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A Case study mapping literacy learning opportunities and identity construction among African immigrant youth in a Canadian Secondary School

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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**A Case study mapping literacy learning opportunities and identity construction
among African immigrant youth in a Canadian Secondary School**

by

Jane Wambui Gichuru

Graduate Program in Education

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

Studies with immigrant and refugee youth highlight challenges, school failure and early push-out rates (Anisef, 2008; James, 2012; Roessingh, 2010). There is limited research about how immigrant students especially from continental Africa negotiate their identity at school for positive outcomes. The goal of this qualitative case study was to explore literacy learning opportunities afforded by the school for African youth who were learning to become literate in English as an additional language in a Canadian secondary school and the implications for the students' communicative and identity options.

The study utilized case study methodology with ethnographic tools, i.e., interview, classroom observation, mapping literacy activities of students' out-of-school and school literacy practices across migratory ecologies. I also utilized artefacts, that is, the socially constructed products of human activity, may be material or conceptual, and that provide means for interpretation and identity construction (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). I collected data over a period of three months with six students, two teachers, and a settlement worker based at the school. Perspectives of literacy as social practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000), multiliteracies theory (NLG, 1996), and critical post-colonial perspectives (Bhabha, 2004) provided a lens to explore the intersection of place, voice, identity, language and literacy learning.

Study results highlighted students' aspirations to a promising future in Canada and the nature of the school curriculum in responding to the aspirations, funds of knowledge, and the contextual challenges encountered by the students. The agentic role of choice artefacts (everyday cultural and material objects) to communicate interests, experiences, and knowledge of minoritized students was also documented. The study recommends that schools and community agencies map students' experiences across migratory ecologies to adequately plan relevant supports. In addition, reimagining school curriculum and high

stakes testing to draw on minoritized students' funds of knowledge, and intercultural learning and scaffolding may foster co-construction of knowledge. The study contributes to the knowledge base about literacy education for minoritized groups that draws on asset models rather than deficit ones, and advances equity and social justice in education and society.

Keywords: Mapping, African, adolescent, literacy practices, funds of knowledge, identity, school, aspirations.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The 21st century has seen an increase in the flow of people, languages and cultures, capital, information, and discourses across borders. These forms of migration have disrupted current conceptions of education based on monolingual and monocultural imaginary, as well as notions of immigration as a unidirectional process of adaptation to the majority culture (Appadurai, 1996). Globalization has altered Canadian cultural patterns visible in the composition of today's urban classrooms, and has major implications for education because education links the experiences of students to economic realities, social processes, technological and media innovations, and cultural flows whose influence is felt beyond national boundaries (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard 2004). In immigrant-receiving countries such as Canada, the influx of voluntary and involuntary (Ogbu, 1998) students from countries with differing sociopolitical, economic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds means that education policies, schooling, and literacy teaching and learning adapt to the growing needs of a diverse population. In the same vein, new students need support to adapt to their new settings (Hamilton & Moore, 2004).

According to Statistics Canada (2007), 252, 000 permanent residents were admitted to Canada in 2006 alone. Fifty percent of the total immigrants who come to Canada settle in Ontario, with 45.7% settling in Toronto. Half of the total number of immigrants who settle in Ontario are between 5-24 years of age. In 2006, 70% of immigrants to Canada spoke a mother tongue (first language learned at home in childhood) other than English and French. African immigrant youth to Canada, who are the focus of this study, are linguistically and culturally diverse. Between 2001 and 2006, immigrants from African countries accounted for 10.5% of new immigrants. The African population has been growing steadily. In 1991, 66% of the 345, 445 immigrants of African origin (identified as African, black) to Canada lived in Ontario (Dei, 1996). During the 2006 census, the African population in Ontario was 473, 765 representing a 50% growth rate since the 1991 census (Statistics Canada, 2006 census). Immigration from Africa to Canada is

driven by two major factors: the desire for better opportunities and safety for refugee claimants (Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC), 2011).

1.1 Research Context

Despite the growing student diversity (cultural, linguistic, prior experiences, etc.) in Canadian schools, an English dominated standard curriculum that is aligned to the goals of a globalized market economy has not reflected this diversity (Apple, 2008; Majhanovich, 2006; New London group (NLG), 1996). Immigrant students navigate multiple social contexts and expectations, and cultures in multidirectional ways (Oh & Cooc, 2011) and often encounter challenges in the process of adaptation and learning. The complex linguistic and cultural diversity points to consideration of responsive strategies and pedagogy to address the learning needs of a diverse society (Gay, 2010). In any case, immigrant students bring with them what Moll (1992) posits as funds of knowledge to mean, the hidden home and community knowledge embedded in home languages (L1), everyday literacy practices, artefacts, family networks, and unique experiences from their environments carried across international borders. In addition, the new students come with aspirations and hope for a better life hinged on education and schools to unlock through relevant strategies and support (Shakya, Guruge, Hynie, Akbari, Malik, et al., (2012).

Successful literacy learning and construction of positive identities among new students point to a concerted effort among community agencies and education systems to engage the funds of knowledge, needs, and challenges of these students in creating opportunities for successful adaptation and learning in the new location. I located the study within an interpretive tradition that views reality as multiple, socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and situated within domains of power and, hence, requiring a critical lens (Goldstein, 2007). Critical literacy studies have identified that the current school curriculum does not appear to recognize the funds of knowledge and literacy practices that diverse students bring to the classrooms (Cummins, 2009a).

Coming to the research

My interest in this study was informed by an earlier study on the school experiences of Sudanese refugees in Canada (Gichuru, 2008) which highlighted that a mastery of English language skills and the support of teachers and peers eased adaptation and facilitated overall learning for new students. I positioned myself in the liminal space which Bhabha (1994) posits as a dynamic in-between space, a third space and a site of contestation where cultures meet and identities are interrupted, negotiated, constructed and reconstructed, and new positions emerge to understand immigrant students in the same space. As an immigrant woman who participated in colonial inspired education, studying in a Canadian institution, and an educator, I was an insider–outsider to the lives of African students with shared and differing aspirations. From a marginal space, and subjective bias informed by personal experiences of learning, I sought to understand how students’ aspirations and construction of identities were supported and shaped across contexts, and within Canadian market oriented, English dominated curriculum that minoritized their own.

Purpose of the study

The goal of this study was to gain insights into how African immigrant youth were learning to be literate in English as an additional language in Canadian classrooms. The study explored the opportunities at the school for minoritized students’ literacy learning and construction of identity, and mapped students’ funds of knowledge, experiences, and interests. The study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base on minoritized groups in education and society. Addressing these goals meant interrogating power and knowledge within educational systems in which certain actors, literacies, ways of knowing, and outcomes are valued over others (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Gee, 1996; Street, 2005). The following research questions guided the study.

- *What are the literacy learning opportunities afforded by schools for African immigrant students who are learning to be literate in an additional language?*

- *In what ways (if at all) do these opportunities relate to students' funds of knowledge, interests, and prior literacy experiences?*
- *What are the implications for the students' communication and identity options?*

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

A case study with ethnographic tools that is, interviews, observations, mapping activities, and artefacts (cultural objects, photographs, samples of writing and work of art) was utilized. I was reflective to the context of the participants' circumstances and available resources. Also, I was careful when representing minoritized students not to reproduce deficit assumptions about the Other (Bishops et al, 2005; Spivak; 1999; Said, 1978/1998). In this regard, I checked with the participants about intended meaning.

The sociocultural conceptual framework (Vygotsky, 1987) provided a lens to explore language, literacy learning and identity reconstruction aspects of the study. Notions of literacy as multiple (Street, 2004, NLG, 1996), social practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) guided the mapping of African youth's literacy practices across sites of school and out-of-school. I also used the approach of view classrooms as figured worlds (Holland et al, 1998) of possibility where students could construct identities and employ cultural tools (artefacts) and funds of knowledge in learning. Theories of post colonial thought (Ashcroft et al, 2007) helped to illuminate the process of migration and its impact on the social location, voice, and identity (Bhabha, 1994; Dei & Rummens, 2012; Hall, 2000) of the African students in Canada. Power and knowledge and persistent global and local inequalities facing minoritized students in structures which do not address the economic, social and "historical conditions that produce inequalities" (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, 14) were interrogated.

1.3 Background to African Immigrant Youth's Literacy Education

African immigrant students are not a homogenous group. They originate from a vast continent made up of 54 countries with about 2000 languages and innumerable cultural

practices (UNESCO, 2007). Migrations from the African continent to countries in the global north such as Canada may be linked to various push factors such as political and religious conflicts arising from the effects of European imperialism and the division of Africa without regard for the geographical boundaries, and the cultural and linguistic composition of the population (Ramone, 2011). In addition, widening global and local economic inequalities and uncertainties marked by growing unemployment have led to international migrations for economic reasons (Aderanti Adepoju, 1998). The displacement of African families and settlement in new locations with differing sociopolitical, cultural and economic backgrounds (Somers, 2010) has implications for language, literacy, identity, and the future of the immigrant youth. Education policies and supports for immigrant students' learning and identity construction inform how education for minoritized students is conceived in host countries (Pinson, Arnot & Candappa, 2010). In Africa, displaced children and youth whose families resist decampment and remain in cities face discrimination in accessing publicly funded schools as urban refugees (Campbell, Crisp, & Kiragu, 2011). Limited access to schooling influences the future literacy learning of immigrant students who manifest gaps in formal education.

1.3.1 Pre migration language and literacy education in Africa

The African youth in this study participated in colonial inspired education which marginalised African indigenous education systems. That is, literacy education ignored the role of African terrain (place) as curriculum and at the same time replaced names of important landmarks and images that were markers of identity and sources of learning with those of the colonizer (WaThiong'o, 1986). In addition, foreign languages replaced indigenous ones as languages of education. In most of Africa, mother tongue or first language at birth (L1) is generally used for instruction from pre-school to grade 3. From grade 4 to university level, a second language, usually a foreign language is used (Alidou, 2003). Consequently, students do not often become fully literate in L1 and may struggle to learn in a new language (Cummins, 2001), and parents, especially those who are not literate in the school language, are isolated from the schooled literacy of their children. In publicly funded schools in Africa, there are reports of underfunding and inadequate

teaching approaches and materials in L1 (Bloch, 2005). These factors have negative implications for the state of language and literacy education in Africa.

Upon migration to Canada, the prior migration education factors interacted with school conditions, literacy curriculum expectations, and language needs in Canadian classrooms to shape African youth's learning and identity. African immigrant youth in this study shared some experiences of relocation from their countries of birth to other African countries as refugees escaping violence. Upon refugee determination by the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR), families left the transition countries and migrated to Canada under the government assisted refugees (GARS) category. Displacement and migration are important social and educational issues because they link place, language, identity, and learning. For example, knowledge of the youths' experiences prior to migration shed light on their adaptation and learning needs and experiences in Canada. Also, shift in location was highlighted in the study to influence the immigrant youth's identity construction, in this case, becoming different and minoritized under the dominant culture and schooling. Experiences of immigrant and refugee students in public schools upon migration are shaped by immigration status (refugee versus economic immigrant), relocation stress, educational experience before migration, familial economic conditions, race, ethnicity, language, and age, among other factors (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Kanu, 2008, and Nieto, 2009).

1.3.2 Green valley school

Green valley Secondary School which is located in a medium-size city in southwestern Ontario was the study site. By the time of this study, the school had a diverse student population of 740 across grades 9-12. Students at the school were drawn from low income neighbourhoods and represented multiple cultures and languages from many countries in Africa, Asia, Middle East South America, Eastern Europe, and those born in Canada, among others. The school had a significant number of refugee and immigrant students whose home languages are not English, and are, therefore, English language learners (ELL). In ELL classrooms, six or more mother tongues (First home languages

learned) were spoken. At the time of study, Green Valley School had a settlement worker to support the large number of newcomers at the school. The settlement worker, in partnership with school staff, provides group information sessions for newcomer youth and parents, and orientation about the settlement needs of newcomers for school staff. They also refer families to specialized community resources as needed.

The school also had a wide range of academic programs, modern technology and resources, and a team of teachers, administration and support staff who were charged with different responsibilities for the students' academic and social development. Classroom teachers in the school were supported by three guidance counselors, two student success teachers, three resource teachers, one teacher-librarian, one hearing resource teacher, two developmental class teachers, one dual-diagnosis class teacher, two transitions class teachers and a number of educational assistants. According to the school mission, the school aims are to improve the literacy skills and academic success of all students by utilizing a variety of teaching and assessment practices. The school had a variety of extracurricular activities such as football, soccer, basketball, hockey, volleyball, badminton, rugby, and track and field. In addition, students participated in clubs such as chess, art, best buddies, prom committee, student council, multicultural club, social justice, and homework help. Educators at the school encouraged cultural events at the school to allow for cultural exchange during which students learned about other cultures and provided opportunities for students to showcase talents. Green Valley School operated an in-school television studio with daily video announcements. Other activities included music night, dances, and volunteer opportunities such as tutoring, classroom support, and coaching support.

The school's language support for EAL/ELD was aimed at facilitating ELL students' transition to mainstream classes and to prepare for life outside school upon graduation. The school perceived that parents of immigrant students often set high academic expectations for the students. Also, it was apparent that the parents did not always understand the challenges facing the students and the learning demands of secondary

school. The school recognized ELLs' efforts and encouraged them to avoid falling below the 50% pass mark, and reminded them about meeting expectations.

Educators at Green Valley School were aware that EQAO assessment often ignored the experiences of minoritized students. The literacy test was far removed from the experiences of immigrant students especially those who were new to the English language and lacked the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) required to pass the test. The use of artefacts in classrooms to support ELLs' literacy learning and identity formation was viewed as a good approach by some of the teachers. However, with accountability and standards as key goals of the current education system, the school curriculum left no room for the students' funds of knowledge, out-of-school practices, and artefacts (everyday material objects) to inform literacy learning. The school reported a commitment to expand learning beyond traditional courses and towards a holistic approach to provide its students opportunities to acquire skills necessary for the world of work and for personal growth.

Fraser Institute Report Card on Ontario's Secondary Schools, April 2012

Green Valley School ranked below most secondary schools in southwest Ontario according to the Report Card on Ontario's Secondary Schools released by the Fraser Institute on Sunday April 1, 2012 for the 2011 EQAO-OSSLT. The test is administered through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The local media carried the news with a headline, "How did the XX district high schools fare on their report cards?" Green Valley School was among those at the bottom of the ranking in the city, and was in position 653 out of 718 schools in the province. Some of the participants reported comments from English-speaking peers blaming the low ranking on those with limited English skills. The school administrator asked her students not to be discouraged by the results and encouraged them to work their best. The claim to literacy as a critical foundation for success in school and life outside school drives OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) to measure whether Ontario students have achieved required reading and writing skills by the end of grade 9. From this perspective, EQAO

claims to implement public accountability in education through province-wide testing programs and partnerships with educators and school-board teams. Although standardized assessments were used with all students, they did not seem to represent the diverse knowledge and skills of all students, especially those of immigrant backgrounds and learning through an additional language.

1.3.3 English language learners (ELLs) and the Ontario secondary school program

Background information on the Ontario Secondary school curriculum, English language learners (ELLs), and English language programs in Ontario help to contextualize the study, and at the same time to survey literature that is pertinent to understand how immigrant students who are also ELLs negotiate learning in the school system. The Ontario guide *Many Roots, Many Voices* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005) for supporting ELLs defines English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as an additional language (EAL) programs as those programs designed for “students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools” (p.1). ELLs are students in English-language schools who speak a first language other than English. They may be Canadian-born, or newcomers from other countries. They may also speak one or more languages. The guide recognizes that ELLs with limited prior schooling may bear cultural experiences and knowledge acquired through their L1 literacy. The guide also advocates teaching ELLs with prior interruption in their schooling through strategies that value and incorporate the learner’s prior knowledge. In Ontario, the EAL program is implemented through the school boards and guides issues on student placement which are not influenced by English proficiency level but by the age of the student and education experiences. For example, a secondary school student who has completed grade 10 in her or his home country is placed in grade 11 without consideration of limited or lack of English language proficiency for this grade. The program guide acknowledge the significance of L1 literacy and prior education experience to the enhancement of later language and L2 literacy learning because they present new ELLs with a head start in their EAL and content area instruction. Two

programs offered to ELLs are EAL and English language development (ELD) for those with minimal or no prior English skills. ELLs are placed in age appropriate classes and receive both language support and content area learning through English as preparation for mainstream classes. Mobility through EAL levels is based on recommendation by the EAL teacher on the student's progress. ELLs often perceive the EAL program as lengthy especially for those who begin in secondary school.

