learners could belong and establish their own agency on their own terms. The EL students whom I interviewed also reflected this view although their responses were less elaborate or nuanced, but it was clear they enjoyed using the tool because they experienced more freedom in choosing how they wanted to express themselves. These teachers' comments were based on a belief that EL students needed a particular pedagogy that could draw upon strengths they otherwise were prohibited from exhibiting in their content area classes where English was the higher status language. It also suggested that students were afforded fewer opportunities to support their learning in the regular classroom. This belief came from teacher understanding that not having these alternative modes were issues of equity for their students (Paris & Winn, 2013). For example, Ms. Sarah described how digital storytelling offered her students a more liberating way to learn new concepts from a more traditional approach, which seemed to overwhelm them. She said:

I definitely saw many things that I had envisioned for the students . . . an alternative form of sharing [their] knowledge and at school they are definitely consumed with content classes and passing, and the EL classroom is a small group but the reality of their every day is that they're in a larger class and their peers are there and they are in the process of wanting to fit in. That's on their minds heavily so the content classes, succeeding in a discussion in science class, and things like that requires [English] reading and the ability to do that independently, and so the digital story was a chance to have them experience concepts differently.

Mr. Mack pointed out how certain expectations were out of touch with the realities of his student's language competencies, and how this was challenging for students who yearned for academic success. For example, content area standards were used to assess student learning, but there was no transition for English learners who were still learning the language. He said:

The problem is that when the LA teacher teaches narrative they use the benchmark exemplars of grade level narratives and that's hardly fair for ELs who are just emergent writers of English.

Mr. Mack also shared his students' concerns as they perceived inequity in the way that resources were distributed in the school and their eagerness to point this out to him. According to Mr. Mack, students generally perceived themselves as receiving little attention, further perpetuating the stigma associated to an EL class.

We have the least updated computers in the building, so the kids know that, too. I think it's because we're always last on the list. The kids take it personally. At least, this room is better than when we were upstairs in rooms without windows. They just think that we should be having the same things as other people have because they see it as equal. They're very proactive sometimes they jump the gun and they interpret things.

I highlight these teachers' comments, because they were deeply affected by the strengths that they saw in their students, but also recognizing that these strengths were not always given the same recognition outside of the EL classroom. As such, the difference they perceived related to a lack of equity for their students especially when it came to communication. These comments also underscored a larger, more critical view of difference, particularly the cultural and linguistic mismatch between families and schools (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006) that often described the language experiences of English learners. According to Gutiérrez and Orellana, the "naming of differences as deficits continue to reinscribe deficit portraits of non-dominant homes and families" (p. 506). Although they cite a valuable need for studying ethnic group differences, framing non-dominant English speakers can be problematic especially when research and practices result in discourse that perpetuates framing of these learners. Understanding what listening to students meant in this classroom added a layer of complexity to their pedagogy especially for emerging learners of English.

Researcher Positionality

Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) noted the tension that researchers often experienced as they sought to describe how students learned. They said

Though ethnographic research may attempt to beautifully reflect the tribulations of kids in school, these, too, speak from a positionality that—in terms of how they are viewed within a positivistic academic paradigm—puts them above and isolated from their participants. (p. 77)

These words bring to the forefront my deepest concerns about conducting research in a classroom with multicultural and multilingual youth.

As a child of immigrant parents for whom language learning seemed to be eclipsed by loss (having to go to a US school meant having to give up my parent's language) I have now come to understand that going to school need not represent giving up one's culture, family traditions, and language. Although I would not assume that my current participants held similar views about competing languages in the same way that I did, I was able to use my years as a bilingual teacher of Spanish and English, as well as my own childhood experiences of having gone through the US school system to understand the significance of belonging and the deep interconnectedness language has with identity when finding acceptance and recognition with