The Ontario Secondary school program is a four year program (grades 9-12) and is geared towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The program is designed so that students meet diploma requirements within four years following 8 years of elementary education preparation. Enrolled students are approximately 14 to 18 years of age. To graduate from secondary school, all students must complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in grade 10. The test is developed by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in Ontario, Canada. Ontario secondary school students are required to complete 30 credits, 18 of which are compulsory and 12 are optional. Courses offered are intended to meet requirements for postsecondary institutions and employers, as well as students' needs and interests. In Grades 9 and 10, courses are geared to promoting the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, and allowing students to focus on their interests and to explore various areas of study. In Grades 11 and 12, students focus on courses that are directly linked to their intended postsecondary destinations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

1.4 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Immigrant children and youth from continental Africa are underrepresented in the literature on literacy learning though this is important to their adaptation and positive experiences in host countries (Bartolome, 2000; Cooper, 2008; Kanu, 2008). In the USA, over 70% of studies have focused on students from Spanish language communities (Genesse, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005). Existing research on the educational experiences and outcomes of African immigrant students tends to focus on

the African American/African Canadian population who have a long history in Canada (e.g., James, 2012; Braithwaite & James, 1996). Other studies look at engagement and school outcomes for immigrant students who are often positioned as being “at-risk” of “dropping-out” of school (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008; 2010; Brown, 2006; Cooper, 2008; James, 2012). There is limited research specifically focusing on recent African immigrant youth (Cooper, 2008; Kanu, 2008) in Canada, especially outside major cities. These factors influence how students of African origin among other minoritized (McCarthy, 2000, 2005) students experience literacy learning, are positioned, and negotiate identities as learners in Canada.

Studies focusing on learning and school outcomes of immigrant students in host countries (Cummins, 2010; Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004; Fu, 2004; Fu & Graff, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Gonzalez et al, 2005) indicate that schools are often not ready for the growing student diversity and lack cultural and educational materials to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students especially ELLs. Also, teachers neither understand the immigrant youth nor draw on the youths’ prior experiences, out-of-school literacy practices, and funds of knowledge during instruction. Immigrant youths’ strengths and determination are often overshadowed by limited English language skills as well as deficit assumptions by educators about the cultural background of this group in their education. McKinney and Norton (2010) contend that school literacy does not always address the learning conditions of ELLs who often lack adequate language skills and school’s cultural capital. Relatedly, minoritized students have generally been reported to perform poorly in schools, particularly on standardized assessments such as the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test (OSSLT), which indicates poor outcomes for ELLs (EQAO, 2012) and children living in poverty (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Challenges faced by immigrant students during adaptation impact their learning and point to the important role of supports during initial adaptation and relevant pedagogical strategies (e.g., Adams & Kirova, 2007).

It is against this backdrop that I explored how secondary schools in Ontario, which receive a large number of immigrants, support literacy learning in an additional language and identity construction for youth from continental Africa. In addition, I was interested in mapping and documenting the aspirations and funds of knowledge of African youth and thereby contribute to the knowledge base about literacy practices, interests, and cultural tools of minoritized (McCarthy, 2002) populations in Canada. The study contributes to the existing knowledge base on diverse students' identities embedded in literacy practices, and advocates for the recognition of the voices of marginalised students in their learning. The study contributes to the advancement of equity and social justice for students and families positioned in the margins of school and society. The study presents minoritized students and families as resourceful and with great aspirations in their learning and for better social futures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), and schools as important sites to negotiate with the demands of accountability in education and support learning and identity options for all students.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized in seven chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction, and the purpose and the significance of the study. I explained my investment in a study on ways in which immigrant youth from Africa experience and negotiate literacy learning in English as an additional language, and the implications for their identity reconstruction. Chapter two covers research literature on experiences, literacy learning and identity among immigrant youth in Canada. It also presents the sociocultural framework which guided my study to explore literacy as multiple social practices mediated through diverse cultural tools such as language, artefacts, art, and technology. Post colonial theory helped me to understand the process of migration and adaptation and the subject social positions, voice and identity of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. In chapter three I present the methodology and data analysis utilized in the study. I utilized a case study with ethnographic tools to capture students' experiences from different perspectives. Data were analyzed qualitatively and themes emerged through triangulation of multiple data sources, with experiences of the African youth being highlighted thematically. Chapter

four highlights the profiles of the study's participants allowing them to present their unique experiences. In chapters five and six, I presented the study's findings under the following themes:

- Negotiating global and local spaces for a place to belong
- Identity re/constructions
- Teaching at the age of diversity and accountability
- Identity texts: extending learning beyond curriculum texts.

In chapter seven, I discuss the study findings and relate them to the literature and theoretical grounding that guided the study. In this chapter I also provide a summary, conclusion of the study, and recommendation for future studies.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I present the post colonial and sociocultural theoretical framework and literature drawn from these frameworks that illuminates the intersection of language, identity, funds of knowledge, and cultural tools to understand learning and identity construction in new cultural worlds (Holland et al., 1998). I also present a review of studies and scholarly literature pertaining to the education of immigrant children and youth in host countries to understand their journeys to learning and construction of identities in new social locations.

2.1 Post Colonial Theory (PCT)

Post colonial theory (PCT) provides a lens to understand the history of colonized societies, migrant identity, the power of language, and the representation of the voices of the *Other* in educational structures and literacy education. Post colonial theory is drawn from the interaction between European colonialism and indigenous societies, and the resulting sociopolitical and economic effects (Ashcroft, Griffin & Tiffin, 2006). PCT engages in challenging and resisting dominant views about the knowledge of the *Other*, for example, African youth in Canada, through essentialist perspectives (Ashcroft et al., 1989/2006; Bhabha, 2004; Dei, 2006). Postcolonial theory illuminates topics about migration, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, gender, race, and place which are all important to understand experiences of people and groups marginalized by colonialism. Thus, postcolonial scholars explore dislocation, that is, the displacement of people and their negotiation of belonging in their new locations, for example African immigrant youth in Canadian classrooms. As such, questions about identity, subjectivity, memory, and home that emerge from the movement (Hall, 1990 & 1996; Said, 1998) are important to PCT.

2.1.1 Post Colonial Theory (PCT): location, voice, and identity

Writing from a post colonial perspective, Ramone (2011) contends that “the individual who migrates is translated into a new place and operates through a new language, becoming a translated individual bearing traces of both location and languages” (p.115). Post colonial theory notions of location, voice and identity provide a lens through which to explore experiences of African youth’s literacy education in pre, trans, and post migratory contexts and the emerging in-between identities (Bhabha, 1994). PCT interrogates the positioning, for instance, of immigrant students as the *Other* and offers a critical lens to resist socially constructed positional identities, and spaces to figure out possibilities (Holland et al, 1998). The voices of refugee and immigrant students have not gained prominence in the global north as informing important educational decisions. According to Campano (2007) and Campano and Ghiso (2011), the narratives of multilingual and transnational youth present emerging voices that are important in literacy education.

Postcolonial notions of location, voice, and identity are, therefore, important topics through which to explore the experiences and literacy learning of African youth in Canada. PCT and critical literacy as articulated by Cummins (2009b) and Cherland and Harper (2007) allow educators to reflect on power dynamics in the literacy curriculum and literary texts that oppress marginalized students. Teachers are also challenged to reflect on the unequal power relations in their role as teachers of minoritized students, and to validate the students’ funds of knowledge and in doing so create enabling spaces for students to create positive identity that highlight their resourcefulness in learning.

Language is an important construct in PCT because it is tied to voice, identity and location, as well as the politics of dominance. Acquiring a new language, Fanon (1986/2004) argues, plays a significant role in identity formation after migration in that it controls and shapes thought and involves the acquisition of ideologies surrounding that language. Immigrant students’ experiences of language and literacy learning and

subjectivities are implicated in the Diaspora identities that are historically and ideologically constructed (Gunderson, 2004). PCT challenges the politics of teaching English language and indicates the need to devise new ways to teach language and literacy to immigrant youth (Pennycook, 2001; 2007). To fit into the new Canadian society and participate in Ontario schools, immigrant students must learn the host language/s and negotiate with the language/s, dialects, and cultures of their country of origin. Ashcroft et al, (2006) posits that postcolonial writers reject;

a normative concept of ‘correct’ or ‘standard’ English used by certain classes or groups, and of the corresponding concepts of inferior ‘dialects’ or marginal ‘variant’ of one kind or another, and is in that sense ‘marginal’ to some illusionary standard. This makes it an important political stance from which appropriation of language can take place (p.6).

The notion of standard, universal, and dominant forms of language and culture echo Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of linguistic capital as a particular way of speaking differently valued in different social fields. Proficiency in Standard English grammar and Canadian linguistic and cultural capital are important for a positive learning experience, passing the literacy test and for employment.

Post colonial theorists posit that immigrants occupy marginal spaces with an identity of visible minority, a space of transition and uncertainty (Ashcroft et al, 2007), an in-between hybrid space, according to Bhabha (1994) that is always changing, and a space for negotiation and resistance. Understanding the concepts of location, identity and voice within PCT requires theorizing the notion of hybridity arising from Bhabha’s (1994) emphasis on the interdependent relationship of colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha rejects any claims of authenticity of cultures. Instead he argues that cultural systems and discourses are constructed in the “third space of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1995, p.209). The in-between space where cultures meet and construct hybrid identities calls for critical reflection when representing the *Other* to avoid essentializing. Bhabha (2004) on the location of culture, posits that hybridity may challenge deficit assumptions on cultural texts and transform the colonial control over culture through, for example, the use of

cultural knowledge such as home languages, texts, and artefacts in meaning making. Bhabha (2004) provides the sources of hybridity as,

not just geographical borderlines, texts, laws from multiple sources, maps that reveal the influences in the naming of locations, but also inside, within, for example, the body of a coloured south African woman who reveals a difference within, and inhabits an in-between reality (p. 19).

Post colonial scholars address the everyday experiences of the colonized and racialized and how these minoritized communities and individuals understand their identities. Spivak (1999) speaks to the manifestation of power in society and language in the representation of the thoughts and practices of the subaltern, those in the margins of society by the *knowing Other* as problematic. Such representation assumes a fixed identity thereby denying those they represent agency and mobility in their social location which makes writing about the *Other* an act of power, a binary for example of literate-illiterate. Representing the other requires reflexivity and moving away from deficit assumptions, for example, in the choice of methodologies that recognize multiple realities, includes minoritized or subaltern students in the co-construction of knowledge, and representation of their experiences through their own voices. In educational settings, immigrant students and members of minoritized groups are sometimes viewed and represented as “certain kinds of people” (Gee, 1996, p.10) who lack agency.

Post colonial theory provides a window to explore the notion of Diaspora (a geo-subject located in a globalized west) (Simmons & Dei, 2012). That is, to understand how immigrant students come to develop a relationship of self and place in the complex process of settlement and integration in Canada. Influence of globalization on displacement, voluntary or involuntary (Ogbu, 1989) of populations from the global south to the global north are concerns of PCT. PCT provides a lens to explore and to link pedagogy with history and global realities of the 21st century (Crandall, 2012) and to understand immigrant youth’s investments in their literacy learning (Campano, 2007; Ibrahim, 1999 & 2008). PCT notions of power and knowledge, representation and

reflection about the *Other* are relevant in critical literacy education because they help to address such issues as transforming education (Cummins, 2006; Giroux, 1992 & 2005; Freire and Macedo 1998, among others) and decolonizing curriculum (Abdi, 2012; Dei and Kempf, 2006; Tajeda and Gutierrez, 2005; Wane, 2009). Decolonizing curriculum refers to the critical interrogation of dominant constructions of knowledge and power in school knowledge system and its impact on the lives of minoritized students. For example, the social, economic, and political exclusion of immigrant students arising from control of literacy education for accountability to meet the needs of globalization (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The aim of decolonization is to deconstruct post colonial spaces in education so that they begin to affirm the identities of colonized peoples (Abdi, 2012, Sleeter, 2010; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity and the New London Group's (NLG), 1996) pedagogy of multiliteracies offer possibilities for marginalized students to "design social futures" defined by (NLG, 1996, p.1) as enabling conditions for active engagement in meaning-making "for all students to benefit in ways that allow them [...] full and equitable social participation". Literacy education curriculum needs to consider cultural diversity, identity, globalization and positive engagement with difference (Dei, 2012, NLG, 1996) and reject a stable unified literacy as adequate to address diversity. Multiliteracies pedagogy which will be defined and discussed later in the chapter articulates topics and aims of PCT.

Postcolonial theory is criticized for its tendency to include all aspects of marginalization that give rise to resistance, and for ignoring the fact that pre-colonial societies have continued to embrace change. However, the strengths of the theory are grounded in its rejection of the classification of individuals and societies through the rigid views of the *Other* (Ashcroft, Griffin & Tiffin, 2000). It allows educators and scholars to challenge hegemonic practices and taken-for-granted assumptions in literacy education positioned within dominant ideological constructs, practices and power. PCT also allows educators to understand that,

Power relations in different settings are rooted in specific historical processes, in the development of a post-colonial order...., in contemporary world, there are broad resonances in ways in which these power relations are played out in local sites (Matin-Jones & Jones, 2000, p.1).

To further articulate PCT's notions of language, identity and power in social, cultural and political contexts, sociocultural theory (SCT) provides a complementary lens to PCT to map African youth's experiences in social environments. Both postcolonial and sociocultural theories are interested in culture and society and therefore engage culture and language as important elements to understand societies.

2.2 Sociocultural Perspectives of Literacy

Sociocultural theory (SCT) has its roots in the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues. Vygotsky (1978) is credited for the theory of learning and development that situates learning within social and cultural contexts. Sociocultural theory posits that culture is interwoven in all aspects of human interaction. SCT provides an understanding of people's knowledge construction when they are using cultural tools such as language, artefacts, music, art, and technology among others. Drawing on sociocultural theory, different perspectives emerged among them the New Literacy Studies (NLS), (Barton, 1994, Gee, 1996, Street 1995). This perspective to literacy emerged to contest the dominant cognitive conceptions of literacy and literacy learning understood as developmental, skills based, neutral and apolitical. Instead, they emphasized an extended view of literacy understood as everyday practices shaped by social and cultural influences (Street, 2005). To provide a definition of literacy from this notion, Street (1984; 1995) brings to the forefront two contrasting views to literacy. The *autonomous* model that is tied to a view of literacy as a set of skills acquired through a developmental process, and an *ideological* model of literacy as the social understanding and uses of literacy.

Sociocultural theorists challenge an autonomous model of literacy as a neutral set of cognitive skills that are taught and learned using a universal language regardless of

cultural, linguistic, gender, and class considerations, among others (Purcell-Gates, Jacobsen, & Degener, 2004). In contrast, an ideological model of literacy conceptualizes literacy as a resource and a “set of literacy practices which are domain specific, varied and multiple, tied to specific uses and functions within social institutions of power and access which shape it in diverse ways” (Stein, 2008, p.30). The application of SCT to literacy research gained momentum in the later part of the 20th century to provide a view of literacy as social practices utilized to meet the social and cultural needs of communities (Street, 2004). According to Toohey (2000), Vygotsky’s idea of the social construction of knowledge allows researchers to examine school and out-of-school literacy practices, and the “ways in which particular children participate in these as situated in larger, concentric circles of context” (p.10).

2.2. 1 New Literacy Studies and literacy as social practice

Competing orientations to literacy continue to shape how literacy is understood and practiced in schools. New Literacy Studies scholars (NLS) (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; New London Group (NLG), 1996; & Street, 1995) have expanded on Vygotsky’s cultural tools for meaning making and learning to theorize literacy as multiple and ideologically situated practices. This presents a lens to explore literacy practices such as those of the participants in this study, and the cultural, historical, and ideological contexts in which they are situated (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Within New Literacy Studies (NLS), reading, writing, and meaning making are tied to social activity. According to Heath (1983) there are different uses and functions of literacy within diverse social and cultural contexts. Hence, literacy teaching and learning need to consider the cultural and linguistic diversity and the societies that are becoming global (NLG, 1996). The social practice perspective treats literacy as a set of cultural tools and stresses the importance of social contexts and purpose in meaning making (Vygotsky, 1987).

Literacy as social practice: Theoretical assumptions

According to Barton and Hamilton (1998), literacy is best understood as a set of social practices inferred from events which are mediated by written texts. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life; for example, literacy can be viewed from the context of the home, school, or any other social institution. Also, because literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, some literacies are more dominant, visible, and influential than others. Literacy is historically situated, and literacy practices change over time and new ones are acquired through informal learning and meaning making processes.

Literacy practices go beyond acts of print-based reading and writing and involve values, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and social relationships (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). It is what people do in everyday life in their homes, at school, and at work. Literacy as social practice views literacy as connected to literacy events which are activities where literacy has a role (Heath, 1983). Literacy as social practice helps to explain the link between home and school literacy environments, and rejects a perspective of literacy development as predominantly an individualistic and cognitive process (Street, 2005).

Gee (1999) contends that literacy is multiple because reading and writing are shaped and transformed into different sociocultural practices which bring together both oral and written language with diverse ways of interacting, thinking, and valuing, and also with “various sorts of nonverbal, symbols, sites, objects, and technologies” (p.3). These literacy practices are legitimized in specific sites by particular groups of people. Literacy can therefore be characterized as what a group of people do with literacy, the social activities, the meanings, the thoughts behind the activities, and the texts that are used in these activities (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Within NLS, reading and writing at school form only one dimension of literacy (NLG, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). The notion of multiliteracies illuminates an understanding of the diverse nature of literacy.

2.2.2 Multiliteracies: bringing in the Others' funds of knowledge

The term multiliteracies was introduced by the New London Group (NLG, 1996) to address the new “forms of literacy associated with information, communication, and multimedia technologies, and the wide variety of culturally-specific forms of literacy evident in complex pluralistic societies” (Cummins, 2006, 53). The complexity, diversity and rapid change in the way meaning is made means there cannot be “one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning, however taught” (NLG, 1996, p. 1). In this case, multiliteracies challenges the notion of a linear text based literacy in a dominant language in schools as limited, and failing to address the realities of a technologically mediated and culturally and linguistically diverse society.