others. As a woman of color in higher education whose work aims to elucidate the educational experiences of immigrant students but whose own academic training continually wrestles with the research tensions of representation and appropriation, I have found inclusive theoretical models for listening and learning that ameliorate the barriers to doing this type of scholarship. Scholars of color (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Behar, 1993; Kondo, 1986; Mohanty, 2003; Ong, 1995) who have contributed to third world feminist theory on the ambiguities of claiming their own authority to represent the voices of others less powerful than they within their research studies have further added to my understanding of the methodological complexities of doing this work. Their willingness to take risks and to raise vulnerability to a level that enhances nuance in their sense-making of the data is engaged to counter deficit and positivistic stories of “the other.” Therefore, in examining my own role within the data analysis, I may examine more closely my assumptions as an adult researcher in a study that looks at student voice, which I describe in the following report.

Hassan the Cultural Broker

Hassan was in his last year of receiving EL services when I was conducting my study in his classroom. His scores in reading, writing, and speaking in English well exceeded the cut-off point for succeeding in the regular content area courses. As a result, he always finished his work early and he was left with ample time in the classroom, which, according to his teachers, was time he could spend more constructively. Hassan observed me carefully in the first few days when I set up my webcam to videotape the classroom. Soon he was asking me questions about what I was intending to do and whether I would be interviewing his classmates. When I answered in the affirmative, he quickly offered his help to videotape the interviews and described himself as “good and helpful at technology.” Hassan’s enthusiasm together with the recommendation of Ms. Sarah, his EL teacher, who was certain this project would be engaging for someone like Hassan prompted me to accept his help. At the time, I had no inkling of what this alteration in my research methods would lead to, but his eagerness to observe and learn from the interviews was persuasive.

Hassan wanted the experience of being a research assistant for this project, because he saw himself as a “helper.” Being helpful mattered to Hassan, and he enjoyed being helpful to his peers, as well as to adults. Being listened to and recognized by his peers also seemed important to Hassan, even if the attention was not always positive. Ms. Sarah shared that sometimes Hassan got into trouble with his closest friends usually when he was bored, and sometimes he would find a reason to antagonize a peer. She said:

Sometimes I tell him he will graduate from high school, and then he interjects (he likes to interject) (laughing) and sometimes he likes to instigate with other students and that can get him into trouble if another student doesn’t like it or if he bickers back and forth with a student. He will get involved in a joking way and he has a loving heart but he has this side that likes to poke at people...that was one of the words he learned this year, why are you *instigating* and what does that mean? He would get on people’s nerves. I tell him, when you go to high school next year you be careful (laughing).

On the other hand, Hassan also had a “softer” side wanting to reaffirm other students and to help them with their English skills. Ms. Sarah attributed his strength in English to his motivation to learn English quickly and to his “wanting to be American.” She also pointed to the complexity of his personal history and the tensions related to being a young Iraqi and an American in the US.

In the beginning, Hassan helped to set up the webcam, sometimes carelessly, as he swung the tripod over his head while joking with his peers, or clumsily forcing the webcam into the knob of the tripod. After explaining to Hassan how researchers took care of their equipment and modeling how to set up the equipment, as well as how to view what I was filming from the laptop, Hassan took note and was more careful afterwards in setting up the equipment. As the study progressed, Hassan's role as research assistant organically developed into that of a peer broker as he became more confident and prompted his peers during the interview, and when needed, translated the interview questions for an Arabic-speaking student. Moreover, his translations and interpretations caused me, the researcher, to examine more closely how student voice could shape the doing of research itself as language was mediated and negotiated through Hassan, leading to a more nuanced concept of what it means to listen to the voices of students with multilingual experiences.