In their seminal paper on multiliteracies (NLG, 1996), the group introduced a pedagogy of multiliteracies whose goal is to create learning conditions that enable all students to participate, and to ensure that culture, language, and gender differences do not hinder positive educational outcomes of CLD students such as the African youth in this study. Early (2006) notes that one way to take advantage of the "current context" is to harness diversity (i.e., students' linguistic and cultural resources) and to reconceptualize pedagogies that build on these resources, recognizing also the "multimodal and multimediated"(p. 67) ways in which communication is now taking place and the types of "knowledge" students need for their future. The framework views curriculum as a design to engage and challenge all students in their learning, produce explicit teaching, make learning relevant, and lead to a transformation in the learners for instance, affording opportunities for students such as the study participants to use available resources to communicate knowledge.

Multiliteracies theory advanced by Cope and Kalantzis (2000) both members of the New London Group (NLG, 1996) constitute three key elements. These are pedagogy, diversity, and multimodality, and are implemented in classrooms through a pedagogy of

multiliteracies that encompasses four components of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice.

Situated practice views knowledge as situated within sociocultural contexts and practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Applying situated practice in the classroom context is articulated by Heydon and Bainbridge (2012) as what educators do to create opportunities that immerse learners in meaningful literacy practices, where they feel safe, are part of community, and participate in learning that is informed by their interests, experiences and needs. In the process, teachers need to reflect on the learners' sociocultural contexts and identities and to scaffold learning.

In overt instruction, students bring to classrooms informal knowledge from their experiences. Heydon and Bainbridge (2012) have argued that overt instruction differs from direct transmission in that it requires teachers to scaffold learning, build on students' funds of knowledge by relating it to what they are learning, and support their autonomy in learning.

Under critical framing, teachers check for student understanding and allow them opportunity to reflect on and relate meanings to their social contexts and practices. In this case, students learn to critique normalised assumptions in society by considering diverse perspectives which may lead to new understanding and possibly social action (Cummins & Early, 2011, Heydon & Bainbridge, 2010).

Transformed practice refers to the ways in which students transfer and recreate designs of meaning from one context to another, such as application of informal and specialized knowledge to transform or bring new understanding (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In this view, educators support learners to utilize their new literacy practices in ways that are relevant to their goals. Educators and students may participate in strategies and practices that are reflective and focus on improving social conditions (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008; Heydon & Bainbridge, 2012; Jewitt, 2008). The notion of design therefore becomes an

important concept within the multiliteracies framework in that it presents possibilities for minoritized students to redesign their future from deficit positioning in school and other social settings to create identity texts of capable individuals.

2.2.3 Designs of meaning-making

The NLG (1996) highlighted six design categories that are the main focus of the multiliteracies pedagogy in the meaning making process. These included the linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal meanings. Characteristics of the design categories are the linguistic design which differs from the explicit teaching of skills in reading and writing because of its creative and representational aspects. The visual design consists of images, layouts, and computer screen views, among others. The audio design includes music and sound effects. The gestural design focuses on body language and sensuality, and the spatial design looks at environmental and architectural elements. Another category, the multimodal design concentrates on the interdependence of the designs, that is, various combinations of the previous elements.

Multimodal literacy is concerned with forms of representation through which people make meaning. Multimodal theory of communication assumes that meaning is always made in many different modes and media. The term multimodal literacy was introduced by Kress and Jewitt, (2003) to broaden the print-only view of literacy. According to Kress (2003, 2008), the basic assumption of multimodality is that people are not mere users of linguistic resources available to them. Rather, people make meaning using a range of modes. Mode refers to equally important organised sets of cultural resources for meaning-making that includes gaze, image, movement, gesture, writing, speech and sound effects. The choice of mode depends on the meaning-makers' interest and appropriateness of the mode to represent meaning (Kress, 2003) Unsworth (2001) posits that available multimodal meaning-making resources need to serve the intended purposes that are largely determined by societal forces such as affordability, choice, and use in the classrooms. Additionally, allowing students, especially ELLs, to move across and

recombine modes (Siegel, 2006) may support interaction, broaden understanding, extend language and communication, and offer opportunities for identity text creation for learners who are positioned as less capable based on limited language skills.

Literature indicates that immigrant students require opportunities to demonstrate their abilities to design, implement, and reflect upon new learning related to their own experiences, identity, goals and interests through the use of a variety of cultural tools (NLG, 1996). The demonstration of designs and their implementation presents opportunity for the “situated, contextualized assessment of learners” (NLG, 1996, p. 87).

Multiliteracies as social practices may address how immigrant students use literacy to solve everyday life issues in specific cultural contexts (Street, 1984, 2005, Wang, 2011). In this case, it may help capture how African immigrant students in Ontario use reading and writing in their various cultural communities, and how they use different forms of literacy to reflect their values. The relevance of the notion of multimodality lies in its potential to support language learners to learn and communicate despite facing language barriers. Representation and communication are both social practices that focus on the interests and aspirations of the meaning-maker (Kress, 2009). They shape classroom interaction where students and educators choose signs or texts from the social environment for example, out-of-school literacies and artefacts to engage others in meaning-making. The application of multiple modes for example L1, dual language, drawing, photographs, writing, maps, and artefacts, among others supports the creation of identity texts, affirms identity, and extends language and learning (Cummins et al, 2005; Cummins, 2009). To address the diverse cultural and linguistic diversity in schools and society, language is an important construct to explore within multiliteracies.

2.2.4 Language(s) within multiliteracies

Language use has been reshaped by the growing cultural and linguistic diversity and utilization of multiple modes in meaning-making, coupled with new technologies. In the 21st century, effective interaction in the social world and the world of work requires the

ability to use multiple languages and dialects and cross cultural, cross boundary communication patterns (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Language is important within multiliteracies because of its importance to the thought process and learning through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1987). Additionally, literacy learning is considered “part and parcel of collaborative interactions with others of diverse skills, backgrounds and perspectives joined together in a community of learners” (NLG, 1996, p. 30). Thus, the social nature of learning encompasses talking, representing, thinking, reading and writing among other modes. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2008) language is a “matter of intertextuality, hybridity, and a basis for cultural change. Language is an already designed resource, and a ground of design for social futures” (p. 203). Language as a creation of society is designed to meet specific purposes and situations.

In language various commonly shared values and interrelated texts come together in meaning making and often shift with changes in society. Hence, language is central to learning, identity, and social transformation. Language identities are accompanied with shifts as public institutions including schools, align with the language of global markets with consequences for individual identities and survival of languages. For example, the emergence of English as a *lingua mundi* (world language) and a killer language (NLG, 1996; Phillipson, 2009) has positioned some languages to minority status, led to the extinction of others, and promoted monolingualism (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008). In post colonial Africa, English and French are foreign languages yet have dominant status as languages of education. Moreover, these foreign languages enjoy privileges of use in high profile offices such as government and business while local languages are used for perceived less important functions (Phillipson, 2009). Consequently, the hegemony of the English language has become a key challenge to literacy education in Africa, and in CLD classrooms in the global north.

Lo Bianco (1996) contends that recognizing the validity of each variety of English, such as Creole and Pidgin spoken among African communities in continental Africa and the Diasporas, and of its speakers as legitimate, would extend Standard English to include

multiple languages and Englishes, and an incorporation of multilingual strategies. However, it is argued that a breakdown of English into “multiple and differentiated Englishes marked by accents, national origin, subcultures, and professional and technical communities presents challenges to cross linguistic boundaries even within English” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2008, p. 103). That means issues of power and legitimizing languages in education (Apple, 2004) cannot be ignored.

The dominance of English in today’s classroom constricts any imagination about the legitimacy of other languages such as those of CLD students who face challenges of not only learning English as an additional language, but also getting familiar with the Canadian English accent, and working across their own English accents for which they are ridiculed in the school settings. Critical scholars (Cummins et al, 2005, Pahl, 2004; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Stein, 2008) have utilized multiliteracies pedagogy to create projects that support literacy learning for minoritized groups in which students’ L1 form an important component in learning. In criticism of linguistic hybridity, Canagarajah (2002b) contends, mere recognition of language/s is political and therefore insufficient in the search for legitimacy. He cautions against notions of such hybridity by stating that,

considering that languages are hybrid doesn’t mean that certain codes don’t function as the linguistic capital (with a clear hierarchy of valued registers, dialects, and discourses) to obtain social and educational rewards (p. 135).

Multiliteracies emphasizes an open-ended and flexible grammar that enables language learners to describe language differences (e.g. cultural, technical, context specific) and the “multimodal channels of meaning that have become critically important to communication” (Kalantzis & Cope 2008, p. 203). The multimodal literacy aspect of multiliteracies allows for meaning-making in which written linguistic modes of meaning are part of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning (Kress & Jewitt, 2003). The concept of design in multiliteracies distinguishes language variability as part of the teaching process from the pedagogy of transmission through which schools reproduce cultural and linguistic forms of English language (Street, 1995). Transmission pedagogy

does not consider the language experiences of students in their language and literacy learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Language variation acknowledges the agentive and subjective nature of language. Thus, different accents, registers, and dialects are significant in the different social contexts and for different social groups (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Language variability provides students with possibilities for interpreting and creating meaning in a new environment. Gee (2001) argues that:

decontextualized language is harmful and misleading, and that a language is only meaningful on the basis of shared experiences and shared information. The solution would be to change the society so that school success and access to specialized forms of knowledge are not markers of class, race and gender (p.67).

Students who arrive in Canadian classrooms such as youth from African who speak little or no English may experience challenges in the mastery of content area subjects because they do not have the competence in the language of instruction. Besides, schools do not offer students learning in English as an additional language (EAL) an opportunity to learn in their first languages which Cummins (2001) argues, is the basis for learning an additional language.

Multiliteracies offer a framework to explore students' experiences, interests, and existing communicational resources that are critical to their learning (Jewitt, 2008). Multiliteracies pedagogy is built on a premise that "knowledge and meaning are historically and socially located and produced. They are "designed" artefacts" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008, 203) that students need as they develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate and to engage critically (Gee, 2008) in their daily lives. Building on the cultural and linguistic resources of students and the use of technology is required to "expand students' literacy practices beyond linear text-based reading and writing" (Cummins, 2006, p. 53). Multiliteracies pedagogy offers students an opportunity to work with multimodality, which is meaning making using a wide range of modes (Stein, 2008; Pahl, 2004). Options for immigrant students' alternative expression and meaning making may produce deeper understandings about their social, political and economic situations, which are important in their learning

(Campano, 2007; Stein, 2008), because literacy learning is supported within multilingual and multiliterate settings.

To support multilingual literacy learning, students require ample opportunities to use language/s in different social settings (Martin-Jones, 2000). Cummins and Early (2002; 2011) build on the multiliteracies (New London group, (NLG) 1996) perspective to formulate alternative principles to promote academic engagement among ELLs. These principles posit that “ELL students’ cultural knowledge and language abilities are important resources in enabling academic engagement, and ELL students will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning” (Cummins & Early, 2002, p. 3). These principles claim to support language and literacy attainment and engagement among ELLs. Multiliteracies pedagogy offers a framework for educators and learners to construct meaning using multiple modes, cultural knowledge, languages and artefacts (Gonzalez et al 2005; Bhabha, 1994), drawn from learners colonial and postcolonial cultures (Stein, 2008). As such, learner identity plays a significant role in literacy learning for immigrant students. The following section will address the connection between literacy and identity.

2.3 Identity Work in Post Colonial and Sociocultural Studies of Literacy

Bhabha (1994) argues against a single, fixed, stable, and unified reality. Consequently, cultural identities cannot be tied to universalized, cultural traits that define ethnicity. Identity involves ongoing negotiation and cultural exchange that produce a mutual recognition of cultural difference. Similarly, identity is viewed as dynamic, fluid, and subjective, conceivable in and through difference (Hall, 1996; Norton 1995, 2003). Identity changes in time, place and practice (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; 2011), may refer to self-understanding, and “are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice” (Holland, et al, 1998, 5). Identity has been described as the “most important ingredient in literacy teaching and learning” (Pahl & Rowsell,

2005, p. 98) because language constructs and is constructed by a wide variety of social relationships. Consequently, educators' views of literacy shape how they see identities forming in their classrooms (Moje & Luke 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Norton, 2008). According to Gee, (1999) identity represents “ways of acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing together with other people, using objects, symbols, tools, and technologies to recognize yourself and others as meaning and meaningful in certain ways” (p. 7). As such, questions of identity in education are central to understanding the complexity in language and literacy learning and the framing of education policies and practices for different kinds of learners, for example, ELLs (Lee & Anderson, 2008).

2.3.1 Identity in Figured Worlds

The concept of Figured Worlds relates to identity construction that includes symbols and socially shared meanings that individuals may use to resist “negative social positioning they experience” (Holland et al, 1998, 128). Drawing on Holland et al, Urrietta (2007) views identity construction in figured worlds as: relating to “self understanding”; how identities are understood and meanings shift over time; is relational, that is, “what one is not is important in defining what one is”, such as immigrant student, African, ELL, ‘black’ constructions from not English-speaking, Canadian and ‘white’, a process of becoming and a site for meaning-making, such as becoming literate in English; “embedded in a collective past” and constructed through “life experiences”, and by participation in cultural activities, and is “mediated through cultural artefacts and discourses” that can be improvised for example, African students’ out-of-school literacy practices and artefacts; “embodying internal tensions and contradictions” as in constructions of hybrid third-space identities among African immigrant youth (p.2).

Figured worlds have potential to distribute actors “not only relating actors to landscapes of action and spreading our senses of self across many different fields of activity, but also by giving the landscape human voice and tone”(Holland et al 1998, p. 41). Certain individuals may be locked out of some figured worlds because of their social position or rank (for example, African immigrant students learning in an additional language may

have limited access to full participation in mainstream classrooms). Individuals may deny some figured worlds to others. For instance, educators may deny minoritized students school literacy by ignoring their funds of knowledge. Also, ELLs may use silence to resist or protect themselves from being labelled. Individuals may also gain mastery in some figured worlds, and may miss others by choice (Holland et al, 1998). Hence, the concept of figured worlds is a lens through which minoritized students assign meaning to their experiences and interpret their interactions with others such as teachers and peers.

Positioning of immigrant students to predetermined roles and abilities such as struggling readers and writers shapes their language and literacy learning and construction of identities (Bartlett, 2008). According to Holland et al (1998), the strength of figured worlds for this study lies in providing:

a basis for studying identity and agency. It is a powerful tool to study identity production in education, especially sociocultural constructs in education, local educational contexts, and can be used as a practical tool to design figured worlds of possibility (p. 112).

For this study a consideration of artefacts (cultural objects in which community knowledge and home language are embedded) is important, because African immigrant students' cultural resources may represent their communicative skills across different identities for the different communities they live and experience. The students may be multilingual or bilingual, and may speak English at school and another language at home. Their complex identities include participating in different figured worlds of home, school, home country, and religious organizations, among others (Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006). Minoritized youth have agency to transform their world and to acquire academic literacy through their cultural materials and artefacts as advanced through the notion of figured worlds. Although most of identity work is enacted multimodally and expressed through narratives, drawing, acting, performing, and gesture (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005), the school literacy curriculum often values written texts (Street, 2005, Gregory et al, 2004) which may exclude language learners who are yet to gain writing skills in the

target language. According to Cummins (2004) possibility for agency can be realised when educators reflect critically on the taken-for-granted aspects of the school curriculum, such as the choice of what is to be taught and how, and on ways to support learners, such as African immigrant students, whose voices are not represented by the official school curriculum.

2.3.2 Negotiating identities through cultural resources

Important to identity is the role played by cultural resources (artefacts) that are socially constructed products of human activity, and which may in turn become tools for cultural reproduction (Ibrahim, 1999). Artefacts are a means of interpretation in which “a particular set of characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain 1998, p. 52). Therefore, the process of identity construction engages artefacts which are both material (e.g. a book, family photographs, life stories, special coffee maker, crucifix, etc) and conceptual (e.g. labels such as good, ghetto, struggling, and ELL student in classrooms). Artefacts also portray aspects of culture, possibility, and agency (Bartlett, 2005) by their potential to mediate identities and activities in literacy learning. Artefacts are situated in relation to power, offer access to social spaces and are multimodal in nature (Leander, 2002).

The application of artefacts in the study of identity and literacy learning for African youth provides a deeper understanding about their experiences which can be represented in discourse across the different identities for the different communities they live and experience (Gee, 2000). Their complex identities include participating in different “figured worlds” of out-of and at school, across their country of origin and Canada, and religious organizations, among others (Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006). Artefacts are situated in relation to power, and access to symbols of power is shaped by social positioning. As such, these cultural resources are not innocent in design and use, can be limiting, and may further marginalize their users and impede their literacy and learning. Dyson (2003) posits that a study of literacy practices through artefacts requires

researchers and educators' reflexivity on the cultural resources learners draw upon to represent and construct meaning, and reassess the meaning this may have on the identity of the learner.