Using Discourse Analysis to Examine Student Voice in the Interview

To examine more in-depth the student voice that I perceived in my original study, I utilized micro-level discourse analysis (Bloome et al., 2010) to analyze the literacy events, which were represented by the interviews (i.e., texts). As such, I refer to *literacy event* as an activity in which literacy has a role, usually pertaining to a written text, or texts, essential to the activity and talk that is usually related to the text (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000). This approach highlighted both the face-to-face interactions between interviewer and interviewee and the contexts in which they occurred. According to Bloome and colleagues (2010), analysis of language and literacy events in the classroom pays attention to *implied personhood*, the constructing and reconstructing of personhood during interactions with others. "People in interaction with each other need to establish a working consensus for how they define each other and what characteristics they assign to each other merely through the recognition of being a 'person'" (p. 3). In concert with recognizing personhood is the focus on the literacy events themselves (e.g., social events). Bloome et al. defined social events as a "heuristic for making an inquiry into how people create meaning through how they act and react to each other" (p. 5). Thus, the language brokering events that Hassan and his peers engaged in were identified in the data and were examined for the nature of his interactions with peers and the meanings he made of the interviews. In the current study, those moments were represented in the peer brokering role that I perceived Hassan stepping into for the interviews. He influenced the interview process in such a way to enhance the literacy events that occurred.

The Cultural Broker: Analysis of Two Data Examples

Our co-constructed interviewing method resulted in two primary findings, specifically establishing an entry point for EL student voice and amplifying student expression in the interview. In this section I will examine Hassan's participation in two literacy events in which he helped to navigate the interviews with his peers from two different language groups: Swahili and Bhutanese. I describe Hassan's interview participation by highlighting his ability to draw out a classmate's voice in one interview and speaking for a peer in another. In response to the questions that this study examined, "In using discourse analysis to re-listen to EL student interviews, what linguistic affordances did having a young adolescent cultural broker offer during the student interviews? In what ways, did Hassan enhance the interviews of his multilingual peers?" The use of discourse analysis identified several ways that Hassan's participation provided complexity and perspective to the EL student interviews. The following transcripts "Creating an Entry Point" and "Amplifying Expression" serve to describe the intersection of peer brokering and student voice from a methodological perspective.

Creating an Entry Point for EL Student Voice

The following excerpt describes an interview that was conducted with Sefakor, an 8th grade student who arrived to the US in 2010 from the Republic of Congo. Similar to Hassan's story, Sefakor and her family fled from a civil war in her country to come to the US, and experienced displacement as they made their new home in the Northeast. Determined to overcome the hard circumstances they found themselves in, Sefakor and her family rebuilt a life focused on attaining personal security and education. She said, "they (her parents) came to America not just to look for their dream but for a safe place."

When I conducted the interview with Sefakor, I mostly asked her technical questions related to her digital movie. The more "educational-sounding" and contrived the questions sounded, the shorter and less elaborate her responses became, such as in the following example, "Yah, I like doing digital story." Throughout the interview, Hassan managed the videotaping and stood quietly behind the camera and tripod, until I asked him if he had questions for Sefakor. I had no idea what Hassan would ask, but I reminded myself that I had introduced him as my "camera person" and I had an intuition that he might be just as effective interacting in front of it as he was behind it based on his curiosity and engagement with the project. Creating an entry point for Hassan marked a sudden transition in the interview that I describe below. (The following transcript includes the following speakers: R= Researcher, S = Sefakor, H = Hassan)

Segment 1. Empowering a Student Ally to Amplify Student Voice in a School Interview

- 30 R: (turning to Hassan) How much time do we have [left?
 H: [Um it's just past 10 minutes.
 R: Oh, it's past 10 minutes that's ? okay. So, I think um, I don't have anything else for now but I'm probably going to ask you more questions later on when we start finishing your movie? ((exaggerated look at Sefakor))
- 40 S: Ok. ((Tilts her head to one side))
 R: [Ok?
 S: [Uh hmm.
 R: Do you have anything- is there anything else you would like to share?
 S: Uh, [no
- 45 R: [with me? about who you are?
 S: Uh- I? don't know. ((Tilts head side to side scrunching face and giggling))
 R: Well, you shared a lot of nice [things
 H: [Yeh
 R: ((Turning to Hassan)) Well did you have a question, Hassan?
- 50 H: ***Wait, do you remember anything, like, at least, like, when you said where you were from, like, something that you could remember, like maybe, going out to play in the grass or something?***
 S: [Yeh, I remember when my parents ((gazes out the office window)) arrived at Tanzania- I was born there but I was burn [sic] in ((2 unintelligible syllables)) it's part of Tanzania so, we moved to, like, Mukugwa I was like a baby, yah, and in Africa I didn't really [born] a I didn't really [born] at [hospital] and, I just [born] at home because ah people from Africa
- 55 thought twins there like they thought wrong about twins...