Artefacts are important in mediating identity construction by providing tools for meaning-making that bring together the individual, collective, historical, and cultural practices and experiences in learning. Artefacts as tools for meaning-making and resistance afford culturally and linguistically (CLD) students' opportunities to create identity texts (Cummins 2006) that portray them as knowledgeable, capable and resourceful. Artefacts are important in the construction of hybrid third-space identities by allowing for improvisation in meaning-making. Hybrid identities challenge deficit assumptions of identity as stable and neutral to the contexts and activities of individuals. According to Hall, (2000),

because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites ... [They] are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion than they are a sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity (p.17).

Hence identity/ties is/are always in a process of becoming (Hall, 1996), and the construction of social identity is an act of power (Gee, 1996; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain 1998; Cummins, 2001). Hybridity in literacy education offers a lens to understand the experiences of immigrant students by using multiple meaning making tools that allow third spaces to develop, and, thereby, extend learning (Gutierrez, Lopez and Tejada, 1999/2009). Hence, hybridity is a lens to view African youth as constructing identity/ies within diverse contexts and to understand how these learners negotiate literate identity/ties as migrants. The notion of hybridity is not a fixed space but a space for ongoing negotiations possible when different cultural systems and practices meet. As such, African youth do not remain in the in-between space but develop new forms of blended or syncretic literacies (Gregory et al, 2004) through a process of bringing together knowledge and diverse spaces of learners to inform literacy learning (Gutierrez, 2009; Gutierrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009; Gutierrez et al, 1999). Diverse tools, spaces

and literacies of minoritized students offer a broader interpretation of literacy beyond print (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008). Sociocultural theory on identity presents tools to explore the complex relationships among identity/ties and language in the context of postcolonial Diaspora (Norton, 1997) by looking at specific interactions and literacy practices in and out-of-school (Gregory et al, 2004). The two theoretical frameworks guided selection of studies and methodology that inform the experiences, literacy learning, and identity issues among African youth. The framework also supports an understanding of knowledge as multiple, therefore allowed for mapping of literacy activities, and recognition of the African youth perspectives, and reflexivity in representing the youth in the study as agentive not victims.

Literature Review

2.4 Introduction

This section presents a review of the literature that illuminates an understanding of migration and adaptation, becoming literate in an additional language and the role of school in enabling or constricting opportunities for learning and positive identity construction among minoritized groups. There are limited studies specifically looking at literacy learning among immigrant youth from continental Africa. Also, there are no studies that map the funds of knowledge of African students in host countries.

2.4.1 Adaptation and learning among immigrant youth in Canada

Selected studies from diverse fields on immigrant children and youth in Canada such as immigration and settlement, employment, health, and education in general, (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Chuang, Rasmi, & Friesen, 2011; Dlamini, Wolfe, Anucha, & Yan, 2010; Dlamini & Anucha, 2009; Dei, 1996, 2006, 2009; Ibrahim, 1999, 2003; Kanu, 2008, 2009; Stewart, 2011; Kilbridge & Anisef, 2001; Wilkinson, 2002, 2008) provided

insights to understand this population. Studies on immigrant students in English-speaking host countries show that that minoritized students experience challenges related to migratory circumstances such as relocation stress, and possible gaps in formal educational experience, family economic circumstances, language barrier, and age. They also face challenges of cultural adaptation and adjusting to a new school and society (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Dlamini et al, 2009; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Janusch, 2010; Stewart, 2010, and Szente, et al, 2006). Encounters of difference and racial discrimination and challenges of learning a new language, coupled with the nature of the English-only school curriculum was also found to disorient new immigrant youth in their adaptation and learning (Gunderson, 2004, 2009).

Critical studies indicate that immigrant students' home languages, literacy, and identity continue to be devalued in the host society through programs that pressure them to abandon their L1 and culture for English (Gibson, 1998). CLD students' identities are also devalued in classrooms that reinforce the devaluation of their prior knowledge (Cummins, 2012). Most curriculum and pedagogy approaches in host countries use approaches to literacy that do not take into account bilingual and multilingual students' literacy in their home languages or their migratory circumstances (Baker, 2006). According to Cummins (2001), devaluation of immigrant students' culture and language within schools may leave the students feeling endangered and unworthy, and consequently they drop out-of-school to preserve their identity. Other studies found that deficit models often used in public education to describe immigrant children ignore the cultural resources that may bridge the gap between home and school (Moll et al, 1992; McTavish, 2010).

In his counselling studies with African immigrant youth in Canada, Brammer (2011) noted that the students struggled with issues of identity and belonging, prejudice and classification in their new country. Navigating multiple and converging cultures (Oh & Cooc, 2011) and identities often position immigrant children and youth between languages and cultures, and may lead to language shift, loss, or both as they become

socially and culturally disconnected from extended families (Wong-Fillmore, 1991) that are an important source of support in all aspects of life including literacy and learning. In their study with immigrant youth in Toronto, Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder (2006), found that most youth migrate with a well formed notion of who they are, and with belonging to memberships in their linguistic, society and national identities. Upon migration, they encounter an evolving identity in their cultural expectations about family, community, language and culture that are important to their adjustment and learning but are not reflected or valued in the host society and in their school.

Adaptation to new locations enhances learning and construction of positive identities among the youth. In his study, Rumbaut (2005) claimed immigrant children and youth often lose their ethnic identity and homeland memories that come with it, a loss that complicates how youth understand themselves or how their identities are understood. They experience acute acculturation (i.e. contact and accommodation of new language and culture often from the dominant group's ethos and values) (Culhane, 2002). The youth often face intergenerational conflicts with their families who aspire to maintain their home culture while the youth quickly adapt to the new culture. They construct the "we" and "them" identities involving membership in a group or category which creates bonding and a sense of belonging (Nieto, 2009). Positioning of immigrant youth in the new environment creates pressure for them to assimilate to dominant social contexts. However, some segments of youth resist marginality and reconstruct an identity for themselves based on how they perceive themselves and what they want to be in their social world (Holland et al. 1998). Immigrant students face challenges of identity negotiation in their new social locations.

Studies by Adams and Kirova (2007) in Canada and the United States found that educational systems in the two countries lacked sufficient support and teaching resources for refugee students. In Canada, schools lack sufficient support and teaching resources to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Taylor et al, 2008; Kanu, 2008; Kao & Thomson, 2006). Nieto's (2009) studies in the USA found that gaps in

educator knowledge about the needs of CLD students may also contribute to limited support for the students' identity construction and learning in their new country. Adapting to a new school environment is a major challenge facing immigrant youth and may be complicated by learning in a new language, and may also lead to withdrawal from school (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). Other challenges relate to the English only literacy curriculum (Cummins, 2010; Gunderson, 2004) that ignores CLD students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992). According to Luke (1997), the school literacy curriculum labels multilingual students as different and deficient and at the same time, "government policy that decontextualizes literacy does not serve the interest of the Other, instead it interferes with redistributive social justice and limits educational achievements of the Other" (p.132).

Immigrant students' experiences of social, institutional and racial discrimination, difference, isolation and conflicts (Chuang et al, 2011; Dlamini et al, 2009; Gunderson, 2008; Steinbach, 2010), and low expectations by some peers and educators (Braithwaite & James, 1996; James, 2012; Cummins, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009) leave immigrant youth feeling overwhelmed and marginalized in many ways. Also, a limited curriculum and construction of negative black student identity by educators may contribute to learning challenges (Codjoe, 2006). Isolation of immigrant students in social contexts may negatively affect the integration, language learning, and identity of new students. Educator knowledge of the circumstances and cultural resources of immigrant students may enhance the students' learning and positive experiences of school (Bhabha, 2004; Moll et al 2005; OECD, 2010; Rutter, 2006).

Age at immigration has been found to be an important factor that shapes adaptation, learning a new language, and integration into the host society. Studies on immigrant youth and children in host countries have shown that although immigrant children are reported to do well in school over time, arrival during adolescence and joining high school at this stage in life may complicate learning in that the newcomer youth may not have ample time to adjust to the new school and environment, and make friends

(Cummins et al, 2008; Stevens, 1999; Wilkinson, 2002). Public education in the province of Ontario is funded for up to 21 years of age (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Students who migrate during adolescence, some with gaps in their schooling and needing to learn a new language find that they have limited time to meet expectations and graduate with peers at their age and grade levels as they require more time and support to complete high school. The youth also have limited time to pass the literacy test in the case of Ontario. Such a situation was reported to limit chances for post secondary education and future employment as they are also streamed in non academic programs, English as additional language (EAL) programs, and some in to special programs (Wilkinson, 2002; People for Education, 2012). Despite these challenges, immigrant youth and their families have great expectations in education as catalytic to improving their social positioning in host countries (Kilbridge, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, & Khattar, 2001; Anisef, 2005).

2.4.2 Literacy and identity studies with immigrant youth

Pahl and Rowsell (2005) have argued that the link between literacy and identity allows literacy practices to construct identities that in turn shape literacy. In their recent studies, Pahl and Rowsell (2012) found that school and out- of school literacy practices “link with students’ evolving sense of themselves as cultural agents” (p. 119), and as readers, writers, or speakers (Moje, 2004). Studies on immigrant learners tend to highlight low literacy rates and poor school outcomes (Cooper, 2007; Brown, 2006, Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). For example, OSSLT outcomes highlight that compared to English proficient peers, more CLD students especially ELLs fail the test (EQAO, 2012). Despite the negative reports on CLD students’ literacy outcomes, school literacy curricula continue to alienate their funds of knowledge embedded in the cultural knowledge, L1, and migratory experiences, that Moll et al (1992) argue are important resources to bridge and extend learning for minoritized students, and offer them identities as capable learners.

Scholars such as Barton and Hamilton (2000), Heath and Street (2008), and Street (2004) working within the sociocultural framework have argued for a consideration of literacy as

social practices, that is, those everyday literacy activities of individuals, to address literacy learning and identity of CLD students. Other researchers such as Cummins (2000) have argued for the relevance of immigrant students' multiple languages and identities in their cognitive, academic, and linguistic growth, that educators may take advantage of and present opportunities for positive identity re/construction for minority students (Cummins, 2005). Literacy therefore as Giroux (1991) argues, becomes an enabling condition for forms of citizenship in which members of dominant and subordinate groups are offered subject positions, the opportunity to shape history in emancipatory terms rather than be the subject or object of its oppressive and colonizing practices (p.1).

Cummins's (2001; 2004; 2010) studies with minority children in North America emphasize the role of educators in enabling minoritized students' participation in learning. In other collaborative studies with CLD elementary school children in Africa, Ireland, and North America (Cummins & Early, 2010; Stein, 2008) and in Canada (Cummins & Early, 2002; Cummins et al, 2005; Taylor, Bernard, Garg & Cummins, 2008) found that educators can create options to support students' alternative expression such as through creation of multimodal,

“identity texts” which are defined as, the products of students' creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher... [which] hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light (Cummins, Bismilla, Chow, Cohen, Giampapa, 2005, p. 5)

The notion of identity texts stresses that through creative approaches to literacy analysis and representation of text, students have options to approach reading from a diversity of approaches such as visual and performing Arts, creation of dolls, and dual language books with the support of their families. In their study with immigrant children Rowsell and Pahl (2007) found a strong connection between the texts and identities of the children who were the text makers. The children's identities were “sedimented” in texts, that is, identities were related to the activities children engaged in as they created texts, such as

the choice of modes in meaning-making, and drawing on their historical and social locations.

Other studies have used the concept of figured worlds to demonstrate that classrooms can be understood as spaces with opportunities for possibility, resistance and negotiation of identities. In their studies with minoritized students, Bartlett (2007), Dagenais, Day, and Toohey (2006), Leander (2002), Wortham (2004), and Urietta (2007) found acts of positioning, labeling and assigning behaviours such as weak, disruptive and struggling by teachers shaped how students engaged in literacy learning. Additionally, Leander (2002) found that ridicule of minoritized students' artefacts by peers who were privileged by the school literacy curriculum strained interaction with other students, limited participation and consequently constricted learning. Students accepted or resisted positioning with implications for literacy learning and learner identity. Bartlett's (2007) study with youth and adult learners in Brazil found that the students refused to participate in literacy classrooms with teachers who ignored their socio political contexts and assigned them responsibility for their illiteracy. Assigning identity labels that disempowered the learner maintains the unequal power inherent in education and society (Cummins, 2001) and promotes social inequalities.

Bhabha (2004) and Hall (2000) argue that studies with immigrant and other minoritized communities cannot ignore the hegemonic post colonial structures which have shaped their experiences over time and are visible in hybrid identities. Furthermore, with the recognition of identity as fluid, and shifting with intercultural interaction and across difference, immigrant youth may choose to assimilate into practices of the dominant society for strategic positioning. That is, some youth change their literacy practices and adapt to those associated with western societies. They may occupy an in-between space and hop between cultures of home and host countries depending on various situations (Bhabha, 2004). Also, immigrant youth may reject positioning and join resistant groups like youth gangs (Stewart, 2010). They confront new cultures and spaces and negotiate new identities for opportunities to realize their selfhood (Bhabha, 1994). In

acknowledgement of the fluid nature of identity among newcomer youth, McLean (2010) recommends reflexivity with students who often equate “success and power with the process of becoming part of, being like, and being in the dominant group” (p.14) in order to support positive identity of these students.

Studies have highlighted the formation of hybrid identities when global and local identities of immigrant students converge (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, Collazo 2004; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). In most cases the literacy practices of immigrant students blend into new hybrid practices which differ from those of school and home (Luke, 2003; Jones, 2000). Empowering classrooms afford learners positive identities and in so doing support language and literacy learning. Cummins (2004) and Moje and Luke (2009) identified that creating opportunities for positive identity formation and allowing student’s experiences and literacy practices in the classrooms, support literacy learning and positive identity reconstruction among the students, especially immigrant students who often face challenges of learning in new schools and sometimes in a new language. Immigrant students’ school and out-of-school literacy practices constitute important funds of knowledge.

2.4.3 Out-of-school literacy practices as funds of knowledge

Sociocultural studies position the legitimacy of out-of-school literacy practices (literacy practices and events that individuals and groups of people engage in to address their everyday concerns, such as reading maps and schedules, planning daily activities, etc). The affordances of literacy practices challenge deficit assumptions about home languages and cultural knowledge in the homes and communities of diverse students (Moll et al, 1992). The application of diverse learners’ cultural/community resources to their learning has been utilized to support literacy and language learning in diverse classrooms (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004; Gregory, 2008; Gonzalez et al, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Gaytan, Bang, Pakes, O’Connor & Rhodes, 2010). Out-of-school practices have been shown to position students labelled as struggling in the school contexts as competent and engaged (Hull & Schultz, 2001 & 2002; Lam. 2009; Moje 2000; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-

Lopez, & Tejada, 1999). Knowledge of relevant information about students' out-of-school literate practices may, therefore, support teachers' engagement with students by relating this knowledge to instruction to enhance literacy achievement (Schultz, 2002).

Other studies with youth suggest that power struggles within school contexts have alienated immigrant students (Cummins, 2001). A divide between school and home implies that cultural knowledge and students' out-of-school experiences are not as valued as the school ones (Campano, 2007; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). In his literacy study with Cambodian immigrant youth in the USA, Campano (2007) alternatively found that valuing the narratives and voices of these students was a powerful tool in knowledge construction. Through an alternative classroom, his students reflected and narrated their experiences and histories. Drawing on this background knowledge Campano provided the youth access to the school curriculum. He argues for the potential of cultural narratives as,

vehicles that link subjective experience to more complete knowledge about a shared world especially for minoritized children who write from buried or misrepresented histories or don't hear the echo of their own experiences in traditional school curriculum (Campano, 2007, 50).

The importance of valuing the experiences and knowledge of minoritized students is also articulated in studies by Gregory et al (2004), Pahl and Rowsell (2005), and Moje et al (2004). Their studies defied deficit assumptions about cultural knowledge, language barriers, and poverty when addressing minoritized students' school literacy engagement and achievement. The studies found that adapting the school literacy curriculum to local conditions of families and children would support students to develop new forms of blended or syncretic literacies. Syncretic practices do not assume that different cultural systems and practices meet and simply replace each other. Rather, "syncretic literacy may include incorporation of any culturally diverse practices, beliefs, identities, tools ...in to the organization of literacy activities" (Duranti & Ochs, 1995, p.5). Learning to function and perform multiple identities in different linguistic and cultural groups supports the

development of students' metacognitive abilities. For example, their language and literacy extends and transforms existing knowledge to new forms (Gregory et al, 2004).

Immigrant students' interactions across and within sites of home and host cultures may demonstrate the transition from one context, culture, and language to another that is important in the construction of hybrid identities (Ahmed, 1999). Third space, which is a hybrid space (Bhabha, 1994) in literacy education posits that meaning and representation are not only domains of the curriculum framework but also reside in learners' funds of knowledge. According to (Moje et al, 2004) third space in the classrooms may be viewed as a place where school literacy practices are challenged and re-shaped. It is a space in which the every day out-of-school knowledge of learners is brought together with schooled knowledge through a process Millard (2003, p.6) refers to as "transformative pedagogy of literacy fusion". Important literacies are said to develop when academic literacy is planned to develop texts that allow students to find continuity in learning, rather than keeping the home and school settings distinct (Gutiérrez, et al, 1999).

Despite numerous ethnographic studies with minoritized students that support funds of knowledge as important tools to mediate and extend language and literacy learning, and identity construction, these resources have not been recognized in learning and classroom instruction. For example, particular studies (e.g., Cummins, 2004, 2009; Gregory et al, 2004; Gregory, 2008; Moll, et al, 2005; Pahl, 2008; Pahl & Rowsell, 2011; Stein, 2008, and Toohey, 2010) are in agreement that CLD students' knowledge and representational resources are often absent from their learning. Fu (2005) found that educators' expectations from the students' out-of-school literate lives did not match the students' urge to share these experiences. Knowledge that CLD students especially ELLs may be limited by language to express their experiences, requires teachers to diversify instruction and provide options to explore and construct meaning using multiple modes (Stein, 2008). Out-of-school contexts are legitimate spaces to construct meaning and teachers need to recognize these spaces in their literacy instruction. Additionally, artefacts and

home languages are important funds of knowledge to mediate and extend ELLs and immigrant students' learning.

2.4.4 Home language as funds of knowledge

Students' L1 is arguably a foundation for L2 literacy development that has not been fully utilized as a resource to support ELLs' education (Cummins, 2009). Non validation of ELLs' L1 in learning may be traced in deficit socialization, competing goals, and aspired identities and has led to development of ELLs' negative language attitudes towards L1 (Phillipson, 2000). Non recognition of L1 and non standard varieties of English in schools (Cummins, 2009; Street, 2005; Averbach 2000) has been viewed in the literature as adding to the struggles faced by language learners. On one hand, social interaction and support from peers has been found to support proficiency in an additional language (Pavlenko, 2004) on one hand. On the other hand, Gunderson (2009) found that ELLs often face discrimination and isolation from mainstream speakers of English which reduces opportunities to learn a new language in social settings. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000),

“learning to write in a second language is not simply the accrual of technical linguistic abilities but rather is intimately related to identity..., how one sees oneself and is seen by others as a student, a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority”(p.155).

Cummins (2010) contends that literacy teachers have an imperative to facilitate marginalized learners' access to the literacy that is central to their participation in Canadian life.

Access to learning for ELLs requires schools and educators to reflect on how to extend literacy pedagogy so that students may gain access to multimodal and culturally diverse forms of literate practices (Mills, 2009). In so doing, educators create possibilities for learners to engage in critical literacy, that is: adopt a critical analysis of texts (Macedo, 1987; Wink, 2011); encourage use of new technology; allow cultural tools such as

artefacts; enable opportunities for literate identities to grow, and nurture opportunities for learners' engagement in hybrid and syncretic spaces and multiliteracies for minoritized students (Cummins, 2010; Gutierrez et al, 1999; Darder, Hudson & Mayo, 2012).

Immigrant students' pre and post migratory factors provide insights into the events that shaped their prior educational experiences and languages, and highlight global and local inequalities surrounding these experiences. Utilizing ELL's funds of knowledge may support them to reflect on how they are positioned in society (Dei and Simmons, 2010) and support them to achieve relevant language proficiency for positive learning experiences. Also, CLD students' funds of knowledge may harness cultural and linguistic diversity as a medium for a culturally relevant curriculum (Taylor, 2007; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billing, 1995 & 1999; Ruiz, 1984).

2.4.5 Becoming literate in a new language

Gregory (2008) posits teaching students to make sense of their worlds in new language(s) in contemporary classrooms (for example, in host countries like Canada where instruction is largely monolingual and monocultural despite the growing cultural and linguistic student diversity) is complex (NLG, 1996). Various approaches have been advanced on how people become literate in new or additional languages. These include: the cognitive abilities approach with a focus on explicit instruction; the sociocultural approach that views learning and knowledge as products of interaction in social and cultural contexts, and a combination approach that utilizes explicit instruction within sociocultural contexts of learning (Collier, 1995).

Sociocultural approaches

Drawing on sociocultural approaches to learning, Gregory (2008) posits that teaching and learning strategies to support students to learn a new language requires responding to diverse students' learning needs, approaches, contexts and languages. In this view, learning how to teach new language learners implies exploring their abilities, needs, and funds of knowledge, and literacy practices from home and community that are ignored in school (Harklau & Pinnow, 2010). In addition, she argues that learning how to teach new

language learners means exploring their abilities, needs, and funds of knowledge, and literacy practices from home and community that are ignored in school. Additional language and literacy learning is influenced by sociocultural processes through which individuals use literacy and language to solve everyday needs in specific cultural contexts (Heath, 1983).

According to Collier (1995), sociocultural processes affect language learners' access to cognitive, academic and language development in both positive and negative ways. New language learning shaped by everyday experiences, in the contexts of home, school, and community requires a consideration of interrelated factors within the school structure and the wider society to provide supportive environments. At the school level, the classroom environment and structure of programs may alienate new language learners and forms a case for educators to create enabling spaces that are supportive to L2 literacy learning. Classroom interaction and knowledge negotiation among students is important for oral and written language development (Cummins, 2010). Thus, new language learning is optimized in highly interactive classrooms where students are actively engaged in problem solving and learning (Cummins, 2010).

Cummins (1991; 2004) and Thomas and Collier (1995) found that L2 literacy acquisition is shaped by factors other than those shaping oral language in L1. Academic L2 literacy requires high proficiency and is supported by academic skills, concept formation, subject knowledge and also learning strategies in L1 which transfer to L2 literacy learning. To acquire conversational fluency, ELLs require opportunity for face-to-face conversations during which they use high frequency words and follow simple grammatical instructions (Cummins, 2009). Guthrie (2004) argues that supporting ELLs to immerse in literacy-rich environments with a focus on literate forms of language use supported L2 literacy. Further, ELLs need to invest time for extensive reading to improve the skill. To teach reading comprehension and writing of related text requires teachers to scaffold language and draw on ELLs' prior knowledge embedded in L1, and extended language use in diverse social contexts to support the improvement of academic reading and writing

skills. Frequent writing allows for knowledge and skills transfer from L1 to L2 for example during group work, demonstration affirms students' identities, allows for feedback from teachers, and consequently creates language awareness and builds academic proficiency.

Combination approach and linguistic transfer

Edwards (2009), Gregory (2008), and Wang (2008) argue that literacy teaching in a new language should involve explicit teaching that considers learners' sociocultural contexts. Noting that reading and writing are closely linked, Edwards (2009) and Wang (2008) contend that reading in a new language requires one to use the target language's phonological awareness, vocabulary, and decoding. Also learning to write requires planning, recalling, spelling of words, writing and revising sentences. Shanahan (2006) like Edwards (2009) argues that decoding skills often developed through explicit instruction are important text-level skills in early literacy acquisition and reading comprehension, but they are not enough. As such, the focus in teaching students to become literate in a new language should be on supporting understanding and building comprehension skills not decoding skills. That is, educators should focus on cultivating learners' interest in reading and understanding how meaning is encoded in text not just developing students' word reading and fluency skills (Cummins, 2012). Also, all instruction, be it L2 only or bilingual, needs to recognize bilingual learners' L1 as a social and cognitive resource, and facilitate a two-way transfer of knowledge and skills across languages. Further, since power relations in society manifest themselves in identity negotiation in schools, minoritized (McCarthy, 2002) students require instruction that affirms their identity within the school contexts. Edwards (2009) argues that learning to read and write simultaneously in L1 and English does not confuse children and also, time spent learning in L1 does not mean less English learning. In any case, providing opportunities for new language learners to use the target language in multiple social environments supports language learning and increases opportunities to use the new language (Wang, 2011). In addition, cultivating a positive attitude towards learning a new language allows learners to use the new language for perceived benefits.

Edwards (2009), Gregory (2008) and Wang (2011) contend that language features that relate to convergence (closer) and divergence (different) play a role in acquisition of a new language. The closer a new language's sounds and symbols are to the learners' L1, the easier it is to learn that language. That is, shared linguistic and writing systems between languages more readily allow for "cross-language facilitation" (Wang, 2011, p.28) in reading and writing than when L1 systems are different from the target language. Another factor is that early exposure to multiple languages enriches dual language learning (Gregory, 2008). School support to new language learners in terms of resources, validation of funds of knowledge, every day practices and L1 improves a language learner's proficiency in an additional language. Teachers need to use multiple modes of meaning-making to support language teaching and model the different ways text is written and presented.

Cummins (2012) advocates for the interdependence hypothesis which views reading comprehension in one language for example L1 as associated with that of another language (such as L2). August and Shanahan (2006) cited by Cummins (2012) argue that bilingual students have the ability for cross-language transfer of reading comprehension across,

typologically different languages; for children across elementary, middle, and high school; for learners of English as a foreign language and English as a second language; over time, from both first to second language and second to first language (p.1981).

As such, effective instruction should focus on two-way cross-lingual transfer where ELLs are supported to use L1 within L2 medium classrooms to support L2 literacy such as in Cummins et al's (2005) multiliteracy and dual language projects. Language learners who are not fully proficient in L1 literacy encounter challenges in L2 literacy acquisition. Additionally, limited exposure to the target language means the learner is unfamiliar with some words (Edwards, 2009). As ELLs expand vocabulary, oral and written skills in L2, they demonstrate knowledge in L1. Students should be encouraged to maintain L1, which

is important for individual and group identities and supports L2 learning (also, Marsh & Ettlal, 2008). On the contrary, a shift to English monolingualism has negative effects on social identity and belonging (Fishman, 1991) and impacts on language learning.

The Ontario government policy and procedures (2007) for K-12 ELLs, ESL and ELD programs and services state that English language learners require sustained language support to achieve the proficiency necessary to meet school literacy expectations. According to Cummins (1999; 2005), different levels of language proficiency require different amounts of time to acquire. For example, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) may take language learners about 1-2 years and the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) may take learners 5-7 years to acquire. Proficiency in an additional language is dependent upon a set of skills and metalinguistic knowledge acquired during the process of learning L1, what Cummins (1981) calls Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). Cummins (2010) identifies EAL programs that offer monolingual instruction to ELLs as causing students to struggle with language learning. At the same time, non recognition of ELLs' prior knowledge, and instruction that constricted identity options and provided less demanding content in both segregated and integrated classrooms were detrimental to language learning (Cummins & Early, 2011).

2.4.6 Accountability in public education and CLD students' literacy education

Accountability in public education has been viewed to minoritize CLD students (Majhanovich, 2006) such as African immigrant youth. The standardized school curriculum isolates learners' funds of knowledge and subjects them to stressful and unfamiliar testing before they become proficient in the language and content of the test. Outcome-based learning, accountability and a prescriptive curriculum are argued to shape the work of teachers by taking away autonomy and creativity in instruction and by placing demands on time allocated to teaching to tests. Consequently, these demands have shifted public education from the ethics of understanding and connecting to the lives of individuals and society to a focus on education efficiency tied to coverage of content

in privileged subjects and test-based learning (Apple, 2001, 2006 & 2008; Majhanovich, 2006; Siegel, 2004).

In Canada, like other immigrant receiving countries, Majhanovich (2006) argues public education perpetuates injustices in education and society by ignoring minoritized students' funds of knowledge and circumstances in its focus to align its goals to serve market demands, protect beliefs and values of the dominant society, and support students with the cultural capital to meet the expectations of the curriculum and testing (also, NLG, 1996). For instance, an analysis of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) test results indicate that compared with the overall population of students who write the OSSLT, English language learners (ELL) show a much lower passing rate. For example, in 2007, 84 % of non-ELLs compared to 52% (ELL) passed the test (EQAO, 2007).

Studies by Hinton, Rogers, and Kozlow (2010) found that in schools where the language of instruction was English, almost 18% of all students who had not met the literacy requirement were identified as English language learners. Additionally, the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) position paper makes reference to studies by Roessingh (2010) which highlighted ESL/ELD students' school dropout rate as at 70% compared to 30% for non ESL/ELD students. Other studies contend that poor outcomes in OSSLT may limit ELLs' mobility to post secondary education and possibly lock them out of certain careers. Consequently, constructing a failing identity among ELLs perpetuates social inequalities and highlights critical issues in the literacy curriculum and the culturally and linguistically biased testing (Jeffrey, 2003; People for Education, 2010; Pinto, Boler & Norries, 2007).

A *People for Education* (2011) annual report showed that ELLs in secondary school were more likely to be enrolled in applied courses which limit their post secondary choices. The *Ontario Curriculum (Grades 9-12)* document highlights applied courses as those that are taught in grade 9 and 10 and "focus on the essential concepts of a subject and

develop student's knowledge and skills through practical application and concrete examples" (Ontario Ministry of Education 2000, p.4). ELLs who join secondary school, for instance the students in this study, do not have enough the years to achieve required proficiency to pass OSSLT. In addition, funding is only for four to five years after which students who did not meet graduation requirements join adult education classes whose focus and support are different in secondary school. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), Ontario secondary school students are required to complete 30 credits, 18 of which are compulsory and 12 are optional. Courses offered are intended to meet requirements for postsecondary institutions and employers, as well as students' needs and interests. In Grades 9 and 10, courses are geared to promote the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, and allow students to focus on their interests and to explore various areas of study. In Grades 11 and 12, students focus on courses that are directly linked to their intended postsecondary destinations. The nature of the school programs and curriculum requirements has academic, social and economic implications for the future of minoritized students.

This study considered additional language (L2) literacy learning within the context of multiliteracy pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 1996) of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformative learning that considered use of explicit instruction to scaffold learning and support learners funds of knowledge, interests, and experiences in their social and cultural worlds The next chapter presents the methodology and data collection tools used to gather relevant data, and analysis procedures, within an interpretive sociocultural perspective as articulated in the theoretical framework and relevant literature.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The goal of this research was to gain an understanding of the school experiences of African immigrant students who were learning to be literate in English as an additional language in Canadian classrooms. The study is situated within an interpretive tradition that views reality as multiple, socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and situated within domains of power. Sociocultural and postcolonial theories guided the study that sought to address concerns about equity and social justice in education and society for marginalised populations. Critical researchers such as Cummins (2009) argue that schools do not appear to recognize the funds of knowledge and literacy practices that diverse students bring to the classrooms. This study employed a critical interpretive lens to interrogate power dynamics within educational systems in which certain actors, literacies, ways of knowing, and outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al, 1998; Gee, 1996; Street, 2004). I employed a case study with ethnographic tools to collect data and was guided by the following research questions:

- *What are the literacy learning opportunities afforded by the school for African immigrant students who are learning to be literate in an additional language?*
- *In what ways (if at all) do these opportunities relate to students' funds of knowledge, interests, and prior literacy experiences?*
- *What are the implications for the students' communication and identity options?*

3.1 Case Study with Ethnographic Tools

Stake (2005) defines a qualitative case study as both a “process of inquiry about a case and a product of that inquiry” (p. 443). It might be an event, a process, a program or several people (Creswell, 2007). My specific case of study concerned the literacy learning and identity reconstruction of African immigrant youth In Canada. Case studies require a qualitative case researcher to conceptualize the object of study (Stake, 2005;

Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998) or provide a careful delineation of the phenomenon (Flybjerg, 2001). Bounding the case provides focus (Stake, 1995) not as a rigid structure but a reflective process. Guided by the interpretive and sociocultural assumptions of the multiple and situated nature of social inquiry, I focused on relevant aspects to the inquiry. These aspects acknowledged time, place, number of participants and the migratory contexts, policies on education and supports for diverse students, classroom practices, and perspectives of study participants.

Bounding the case allowed me to have an in-depth literacy inquiry about a particular group, African immigrant youth in Canada, learning in English as an additional language in southwestern Ontario, across sites of home and school. It allowed for mapping of the geographical, the participants, and their literacy practices. Bounding the case presents challenges because the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident (Flybjerg, 2001). For instance, some features of the case are found within the case with others outside the case, yet features outside the boundary are important as context (Stake, 2005). Boundaries of a case may be constrained in terms of time, events and processes, and as such are not always fixed or clear (Stake, 1995). I interviewed and observed six youth who had been in Canada for three months to five years, and three teachers. I also interviewed one at the school, and had an informal conversation with the school administrator. These boundaries enabled me to focus my study by working within the limits of what I could possibly learn at the school classroom within three months. Ongoing reflexivity on how I interacted with the study participants enriched the dynamic process of conducting qualitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

To gain an understanding of African youth's literacy and identity, I utilized qualitative research which is a "method of inquiry that seeks to understand social phenomena within the context of participants' perspectives and experiences and uses research methods that are flexible, responsive and open to contextual interpretation" (Merriam, 2002, p.3). I employed a case study (Creswell, 2008) utilizing naturalistic methods such as interviews, observation, and textual analysis in my research to explore, "what happened, how, and

why” (Yin, 2003, p.111), and also according to whom. A case study approach afforded the study credibility through triangulation of multiple data sources, the interpretation of data, and my reflection on the data. In addition, I conducted member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by going back to participants for conversations about their responses to seek clarification, and to gain an “in-depth” understanding of the their intended meanings. Another reason for using case study in my research was the potential for representation of my participants as partners, co-constructors of meaning rather than research objects in the study. Case study strategy enabled direct observation and collection of data in natural settings of school classrooms and to invite out-of-school practices (Heath, 1983, 2005; Pahl, 2004; Stein, 2008). The case study approach is also appropriate for general education enquiries (Merriam, 1998), and for literacy inquiries (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) such as African youth’s literacy learning.