At the beginning of the transcript in line (30), I asked Hassan whether he was keeping a record of how long the interview had run. Since Hassan had informed me of his interest in camera

work, I wanted him to understand that I was hoping to limit the interview down to 20 minutes so we could fit 2 to 3 interviews within the allotted time that the teachers gave us for using their office. The interview protocol required flexibility as the teachers informed me of the range of speaking abilities in their students. According to Mr. Mack, although most of the students were in an intermediate English class there were a few who were recently new to the school and spoke little English. To accommodate this range, my interview questions followed a simple and straightforward protocol: prompt students to share their movie with me on the iPad, agree or disagree with what they liked most about the digital movie tool, and then have them describe what they liked most about their movies. Sefakor had a vibrant personality and liked to share about herself, which is why she was one of the first that her teachers recommended for the interview. However, the questions that I assumed to be the most familiar and straightforward seemed to be the most limiting and disengaging for my participants. Students in Ms. Sarah's class already had some experience with using the digital movie tool in their content area classes and Sefakor, in particular, was ahead of the group with her assignment mostly completed. When I asked her if she had anything more to say, she quickly responded with "uh, no" in line (44). However, when I asked her whether she wanted to share with me about *who she was* in line (45) she paused and seemed to reconsider the question as she responded, I don't know. Suddenly, this line of questioning was different from the earlier goal-oriented ones. In line (46), I told Sefakor she had shared a lot of nice things to say. When Hassan enthusiastically responded "Yeh" in line (47) in agreement, that moment marked an entry point for peer brokering to occur as I asked Hassan in line (48) whether he had any questions he wanted to ask Sefakor.

Prompting Hassan turned to be a notable move, since he asked Sefakor in line (49) a recall question probing her to reflect on something they had done in a previous classroom. He used the phrase "...when you said where you were from" to think specifically of the time when Ms. Sarah had asked Sefakor's class to write a "Where you are from" poem as a precursor to writing their digital movie story. His use of the phrase, when you said, indicated a classroom event that Hassan and Sefakor shared since I did not observe that particular class activity. Fielding (2004) described a plurality of voices as a nuanced way of doing student voice research. Hassan's voice within the interview, as well as shared experience with Sefakor helped me (the researcher) to gain more understanding about Sefakor, and to avoid redescribing (Fielding, 2004) her in ways that limit how readers might view her. Ms. Sarah had described the lesson to me later because it proved to be a success in motivating students to share their personal narratives. Hassan further probed Sefakor in line (51) to reflect on a time "when she played in the grass" causing her to respond excitedly when her utterance overlapped with Hassan's in line (52), and she said, "Yeh, I remember when my parents arrived at Tanzania." In a peer brokering move, Hassan's recall question and reference to the *Where I am From* poem enabled Sefakor to launch into a story about the time when she was born in Tanzania. From then on, she proceeded to tell a birth story of her twin sister and herself, and the disapproval of her neighbors who thought that twins represented bad luck or a bad omen. She later added more information about her parents and the dreams and goals they had for their children.