My research employed ethnographic tools to collect data: participant observation and semi-structured interviews, mapping literacy activities with participants, analyzing artefacts and Ontario curriculum documents on strategies to support ELLs. Ethnographic tools allowed me to explore the experiences of my participants in ways that afforded me deep understanding. Although similar strategies are used in case studies, ethnographic tools imply that I spent time closely interacting with the African youth to capture meaning and thick descriptions (Geertz (1973) from their activities as “actors” (Schwandt, 2000). I chose a case study with ethnographic tools over ethnography because “the intent of ethnography is to determine and describe how a cultural group works rather than to understand an issue or a problem using the case as a specific illustration” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Ethnography in its true sense requires a long time commitment in the field to immerse oneself in the culture of the participants (Tedlock, 2005). My aim was to capture the experiences of African youth in a school setting using tools that allowed for interaction through observation, conversations, and mapping activities and facilitated adequate data collection to describe participants’ accounts for analysis and interpretation. In the following section I will present the data collection strategies employed to generate data. These methods are consistent with the interpretive

orientation that shaped how I understood the experiences of marginalised students, and their perspectives (Creswell, 2007) grounded within sociocultural thought. The case study approach provided an analytic process to collect, organize, and analyse data (Patton, 2002) about the school experiences, literacy learning, and identity re/construction among African youth in Canada.

3.2 Research Methods

Understanding complex social realities such as the experiences of African immigrant youth in Canadian classrooms required data collected using multiple methods. To achieve this end, I utilized participant observations, semi-structured interviews, mapping literacy activities, artefacts, and textual analysis of relevant education policy documents. Multiple data sources provided an in-depth investigation into a complex research problem (Yin, 2003) enabling triangulation and trustworthy analysis. Table1 (see pg. 70) provides a summary of data collected, by type of data, number of participants, time allocated and nature of data/activities involved.

My role as a researcher of literacy events with ELLs and their teachers required that I located myself “within the case” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 50) to collect adequate data. Drawing from literacy as social practices (Heath, 1983), the multiliteracies notion that extends literacy beyond print, and the potential in CLD students’ funds of knowledge in their learning, I observed the youth as learners and meaning-makers and reflected on the nature of their classroom interactions, and how they positioned themselves. I was respectful of the social space as I observed and interacted with participating students and teachers not to interfere with the teaching-learning process. Observation did not only include language and math literacy events but also considered overall practices within the school setting and the forces that shaped them such as the Ontario curriculum expectations, nature of EAL program and support for ELLs within the school. Topics guiding observation included: classroom physical space and teaching and learning resources (Merriam, 1988); the characteristics and nature of literacy activities in the classroom; if instructional strategies and activities fostered student identity and

background; the nature of student participation, and the kinds of identities that were constructed and legitimated by school practices. Details of observation strategy are taken up later in the chapter. See also appendix 12, classroom observation guide on page 272. Data collection and generating processes involved mapping literacy practices during which the youth participants completed drawing, writing, and linking school and out-of-school literacy practices, in Africa before migration and in Canada following migration. Mapping activities were conducted at two levels, first, with all participants lasting for two hours. Secondly, with all the ELLs in the classrooms observed including non-participants, and lasted 40 minutes each in three classrooms. I also conducted two individual interviews with 6 youth for a total of two hours each, and interviews with 3 teachers of EAL classrooms. Two of the teachers responded to interview questions through writing. Informal ongoing conversations with the teachers of the EAL and with the students were maintained through the study period. These took place before school, during break and after school. Daily classroom observation for 75 minutes per class for 3 EAL levels (B, C, & D) formed an important aspect of data collection. I conducted myself to high ethical standards when dealing with the participants and respected their time and opinions. With their permission and collaboration with the teachers, I collected and analyzed students' creative writing and art samples, and artefacts of their choice.

Green Valley School English support program

The English as additional language program at the target school was supported by a department head and EAL teachers. According to the Ontario curriculum grade 9-12 (2000) EAL courses are based on levels of English proficiency not grade. The courses are ranked from levels one to five, with level one reserved for ELLs with little or no exposure to English, and five being the highest level for ELLs. All EAL and ELD are Open courses “designed to prepare students for further study in a subject and to enrich their education generally” (p.5). Thus levels 1 to 5 are presented as English as a second language, level A to E, Open ESLAO-ESLEO.

3.2.1 Research participants

The search for a school research site began in the summer of 2011. In consultation with teachers, settlement services, and members of the African communities, I located one secondary school in southwestern Ontario which had a significant number of students from continental Africa who had lived in Canada for 5 years or less. Ethical clearance and permission were obtained both at the University and School Board levels before I gained access to the school and research participants. I contacted one EAL/ESL teacher for guidance on the selection process for suitable participants. The first contact with the EAL teacher was established in February 2012 by email followed by a telephone conversation. The initial meeting was held at the beginning of March 2012 during which I explained the study, and at the same time recruited two EAL teachers, Ms. Alexis and Mr. Green (all participant names are pseudonyms), to participate in the study. The two teachers were instrumental to the recruitment of four student participants, namely, Hongera and Mwangaza who were at EAL levels C and D respectively, and Salama and Shujaa were both EAL B students. A third teacher, Ms. Rob consented to participating in the study. She was on practicum in Ms. Alexis' classroom. Two students at level E who were willing to participate could not get parental consent. Consequently, I recruited Salama and Mwezi as replacements. The two students had graduated from the EAL program the previous semester.

During individual meetings with the students I explained the study and provided letters of information and consent forms. Students 18 years and younger received consent from their parents. I was available to explain the study to the parents if they needed clarification. As I waited for consent from all participants, I spent time at the school building rapport with the potential participants. An observation schedule, initially twice a week for the first week and every day of the week for the rest of the months of March, April, May and part of June was set up with the teachers.

Ms. Asante, the settlement worker in the school who supported student integration, and liaised between home and school, and community and school was instrumental to the recruitment and follow up process. Ms. Asante consented to participate in the study and I received an amendment to add her as a participant and also got the letter of information and interview questions approved by the research ethics office. I conducted a face to face interviews with her and also received insights about the students' home, community, and school relations. The researcher negotiated with participants for times to meet for individual interviews. I maintained open communication with the participants and respected their schedules both of which presented an opportunity for informal talk during which the participants spoke freely about their experiences because they were not restricted to interview questions or limited on what to say because they were conscious of being audio recorded. Most conversations happened in the morning before school began, during lunch and after school. I also had ample time before and after school to interact with the teacher participants for insights and clarification on issues arising during the study. An outsider to participants' lives must observe high ethical standards and consult participants on issues of observation, and reporting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I cultivated a reciprocal and ethical relationship with the participants to ensure the credibility of my research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and acted with respect towards the students and teachers throughout the research process.

The ten participants in the study included six African immigrant youth, three teachers and one settlement worker. Teacher participants were recruited by virtue of being teachers of African students and willingness to participate in the study. Case study design allowed for in-depth examination of a case (Yin, 2003) that is literacy learning within a school classroom to obtain firsthand experiences of African youth. The participants' detailed profiles are described in Chapter 4. The selection of participants and the school was done through purposeful sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to select participants who were most informative about the phenomenon under study. The following criteria were utilized:

- Students of African origin who have lived in Canada for less than one year to 5 years
- Students currently attending secondary school in southwestern Ontario
- Students who speak English as an additional language or are receiving support in English as an additional language
- Teachers of English as additional language (EAL) learners
- in the school supporting adaptation and social needs

The focus of the study was to understand the depth rather than the breadth of immigrant students' literacy learning and construction of identity. Hence, a sample size of six students was sufficient. Limited research about the African youth and deficit assumptions (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005) about their literacy learning has positioned them at-risk of school push-out. The choice of three teachers was to obtain educators' perspectives regarding literacy and learning needs and experiences of diverse students. Table 1 summarizes participant demographic information.

Data from the table highlight the countries of origin and transition, last grade attended before migration, grade placement by age upon migration, level of English as additional language following initial assessment, age of youth at the time of the study, home languages and prior exposure to English. The youth had migrated from different countries in the eastern Africa region. They spoke at least two languages with the exception of Shujaa, in addition to learning English. Mwangaza and Mwezi were bilingual and biliterate, Hongera, Salama and Nyota had acquired L1 literacy while Shujaa had not acquired L1 literacy before migration. Shujaa had three years of language support at elementary school before joining Green valley. Data indicates he was at level B of EAL which indicates he had not acquired significant language skills over the four years. The table also shows data on age at migration, grade placement and English support. All the participants had limited exposure to English before migration. All these factors had implications for the youth's adaptation, school experiences, language and literacy learning, and identity construction in Canada.

Due to time and logistical constraints during school days which prevented meeting with all participants as a group, I negotiated with the youth to meet during one professional development day. All participants except Shujaa came to the meeting where the initial mapping activities were explained and executed by the students. Shujaa completed his

Name	Age M/F	Yr moved	Country of origin	Other country lived	Last grade Att.	Gr. /p /age	Gr. Age	EAL level	Prior Eng. skills	Language R,W,S, L
Mwangaza	15 M	Oct/10	Ethiopia	Sudan	8	9	10	D	<i>little bit</i>	Amharic Tigrinya Arabic Eng-(L)
Hongera	20 F	Oct/10	Ethiopia	Sudan	9	12	12	C	<i>some</i>	Arabic Amharic English (L)
Salama	18 F	Dec/11	Somalia	Kenya	8 (Push -out)	12	12	B	<i>Some</i>	Somalia Swahili Eng.(L)
Shujaa	14 M	Oct/08	Congo	Uganda	6	6	9	B	<i>Not enough</i>	Luganda Eng. (L)
Nyota	18 F	Dec/09	Congo	Kenya	7	11	12	M	<i>Some</i>	Mashi Swahili French English
Mwezi	15 M	July/09	Eritrea	Ethiopia	6	8	10	M	<i>Little bit</i>	Tigrinya Amharic English

activities on a separate day.

Table 0-1: Participant demographic information

[The following words represent abbreviations used in the table: **Reading, Writing, Speaking, Learning, Grade; Placed, Attended**]

I observed Hongera, Salama, Mwangaza and Shujaa who were ELL. Hongera and Mwangaza were in English EAL levels C & D respectively and Salama and Shujaa were in EAL level B in Math. I also observed Salama in four EAL B English sessions. The two participants, Nyota and Mwezi were not observed because their teachers were not participants in the study.

3.2.2 Mapping literacy related activities

Mannion and Ivanič, (2007) contend that mapping students' activities and experiences is a useful tool to explore the diverse literacies that students brought to their learning and the supports they required for positive outcomes in their literacy learning. Trelle and Van Hoven (2010) found that mapping of important sites in youths' everyday lives was a creative and interactive research method. That is, mapping allows the researcher to capture everyday practices in multiple sites, using different modes and media. As such, mapping African youth's literacy practices allowed space for analyzing their various interests and abilities. Mapping also enabled the youth to participate and share their language/s and literacy experiences in the research process. When combined with interviews, mapping enriched the data by presenting communication as multimodal (Kress, 2003). Mapping also provides the "spatially situated nature of experience" (Massey, 1994, cited in Mannion & Ivanič, 2007, p.5) that links time, place and practice together. For example, mapping African youth's diverse literacy activities and experiences connected literacy practices in Africa and Canada to different times, contexts and languages.

Activity 1: mapping pre and post migration school and out-of-school literacy activities

Mapping activities provided students with visual representations of information and allowed for construction of meaning in multiple ways. The mapping activities began with an audit trail of daily activities. In the map, the participants illustrated their daily activities at the two sites of home and school and the languages used as presented in participant profiles in chapter four. They then linked activities at home, and other sites such as church, mosque, library, park, and malls. The mapping strategy was useful in making connections to, and introduction of activities and engagement through the research process. It also provided activities of interest to the students at different sites, and allowed for an analysis of their experiences of school literacy curricula. In addition, mapping showed the connection between the sites of interaction, and revealed the students' funds of knowledge. Although mapping as a data collection strategy has many

affordances by presenting reality as subjective, presenting what is read in maps as objective and final may be problematic (Manion & Ivanič, 2007) and, requires reflexivity. In the study, mapping activities were accompanied by writing and talking about the activities. This allowed for opportunities to link related practices, and clarification of where they took place. For example, I was able to capture the lack of association of certain practices to transition countries where they had actually happened. Mapping activities may also be presented as information on a table. Table 2 presents a summary of information from the youth's mapping activities of out-of-school and school in country of origin before migration and after migrating to Canada.

Country of origin:	Main languages:	Popular sites & out-of-school activities	At school	Proficiency in L1
Ethiopia Sudan Kenya Uganda Congo	Tigrinya & Amharic Arabic Swahili & English Luganda & English French & Marshi	Mountain, lake, river, mosque, church Herding animals, swimming in the river & lake, singing, dancing, drama, story, play	Reading, writing math, sing & dance, story telling, after school programs	Amharic, Tigrinya, & Arabic as L1 & L2 (school languages). Somalia, Luganda & Marshi as L1, not school languages; New languages: Swahili, English, French (L2/3) for education
Canada	English only	Sites: Mall, YMCA, Park, church, Library, shopping, sing & dance, play, soccer, swim, home/work, sports	Reading, writing, learning English, computer, math, library, home-work help	All participants had limited exposure to English language before migrating to Canada

Table 02: Place, language & literacy practices of African youth

The table above highlights African youth's activities in Canada and Africa by language, country, and nature of activity. Most out-of-school activities were more nature oriented and creative in Africa and more structured in Canada. School literacy activities were similar but with more options made possible by technology, libraries and language support in Canada.

Activity 2: Linking literacy to spaces/places/sites

This activity was conducted with 5 participants during the PD day and repeated with all the students in EAL levels C and D English, and B Mathematics. Activities 3 and 4 (Artefacts and school physical space described under artefacts) were also conducted in class. I negotiated with the participating teachers to incorporate the mapping activities in lessons that were closely related to literacy. In consultation with the researcher, Ms. Alexis and Ms. Rob guided the activities in EAL C and D. I guided the activities in Mr. Green's classroom with his support. The maps formed important data for analysis. Mwezi and Nyota individually met with the researcher twice after school to complete the activities. Another mapping activity involved looking at literacies that crossed sites of school and home. The researcher asked the youth to think about occasions that were special or important to them at home or out-of-school and the literacy activities they engaged in during those occasions. The participants listed activities that stemmed from their interests, and choices, and which were valuable to their cultural identity. They listed literacy practices at school as dominated by demands to meet curriculum expectations, and those of the teachers. In a venn diagram, the participants recorded in the middle, those practices that crossed from out-of-school to school, for instance those out-of-school practices they wrote about at school using school language, or were helpful in their interaction with peers and in learning. Figures of maps are included in the youth's portraits in chapter Four.

Activity 3: Identity in the classroom community

The purpose of this activity was to explore the role played by school as community in the learning and identity construction, the extent to which the students participated and felt belonging to their classroom communities. I provided a venn diagram for participants to write on either side words that came to mind when they thought of the words community

and identity. In the middle, they wrote words that were common to both identity and community. Figures are included chapter 4.

3.2.3 Artefacts as sources of knowledge and communication

Artefacts are powerful socially constructed everyday objects used to satisfy needs, wants, or to express an idea (Holland et al, 1998; Given, 2008). The study utilized artefacts, that is, valuable cultural objects, to complement interviews, observation, and mapping activities by adding material aspects of the youth's lives that provided a thick description about their literate identities and experiences. In addition, artefacts offered African youth an opportunity for meaning making through semiotic mediation (Vygotsky, 1987) of their identities in practice. Artefacts enabled voice or "open [ed] up figured worlds" (Holland et al, 1998, p.61), and provided opportunities for the youth to talk about their everyday realities within school and society. Showing, speaking, and writing about artefacts allowed participants to reconnect with the past and to reconstruct literate identities. The youth were minoritized (McCarthy, 2005) by the school curriculum as struggling and always in the process of improving their English language skills and in literacy learning.

Activity 4: drawing on artefacts to represent and communicate meaning

Ms. Alexis in consultation with the researcher included activity number 4 on artefacts during EAL C and D lessons. She illustrated with her most valuable item, a photograph of her great uncle and talked about him. She then asked the students to think about their valuable items, draw and write why an object was valuable to them. In a similar activity with students in EAL B Math, the researcher asked them to write about, draw, bring the actual object or a picture of it and write what the artefact is, when they got it, from whom, and why it was valuable. Students in this class had an opportunity to share about their artefacts and were happy to talk about themselves to their colleagues. Necklaces, photographs, and a special coffee maker constituted the artefacts from the youth. In addition, participants' school writings (opinion paragraphs, letters and poems) and artwork formed part of artefactual (Rowse & Pahl, 2011) data. They provided information about the individual students' experiences as learners of the English

language. Data from artefacts enriched interview responses on the participants' understanding of the term identity, experiences of learning and meaning-making using cultural objects. For example, Salama, who had lived under the care of her uncle for 16 years brought his photograph as an artefact, and also shared a drawing that she had done in her Art class, a tearful eye with words, "miss you". Every artefact carried important meaning for the youth. Following activity 4 we conducted an activity (4b) on the most important physical space/s in the school and what the participants did in those spaces. This activity drew the students to talk about what they did at the school and the resources and supports available for them and at the same time expressed their interests outside class time.

3.2.4 Interviews

Qualitative interviewing provides a framework within which respondents can express their meaning (Patton, 2002) and allows researchers to address the issue at hand, to draw from the participants' emerging world view, and to gain new insights (Merriam, 1998). Because the "perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit, interviewing allows us to enter another person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, 341). I interviewed African youth to find out from about their perspectives of learning through a new language and how their school supported them (or not) to construct positive identities as learners. I intended to hear their stories which are a way of knowing (Seidman, 2006) by listening and carefully documenting each participant's experience with literacy learning. Utilizing face-to-face, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews with the students and teachers provided space for expression of meanings and to catch authenticity, richness, and in-depth responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility to explore topics on literacy and identity more deeply, and to ask questions about topics that emerged which I had not anticipated in the interview guide. An interview guide provided a framework with topics to explore, and questions to ask that related to a subject of interest. Open-ended interview questions with three teachers provided what Patton (2002) calls space for open-ended responses which were an opportunity for the teachers to shed light on the learning and participation

of African youth in their classrooms. All interviews with the students were conducted at the school and were audio recorded. Field notes were taken in addition to recorded proceedings. Interview questions (See Appendix F) and conversations explored experiences of school as new immigrant students, opportunities at the school to support learning, perspectives about home language (L1) to learning, and what they understood by literacy and identity. Selected transcribed responses from the participants are quoted directly in *italics* in the portraits chapter 4 and in the findings chapter.

Interviews are not without constraints. Scheduling of interviews around the participants' schedules left us with limited time for conversations. There was also a rush after school as students joined club activities, went for homework help or returned home to take care of family commitments. To address the issue of time limitations, I met with the students for individual interviews whenever they were available for about 20 minutes over lunch, and every other day after school when they had no commitments. On some occasions and with permission from the teacher, I met with the participants after they had completed independent work. Language challenges presented another limitation to interviewing. The researcher asked questions in the simplest way possible and checked with the participants for understanding. Initial rapport allowed the youth to seek clarification when they did not understand the question. A suggestion to use L1 was turned down by the youth who had a preference for English while at school. They also spoke slowly which made it easier to transcribe. Following transcription, I met with the youth for a follow up interview. Ongoing informal conversations around the school added to the data. Other sources of data complemented data from interviews. For example, observing classroom learning and peer-peer and student-teacher interactions presented an opportunity to record activities as they unfolded, which interviews alone could not capture, and at the same time enriched my understanding of the nature of learner participation. I remained reflexive of the participants' time and rephrased questions in different forms so that they understood. I also respected their wish about the amount of time to spend during each interview session.

3.2.5 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation provided another source of data. I conducted classroom observation as a participant in some sessions and as a complete observer in others, of student interactions and responses during classroom practices. My primary role was to observe and obtain data on events and activities as they occurred (Creswell, 2007). During the observation period, I negotiated with the teachers regarding my level of participation in classroom activities as participant-observer and spent most of the time observing and taking descriptive and reflective notes of what I observed and learnt, and of the shortcomings that I encountered in the process. I participated in some group activities and helped students with research at the computer lab. I also helped the teachers for example, to display learning materials on the wall. The observation was five days a week for three months during which I maintained a balance between insider-outsider effects (Merriam, 1998). As an insider, I was familiar with some of the participants' cultural backgrounds and practices, and as an outsider, I was a guest to the classroom, the teachers and students, and to the transactions that went on in the school environment. I checked in with EAL teachers on an ongoing basis for clarification about my observation.

Observation of the nature of African immigrant students' participation and classroom interactions was guided by the following topics: classroom physical space and resources; the characteristics and nature of reading and writing activities in the classroom; how the activities fostered student identity and background; the nature of student participation; how the teacher's philosophical lens shaped classroom practices with ELLs, and, what student's identities were constructed and legitimated by school practices. When needed, I participated in group activities and helped students with research at the computer lab. I also helped the teachers for example, to put up or take down words on the wall. I carried out participant observation at different times because the students were in different levels.

Table 3 shows a summary of the observation schedule

Name of participant	Class observed	Teacher	Time
Shujaa	ESLB Mathematics	Mr. Green	11.45-1.15pm (odd days)
Salama	ESL B English & Mathematics		1.05pm-2.20pm (even days)
Hongera	ESL C	Ms. Alexis	8.20am- 9.15 am
Mwangaza	ESL D	Ms. Rob (on practicum)	9.40am-10.55 am

Table 0-3: Classroom observation schedule

Each observation session lasted 75 minutes. For each session observed, I reflected on the nature of the African immigrant students' participation and classroom interactions under the following topics: classroom physical space and resources; the characteristics and nature of reading and writing activities in this classroom; how the activities foster the student identity and background; the nature of student participation; the philosophical lens referenced by the teacher's actions, and, what aspects of the participant's identities were constructed and legitimated by school practices.

Observation was conducted throughout the data collection period. I took detailed field notes describing what happened and my reflections about the sessions observed. After reading and reflecting on the field notes, new questions surfaced and I sought to understand things through the eyes of the youth participants. Observation also added meaning to the interview data and provoked questions for follow up. For example, issues of non participation, teaching strategies, connecting lessons to student's lives and providing options for students to form authentic texts were documented.

Opportunities and challenges faced by both the participants and their teachers were also documented. During observation, I was faced with challenges that related to my role of “participant, nonparticipant, or middle-ground position” (Creswell, 2007, p.139). The challenges I faced while observing included recording quotes accurately for inclusion in field notes, determining the best time to switch from observer to participant, and being careful not to get overwhelmed with information at the site. I also had to learn how to focus on the subject of study when multiple activities and interactions were in process. I remained respectful of the teachers and students during observation and checked with my participants after observation for clarification of what was observed.

3.2.6 Document analysis

The Ontario Ministry of Education provides resources to the Ontario school boards for policy development and implementation in the schools. I analyzed the Ministry of Education, Ontario (2007) curriculum documents for grades 9-12, and the Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) *Many Roots Many Voices*, a guide for teachers, principals and other educators on how to support English language learners effectively. Document analysis of such resources provided content and reference on the state on EAL in Ontario, how ELLs were positioned, and what kinds of literacy were valued. They also offered insights useful in making connections between theory and practice in instructional support in language and literacy learning of ELLs. These documents complemented observations and interviews and were pertinent to understanding how ELLs are supported in language and literacy education in Ontario. The table below provides a summary of data sources.

Data sources	Activities under each data source
Literacy mapping activities	Individual spoken and written responses with six participants (two hours per participant) Drawing maps of places of interest & activities in each site Writing down ideas about identity & community Linking literacy activities between out-of-school & school
Interviews	Two individual formal and informal conversations with six participants (two hours per participant), and three teachers (one hour for each). Informal conversations about language and math learning and teaching experiences with immigrant students.
Artefacts	Everyday objects- six youth showing, speaking, writing, and drawing their most valuable item.
Work samples	Creative writing, art work/drawing, & classroom projects
Classroom observations	Daily observation of classroom interactions (April-June) with 4 students and 2 teachers, 75 minutes a day for each ESL B, C & D level.

Table 0-4: Data sources

The data from multiple sources highlighted here were analyzed thematically.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process through which data (field notes, artefacts, interviews, observation, etc) are transformed into findings (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In this study, the aim of analysis was to “identify and gain analytic insight into the dimensions and dynamics of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 81), to understand if and how literacy learning matters to the African youth from their own perspectives. Case studies often require data collection and analysis to be done simultaneously allowing the researcher to modify data collection plans while still in the field. An interpretive framework guided my data analysis to establish credibility (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003).

3.3.1 Steps in data analysis

Data analysis and representation in case studies involve a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2007). I utilized the interviews, field notes from participant observation, documents, maps and artefacts to capture data that were relevant to the

study. Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins during the data collection process as opposed to the end of the process (Stake, 1995). For instance, my first day for interviews followed the announcement of the 2012 OSSLT literacy test results and the publication of *Fraser Institute Report Card on Ontario Secondary Schools* (Cowley, Easton & Thomas (2012) that highlighted how Ontario schools had performed on the OSSLT. Green Valley School was among the schools that performed poorly in the Board. The youth participants talked about the OSSLT which I had not given priority in my interview questions. I came to appreciate that the OSSLT mattered to the students' literacy learning and imagined identities pegged on the future benefits such as employment and related social and economic mobility. I added a topic on the literacy test to the interviews and asked the youth to talk about their experiences and/or perspectives about OSSLT.

To understand textual data, I drew on Miller and Crabtree's (1999) three ways to read texts. First, to get its literal content and form, I read textual data from transcriptions, observation and mapping activities literally for a number of times. Secondly, I read the text reflectively, guided by my own critical interpretive orientation to shape interpretation. Third, I read the text with the focus on its meaning. I then identified patterns and looked for a relationship between two or more categories (Patton, 2002). Information from documents provided insights into the pedagogy of English and literacy teaching. As a reflexive researcher, I adapted Patton's (2002) emic focus and represented the settings to the extent possible in terms of the participants and their viewpoints, rather than an etic focus that represents settings with the researcher's terms and viewpoints. I paraphrased and rephrased questions and encouraged the youth to take their time, ask for clarification, and to represent their views in L1 or through drawings. I developed participant portraits from their responses to interview questions, observation, and mapping activities for detailed description of the data. I looked at critical incidences in direct interpretation, that is, a process of pulling data apart and putting them together in meaningful ways.

I organized, compared, coded, and examined the interrelationships among the data sources, reflected upon, and raised any new questions arising from the data or not addressed by the data. Emerging themes included migration, global inequalities, adaptation and learning, identity construction, funds of knowledge and the school curriculum knowledge. Multimodal representation through mapping and artefacts to communicate meaning were identified and analyzed. I adapted the New Literacy Studies (NLS) notions of literacy as social practices (Heath, 1983; 2005; Barton & Hamilton, 1998), and literacy as multiple (Street, 2004) to look at African immigrant students literacy practices. Drawing on the NLS approach, the youth's stories, conversational units, teachable moments, and daily interactional practices (Dyson and Genishi, 2005) were analysed for content, mode, meaning, and identities. As a final interpretive phase (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I prepared a report about what I learned from the case, as well as the challenges I encountered and recommendations for further research. These are reported in chapter 7.

3.4 Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

Within the interpretive tradition, reflexive practices are both the topics of, and the resources for qualitative inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I reflected on my behaviour, thoughts, and actions throughout the research process and remained conscious that my subjective biases, values, beliefs, and experiences shaped how I conducted and reported my study (Watt, 2007; Davies, 2012). I strived to “recognize the situated nature of knowledge and the interactional sites where issues of race, gender and class are enacted” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 23). Reflexivity on how I position myself as a researcher and represent my participants, conduct member checks, triangulate multiple data sources are all important to establish trustworthiness and transferability of my study findings. Case studies deal with issues of public interest (Patton, 2002). I was reflexive and conducted myself to high ethical standards. I sought informed consents to protect the participants and to agree on issues of observation, and reporting, as well as limit to access (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I adhered to the UWO guidelines on research ethics on integrity and credibility of myself the researcher and the University. I sought informed consent from

all the participants that is, students, teachers and parents of students less than 18 years of age. Gaining trust of the research participants was critical to the success of the research process. I provided my participants with a letter of information and explained the study and time commitment, and informed them about the voluntary nature of participation before they consented to be part of the study. I also maintained respect for the students and teachers throughout the research process. Additionally, I was careful not to breach confidentiality of all my participants.

The sociocultural framework acknowledges co-construction of knowledge during interaction with others. Credibility of research is based on the ethical relationship between the researcher and the participants and needs to be reciprocal not hierarchical (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). My role as a researcher was one of a collaborative learner. That is, the students and their teachers were collaborative partners not subjects in research. I consulted with the students, teachers and on strategies to support the youth in areas of literacy-learning, and acquisition of life skills such as use of a diary to manage day to day activities. I allowed the students' ideas to shine by privileging their knowledge, experiences, reflections and voice in *italics*. I brought meaning to their voice by transcribing their responses directly/verbatim.

3.4.1 Representation

Understanding and representing experiences of others may lead to misrepresentation (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1999). I was critical and reflexive in the choice of methods, ethics and epistemologies, what to report and how to report it (Daniel, 2005; Fine, 1998; Finlay, 2002). I strove to understand and contribute to a better world, to improve, not to marginalise others. My study highlighted African youth's funds of knowledge, school expectations and supports, what the youth perceived as challenges to learning, and exposed inequalities in literacy education. I checked with the study participants after transcribing the interviews and analyzing the multiple data sources for clarifications, corrections or additions to the data during follow up interviews to enhance reliability of collected data (Creswell, 2007). Doing member checks helped me to better

understand and acquire new and reflective thoughts from participants. To gain insights into the experiences, realities, values and beliefs of my study participants, I employed ethnographic tools to produce information in its “complete and lived essence” (Compton-Lilly, 2003, p.42) to understand literacy practices, and identity (re)construction of African immigrant students who are learning in new environments. I was respectful of these realities throughout my learning process and reflected on my own beliefs about the education of minoritized students.

Cross-cultural analysis and reflexivity

Although I share the participants’ background as an African immigrant to Canada, I recognized the diversity of the African youth’s sociocultural and socio-political contexts. I was aware of some of the challenges faced by immigrant youth who are minoritized by being learners of a new language, and negotiating a sense of belonging in a new school and country. At the same time, however, I am an insider to the broader African community yet an outsider to the experiences of the youth in literacy learning and identity constructions. As an African woman who may be privileged by my experiences, yet positioned by race, gender, and colour, I had an ethical responsibility to encourage the youth in their aspirations for the future in Canada. My personal experience as an immigrant woman informed my commitment to advance access, equity, and social justice for groups and individuals marginalised by dominant societal structures. I believe that research should be trustworthy, educative, transformative, reliable, practical, and relevant to address issues of knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 2005).

To increase reliability of my research outcomes, I utilized multiple data sources (Yin, 2003) that captured the youth’s multiple representation of their experiences.

Triangulation (Lather, 1991) of multiple sources of data allowed for cross-examination. For example, data from artefacts, interview responses, and mapping activities worked together to enrich the researcher’s own understanding of the concept of identity.

Observation provided depth in understanding data from interviews. For example, three of the participants expressed concerns that L1 majority in the classroom was problematic

and isolating to those outside that language group. I observed this reality in one of the classrooms and corroborated it with the interview data. Additionally, data from document analysis allowed for a comparison against what I observed and heard from my participants. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education policy guidelines recommended drawing on diverse students' cultural knowledge. However, there was limited reference to ELLs' funds of knowledge in the classroom. The disconnect between policy and practice pointed to the constraints of adhering to a prescriptive literacy curriculum with implications for African immigrant youth learning and identity in Ontario. To address transferability of my research findings, I have presented rich thick descriptions about my participants and the study settings to allow my readers to make decisions if they can use this information because of its shared characteristics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Thus to establish trustworthiness in my research, I made "an attempt to assess the accuracy of findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007 p.206).

3.5 Study Limitations

One of the challenges during interviewing was time constraints and logistical problems. Since I carried out data collection on a full time basis, I was flexible around meeting times with the participants. Also, support from the teacher participants and the settlement worker facilitated my data collection within reasonable time. The study was limited to a single site at the school and the number of activities we could engage in. Future studies may extend mapping activities and interviews to other sites over a longer period of time.

Another limitation relates to participants who did not want to reveal their learning experiences at school and instead provided remedies about how they were learning. For example, use of repetition, watching TV, and interaction with peers out-of-school , among others, to learn English. Some aligned responses to what they perceived I may have wanted to hear. I consulted the participants about their responses on an on-going basis and was careful to confirm their intended meanings. The use of mapping activities,

informal conversations, artefacts, and ongoing observation and interaction with the participants presented an opportunity to learn from and with the youth.

3.6 Summary

This chapter highlighted the choice of the methodology and methods that guided the study. The goal of the study was to understand, from the African immigrant youth's perspective, experiences of school and literacy-learning and the opportunities available at the school to support learning and identity (re)construction. The knowledge generated from the study hopes to shed light on ways to address the challenges and support for diverse learners. To better understand the experiences of participants and given the challenges they presented as learners of English as an additional language, I incorporated various activities such as mapping school and out-of-school practices in both countries of origin and Canada, participant daily routines, and artefacts that are not usually reflected in school's literacy practices. The study adopted a qualitative interpretive approach to understand my participants' lived school experiences (Merriam, 1998). The interpretive approach helped me to understand multiple realities and research as situated and never neutral. I utilized a case study approach with ethnographic tools including, interviews, participant observation, mapping activities, and artefacts. The multiple methods allowed for triangulation of data. Thus, reflexivity was important through the process of recruitment, data collection, and analysis and reporting. Portraits of the participants are presented in Chapter 4. Findings of this study are reported in Chapters five, and six.

Chapter 4: Participants' Portraits

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents profiles of the participants drawn from multiple data sources namely, formal interviews and informal interviews (conversations), observation record, mapping of the youth's pre and post migratory school and out-of-school literacy related activities, and artefacts of their most valued items. Participants' profiles or portraiture (Chapman, 2005) allowed the researcher to see the uniqueness of each participant and to showcase each one's perspectives and activities. Profiles challenge the tendency to group individuals as what Hall (2000) calls a fixed category and display the individuality of each youth identity as an interrelated web of cultural, historical, and social interaction, and experiences shaped by past and present experiences.