Reflecting back on Mitra's (2001) caution about researchers' agendas, the research purpose (i.e., questions about the digital story) of this particular study might have led to more academic understanding of Sefakor's learning, but it would not have gained a better understanding of her *personhood* (Bloome et al., 2010). Prompting Sefakor with questions about her academic experience with the digital storytelling movie tool may have brought the interview to a halt, but these questions, as information-based as they were, helped to focus the interview on Sefakor's digital movie and all of the classroom experiences related to the movie-making tasks. This focus together with Hassan's reference to her *Where you are from poem*

and their shared classroom experience enabled Sefakor to elaborate on her story as a young child.

This literacy event brings attention to the points of Fielding (2004) and Arnot and Reay (2007) who argued for more complexity when examining situations of speaking for and representing students. Findings from this transcription suggest that utilizing Hassan as peer broker provided an entry point for Sefakor to participate in a dialogic process. From a peer brokering perspective, Hassan's ability to relate to Sefakor and direct her to a question that she found more relevant was beneficial because it led me, the researcher, to more information about her. Orellana (2009) described children who translated for a social purpose rather than to explain concepts, an agenda adults had when they performed translation and thus necessitated a different type of listening. Hassan chose socially appropriate cues relevant to peers prompting Sefakor to share a more nuanced story about her family.

Amplifying Expression: Speaking for an Emergent Speaker of English

Fielding uses the term "radical collegiality" (1999) to describe how teachers/researchers and students might be perceived in order to re-envision any co-constructed dialogue. In the second example of peer brokering, Hassan engaged with a beginning speaker of English in the EL class. Rahul, a Nepali-speaking Bhutanese who had migrated from Nepal and had lived less than a year in the US. He was in the 7th grade and was extremely shy. However, impressed by Rahul's ability to learn the technology, Mr. Mack encouraged him to agree to an interview. Rahul was small in stature and slight, emphasized even more by his teacher's description of him as a quiet student but excited about technology. When he first entered the office for the interview, his facial expression was solemn and mostly focused on the iPad that he gripped in his hands and later placed on his lap. Although he agreed to the interview, we decided to first watch his movies before proceeding with the interview with the hope that he would become less nervous. As we watched in silence, Hassan began to play with the tripod and picked it up from the floor and tilting it toward the iPad that Rahul propped on his lap began to videotape the two short movies he was showing us. Rahul looked on with interest noting the precarious way in which Hassan was holding the camera.

In this particular excerpt, Hassan served as a peer broker for Rahul by affirming and co-constructing Rahul's responses, thus speaking for a peer who was still an emergent speaker of English. (The following transcript includes the following speakers: R = Researcher, Ra = Rahul, H = Hassan)

Segment 2: Speaking for an Emergent Speaker of English

- 65 Ra: Yeh.
 R: Do you have a favorite class that you like?
 Ra: ((Gazes forward thinking)) Hmm, yep.
 R: Which class?
 Ra: ELL ((English Language Learner)) and PE ((Physical Education))
- 70 R: Nice. Why do you like ELL?
 Ra: Ah ((Folds arm over his head)) reading?
 H: ***He likes to read.*** ((Rahul looks at Hassan and smiles))
 R: Friends?
 Ra: *Yeh*.
- 75 R: Are you friends with him ((Hassan))? ((Smiling))
 Ra: A little bit. ((Gazes at his iPad))
 R: Only a little. And then, uh, you like PE. Do you like running around?

- Ra: Yeh, and *playing [games.*
 R: [playing games
 80 H: *He's really good at PE.* ((Rahul is playing with his iPad screen)).
 R: Playing soccer? ((pointing at Rahul))
 H: *Yeah, so we were playing uh during sports hour ((Rahul looks up at Hassan)) and the ball's about to get on and score and he jumped in front and he went like that (puts his hands up) and they didn't score.*
 85 R: ((Turning to Rahul)) You must be really good.
 Ra: ((Slight nod of the head))
 R: Hassan says you are good. ((Continues to run his hand up and down his iPad screen)) Do you think you are going to try out for the soccer team?
 Ra: Yep?
 R: Cool. ((Makes a thumbs up)). ((Hassan begins to run his hand back and forth in front of the camera)).

This literacy event suggested several ways in which Hassan used discourse and verbal gestures to foster more of an appreciative framing of Rahul's identity (Malsbary, 2014) within the interview context. In line (71), I asked Rahul why he liked his EL class to which he responded with a filler word in line (72) and folding his arm over his head he said "reading." Hassan interjected in line (73) and excitedly said, "He likes to read." Rahul turned to look at Hassan and smiled. Taking advantage of this connection, I asked him in line (76) if he was friends with Hassan and he spoke in a quiet voice, "a little bit." When I responded by saying "Only a little," I realized he might have perceived the tone as evaluative as I used the word "only" abruptly shifting the dialogue we were creating about his friendship with Hassan. This may have constrained the dialogue as my adult researcher discourse defaulted to the academic-related tone in the interview (Arnot & Reay, 2007). These split-second moments were important to examine as they highlighted even more Hassan's ability to save the interview.

Hassan kept the discussion going after his interjection that not only did Rahul enjoy reading, but he *must* also be a good reader if he liked to read. Although we had no evidence that Rahul liked to read, Hassan reaffirmed Rahul's identity as a reader. Drawing upon the notion of implied personhood (Bloome et al., 2010), Hassan's familiarity and confidence with brokering language enabled him to negotiate Rahul's personhood, assigning categories that positively identified him as an engaged reader and skilled goalie.

In line (78), Rahul mentioned that he liked to play games prompting Hassan to interject in line (81) that Rahul was "really *good* at P.E." emphasizing the superlative. Hassan once again spotlighted Rahul's skills. Based on his experience of knowing Rahul (they were in the same gym class), Hassan provided evidence of Rahul's athletic prowess as he narrated a short story (lines 84-86) in italics, brokering for Rahul, which I perceived as creating a sense of belonging (Antonini, 2010; Orellana, 2009) since Rahul couldn't speak for himself. This move gave me the opportunity to *reinterpet* the way in which Rahul was perceived (Malsbary, 2014) from a student with a single characteristic—an emergent speaker of English—to one who had many positive attributes.

Whether he realized it or not, Hassan used information that he had about Rahul to help him create his narrative, but I perceived it as his need to help his friend. As such, Hassan's currency as a language broker served to elevate his friend Rahul during the interview. Although one cannot really give voice to someone else's experience (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), Hassan tried to be helpful during the interview encouraged by my prompting for his help as a student research assistant. In a later interview with Hassan when I asked him where he learned

to be so comfortable interviewing his peers about their stories as well as empathizing with them, he said:

I kind of learned that all by myself cause like if you learn from your mistakes like when you're young you obviously know sometimes you laugh about things that aren't supposed to be funny you're like when I do it it's because I'm mature I know how to behave. Like if somebody says something that's funny I would laugh but even if it's not funny I wouldn't laugh... Well, I made a lot of friends here who kind of taught me how to be confident.

Seen in a different light, had Rahul felt more confident and more proficient in expressing himself in English, he might have been able to give voice to other abilities he possessed that he was good at. Rahul might have communicated a completely different story about himself.

Enhancing Narratives of Multilingual Students, Motions of Cultural Brokering, and Listening

In their introduction to *Humanizing Research*, authors Paris and Winn asked, “What does it mean to be a ‘worthy witness’ in qualitative inquiry with communities and how can researchers become ‘a friend who understands fully’?” (2013, p. xiii). They describe how they are still in the process of “becoming” as they wrestle with the tensions of engaging equity work and at the same time engaging in research with youth and communities. Their words hold true the dilemma I experience as I, too, become concerned with social justice and equity and simultaneously work with multilingual youth. English learners, like all learners, deserve to tell their narratives in their own way and, if they are emerging English speakers, told in ways that can be navigated either by themselves or with a peer broker. In this particular study, Hassan’s role as peer broker served to *stretch* his peer’s voices beyond the extent of the interview protocol or the skills of communication in a new language, helping them to amplify who they were in ways I would not have been able to from my own skills and training as researcher. As such, this study highlights two central ideas when considering the intersection of methodology and student voice. The first relates to being open to the cultural brokering abilities of a student whose intermediate fluency in English was both enhanced by his self-confidence and social personality and his personal experience brokering for his family. As Ms. Sarah noted, Hassan “excelled at being social.” According to Orellana (2009), “children use language as a tool of negotiation; they do not passively transmit words from one person to another...” (p. 25). The ability to negotiate language among peers in itself is a desired trait given the need to socialize and make friends in school, as well as the importance of helping to foster language skills are two ideas that are underscored in this study. Given his confidence with language brokering, technology, and his helping nature, it was not too unusual for a student like Hassan to attain his goals, such as becoming my research assistant.

At the same time, findings suggested power dynamics particularly in the manner that Hassan spoke for Rahul when Rahul could not use his own voice, at least, when using it in English. If we had a Nepali-speaking Bhutanese translator or if Rahul’s English-speaking ability was more extensive so that he could elaborate more, Rahul would have most likely provided us with different answers than the ones that were offered during the interview. Recognizing that Rahul was still in the stages of acquiring more English, Hassan used information that he had about Rahul to help him enhance his narrative, just add a bit more for the interviewer. As such, Hassan’s currency as a language broker served to elevate his friend Rahul during the interview. I perceived Hassan as being able to sympathize with Rahul’s story of migrating to the US enhancing his interaction with Rahul enough to help him belong

(Malsbary, 2014) in a way that I could not have achieved within the traditional interview. Yet, had Rahul felt more confident and more proficient in expressing himself in English, he might have communicated a completely different story about himself. However, in this particular case Hassan helped me to get to know Rahul a bit more that extended my perception of him beyond the English learner.

In practice, knowing that most immigrant students in an EL class might have some experience with language brokering could potentially lead to harnessing that experience in an educational activity recognizing those skills. Hassan was so excited about the interviewing process that he was disappointed when the end of the project was drawing near. He recommended that next time his teachers should create another storytelling project requiring all English learners to interview each other, and to videotape the interviews so they could watch themselves on camera. Mr. Mack agreed emphasizing that it was a way to draw in the recently arrived immigrant students so they could develop a sense of belonging in the school.

The second major idea returns to the vital role of listening in the field of student voice to inform educational research. Through discourse analysis, this study examined how methodology in educational research could utilize cultural brokering to both enable students to amplify their voices and enable researchers to gain deeper understanding about English learners. However, this would not have occurred had I not considered the potential for students themselves to mediate their own narratives through the interview, or for their peers to assist them in this process. According to Cook-Sather (2002), one of the most challenging aspects of engaging student voice is the shift in power that must occur between adults and students. In changing the power dynamics in educational classroom or research contexts, students themselves may discover the political agency needed for speaking up for themselves. However, student agency also relies on the capacity of adults to advocate for and support a re-examining of power dynamics within their relationships. In envisioning what Fielding's (2004) dialogic model might look like, adults who care about student voice research projects should be willing to examine the research tools that they engage and the manner in which they employ listening and representation in their own work, as well as be ready to engage their own resistance to change or usurping some of their own personal vision. This interpretation process can contribute to the complexity of employing methodology with students as co-researchers and provide more ways of thinking about how to particularly engage a community of multilingual and multicultural students.

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Appendix A

Transcription conventions (modified from Wortham & Reyes, 2015)

‘-‘	abrupt breaks or stops (if several, stammering)
‘?’	rising intonation
‘.’	Falling intonation
‘_’	(underline) stress
(1.0)	Silences, timed to the nearest second
‘[‘	indicates simultaneous talk by two speakers, with one utterance represented on top of the other and the moment of overlap marked left brackets
‘((...))’	transcriber comment
‘:’	Elongated vowel
‘*...*’	segment quieter than surrounding talk
‘,’	pause or breath without marked intonation

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