Through participant profiles, I hope to showcase each youth's school and out-of-school experiences by mapping authentic practices that characterized their everyday lives. Highlighting the perspectives of the youth provides context to their experiences as new immigrant students, learners of English as an additional language, and encounters with adaptation challenges. Aspirations to achieve a good education empowered the youth to invest their time and energies in literacy learning. Aspirations may be driven by the urge to close gaps in school literacy, wanting to fit and gain acceptance in society and for personal fulfilment through access to post secondary education and employment (e.g., in Shakya, et al., 2012). Each participant's profile presents their prior migration history, language and digital self, learning and identity construction and reconstruction within Canadian classrooms and society. The school profile sheds light on to the social structure within which the youth negotiated and constructed their identities as learners.

4.1 Teachers' Profiles

Teacher participants included Ms. Alexis, Ms. Rob, and Mr. Green, who were EAL teachers of the African youth during the study. Their profiles were generated through one on one interviews, conversations and classroom observations.

4.1.1 Meet Ms. Alexis

Ms. Alexis had been at Green Valley School for seven years, teaching grades 10 and 11 and ESL levels A-E. In her 25 years as a secondary school teacher, Ms. Alexis had taught EAL/ESL, English, civics, careers, and foods and nutrition. During the time of this study, she taught EAL classes to 34 immigrant students who had migrated from Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Iraq, and were at levels C to E. When working with new students, Ms. Alexis began with reading and writing diagnostic testing with each student to figure out what he/she knew, prior reading and writing skills, and the level of English language skills. She used the knowledge from initial assessment to choose appropriate reading materials for the level. The choice of materials followed the Ministry of Education guide and also independent reading of choice. Her strategy to teach writing depended on the level of each student. For example, for the EAL A, she began with simple verbs then moved to more complex writing as students became comfortable with using English. Ms. Alexis did not consciously incorporate immigrant students' out-of-school literacy practices and artefacts in her teaching. However, students' out-of-school and cultural knowledge entered the classroom when she invited them to talk about how they spent the weekend or following a special holiday, and also through students' creative writing of choice. She acknowledged artefacts as important but not common in secondary school:

[Cultural materials/artefacts]: *It is relevant not as prevalent in secondary school. We see most of this in elementary school where children do a 'show and tell'.*

Ms. Alexis had observed a shift in the way the youth learn today from the way learning and language were used years back, maybe due to the increase in technology, which has

altered the way youth use language. Her written response to an interview question on literacy learning among the youth was:

Technology has a huge/major impact on their literacy learning. Sometimes it is hard to hook them on a book, a class set. Most seem not to like to read books. It's different, language today is in short form, (snippets... bits), for example as in texting. Many students don't have the academic language of the past? Too much technology, media interference??

Ms. Alexis found working with immigrant students to be rewarding. She was enthusiastic and gave her time and skills to support CLD students even after they have joined mainstream classes. She connected with them and helped them to feel at home and valued members of the school. The youth found learning interesting because she was supportive of them. She participated in professional learning on how to work with CLD students and attends conferences such as Celebrating Diversity, and workshops as time permits. She was also involved in the ESL/English task force committee which explored best strategies to support ELLs when they transition to mainstream classrooms.

4.1.2 Meet Ms. Rob

Ms. Rob was a teacher candidate on practicum in Ms. Alexis' EAL C- E classrooms at the time of study. She had been a volunteer in an EAL classroom at the school before she enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program for preparation as a teacher. Her teaching subjects were English, Drama, and ESL for the intermediate senior division. She improved her knowledge about teaching ELLs through an additional qualifying course in EAL, teaching English as a second language (TESL) course, and reading materials on EAL. To teach reading and writing in the classroom, Ms. Rob utilized:

Worksheets, textbooks, games... audio files as language and literacy instructional materials; [Reading]: uses guided reading, modeling reading process; fluency rather than accuracy; [utilizing student' out-of-school literacy practices and artefacts]: not enough references made to things in student's lives, but could do this more effectively; this should be incorporated more, especially in classes with immigrant students to provide context.

She reported the following to be the main challenges in teaching/working with immigrant youth:

there is a wide variety of abilities in each class, many resources refer to pop culture, students lack context. [ELLs challenges in OSSLT were]: vocabulary is often unfamiliar, questions involving inferences or summarizing pose problems; even with extensive practice it is impossible to get all the ESL students up to the vocabulary level of the average Anglophone student, so they struggle with comprehension; [Thoughts about literacy in the 21 century]: students need to be developing more media literacy skills (especially immigrant students!).

4.1.3 Meet Mr. Green

Mr. Green had been at this school for 5 years teaching grades 9-12 on a contract basis. He taught EAL B mathematics and English, and history and English to mainstream students. He had also taught grades 7-8 at another school. The total number of immigrants who were also ELLs in his classrooms was 35 representing 6 language groups. Most students migrated from Nepal and Burma. Other countries of origin included Somali and Kenya (Salama's home and second countries) and, Congo and Uganda (Shujaa's home and second countries). There was one student each from Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Guatemala.

Mr. Green had not received training as an EAL teacher. However, he engaged in various professional learning communities and collaboration with staff to gain skills for working with ELLs. Mr. Green used *explicit systematic instruction in vocabulary, feedback and encouragement, rich language input* as language and literacy instructional materials in his classroom. He shared Ms. Alexis' views on literacy learning for the youth today as shaped by technology: *today, youth have dependency on technology and do not seem to care about the rest of life.* To teach reading and writing skills and strategies to new immigrant students, Mr. Green's strategy was:

[Reading]: *predictability, encouragement, practice.* [Writing]: *practice, scaffolding, phonological awareness, many literacy skills, i.e., rhymes, songs, word games, can transfer across languages.*

Mr. Green, like Ms. Alexis, did not incorporate students' out-of-school practices and artefacts during instruction. Students' cultural knowledge and out-of-school literacy practices became part of the classroom learning when he asked them, for example, to relate math to activities they engaged in during the weekend or holiday. His response on use of these resources was:

Very little work aside from maintaining open communication with parents/family. Students have a good deal resources that exist for extra literacy help; we don't use cultural resources/artifacts at this school.

Mr. Green was calm and friendly and engaged in classroom management besides teaching ELLs with low English skills.

4.2: Student Participants

Hongera, Salama, Nyota (females), Mwangaza, Mwezi and Shujaa (males) migrated to Canada as government sponsored refugees (GARS) and were permanent residents at the time of the study. Of the six participants, Mwezi and Nyota had recently progressed from EAL classroom to mainstream classrooms, an achievement all ELLs aspired for. The rest were at various EAL levels. The ELLs were placed in current grades by age and progress by language levels. The youth as discussed in chapter 2 were diverse not only in home language/s but also in their prior formal educational experiences, literacy levels in L1, family background and countries of origin. The youth had moved with their families to neighbouring countries for safety and potentially better living conditions before migrating to Canada. Their countries of origin and cross-border migration are presented in the map below. The arrows on the map of Africa illustrate the movement of the study participants before migrating to Canada. The responses below represent participants' profiles compiled from a triangulation of multiple data sources.

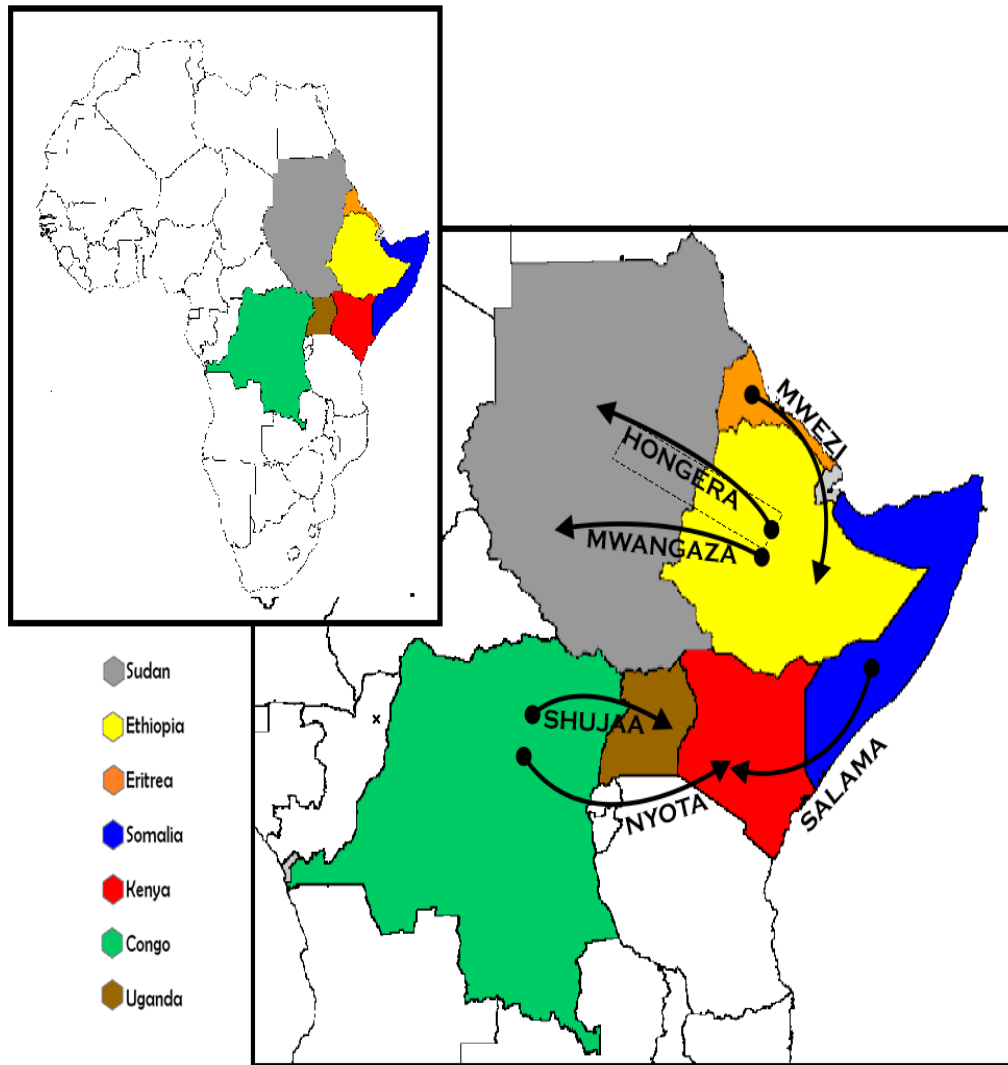


Figure 1: Countries of migration: Pre & transmigration

4.2.1 Meet Mwezi

Data drawn from the interview highlighted Mwezi's initial experiences in Canada as follows:

When I first came I did not know anyone. On the first day, I was sitting alone. I used to get lost, I had problems to communicate. I made new friends quickly when I started going to the park to play basketball; I had to start a new life. Here teachers are not listening when students are doing bad. They don't really care. Back home they listen and call your parent: When I first came I was not that good at English. I had difficulties. Math was hard for me ... problem solving questions,

I could read what I need to do, I could not get it. I did not know how to do it. I had to ask the teacher. Also I had difficulties trying to understand the question to write an essay. It was hard to learn a new language. The language is the main challenge in my learning. Like in English there are some words that I don't know; [School support]: Better education, easier life, technology and facilities help get things done faster. I have good experience learning and I get help from teachers. The ESL teacher, she told me to go to the website and start reading stuff. And I read at home and got better at reading and writing. I could go to a regular class because I got better.

Mwezi was born in 1997 in Eritrea where he went to school up to grade 4. His family moved to Ethiopia where he completed grades 5 and 6. In 2009, Mwezi and his family moved to Canada and he was enrolled in grade 8. He received EAL support in elementary school and for one year in secondary school before he joined a mainstream classroom. Mwezi was bilingual and biliterate in Tigrinya and Amharic languages which he used at home and school in Eritrea and Ethiopia. In addition, he continued to improve his English skills. Mwezi's parents helped him to maintain his L1 and he also understood its relevance during future visits to Eritrea and Ethiopia. Mwezi was cheerful and respectful. Sometimes he did not complete assignments in time and got marks deducted. He had an older sister at the school who helped to keep him on track by reminding him of important events. As a new immigrant student, Mwezi's experiences in Canada were marked with periods of loneliness and isolation before he acquired basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) (Cummins, 2000) to make friends. He reported challenges in the adaptation process and learning at school which improved with mastery of additional English skills, help from his school, and teachers and use of technology.

Identity and literacy learning

Mwezi's identity was demonstrated through his interests in a variety of activities, expression of values, artefacts and his writing sample and artefacts. Mwezi was of the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith and observed the beliefs and values tied to it. His most valuable artefact is the necklace with a crucifix which was a gift from his late grandfather, who was also his best friend. See figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Necklace from my grandfather

He treasured the crucifix as it reminded him of his family's cultural beliefs, religious values, and family connections. Mwezi was involved in sports and engaged in various activities in and out-of-school. At school, he was a mentor to other immigrant students. He also valued family and friends, respect for others and himself, and working together as a community. Mwezi had noticed a shift in his identity such as in the frequency in L1 use. He also perceived that being an immigrant student required a lot of investment in himself if he was going to do well in Canada. The following excerpts from data summarize Mwezi's notion of identity and different ways it was manifested:

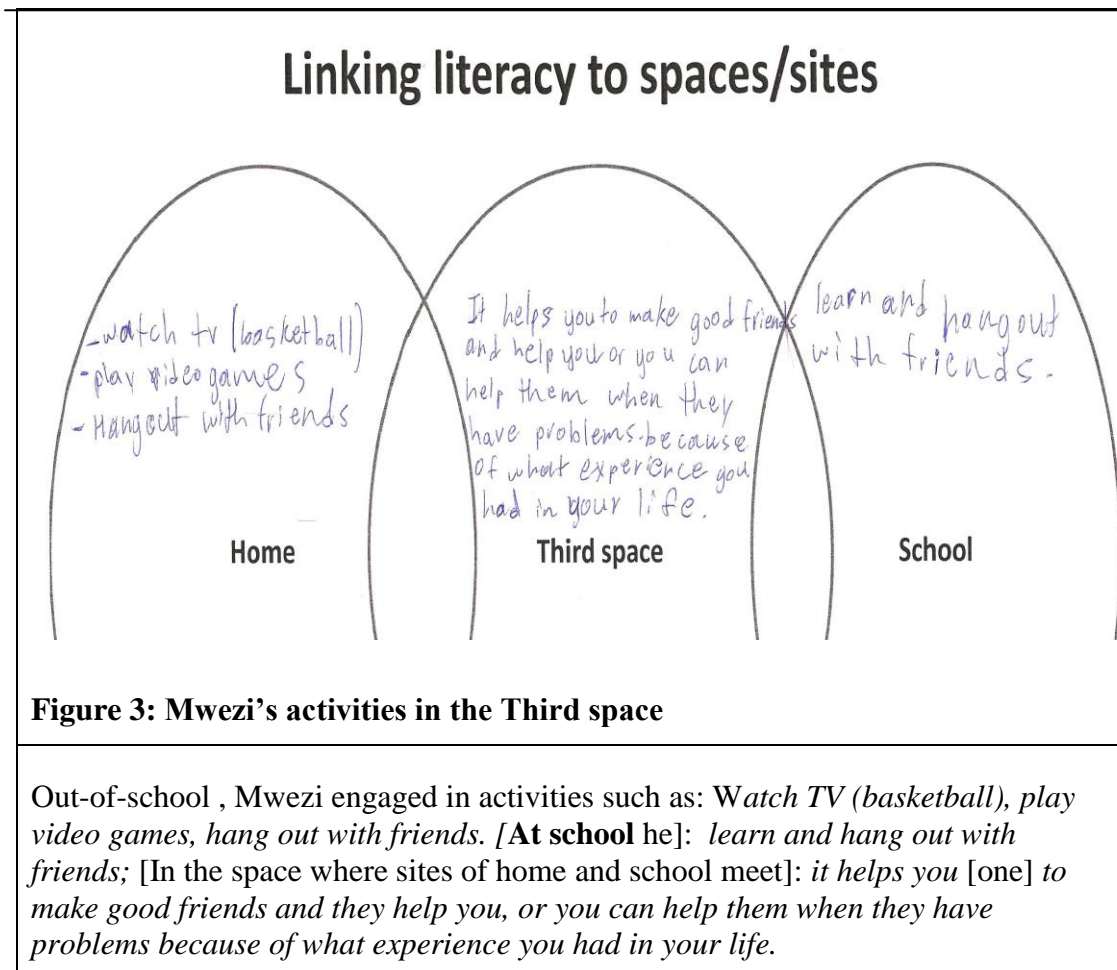
[Identity to me means]: *Being different. Identity means like respect to me. It describes who I am. You should respect other people's identity in order to be respected. With my friend back home we are more close. But here it's not the same. We are not treated the same. My identity has changed since I came to Canada; [Has this change affected how you see yourself?]: Actually, I am very happy and proud to be called African. It helps me, I think more about where I came from and why I came; to have a good education. This inspires me to do well at school. I am a hard worker, I don't give up easily, I have goals. Like I want to go to university and graduate and be an engineer. I want to get a scholarship for university. I think I am very good at school. I am trying to improve my English and do well in school. I have to work extra harder than students here because they were born here and they know the language. So I need to work extra hard; [Accent]: I don't think I have an accent. But it's kind of funny how people speak. This guy in my math class he has a different accent. It's hard to understand when he is speaking.*

Literacy and learning

Mwezi was positive about his language and literacy learning. Though learning in English as a new language limited his learning and communication, he sought the help of his teachers in his learning and also visited EAL websites for practice, which he reported enabled him to progress well through the EAL levels. Mwezi had come to assume that unlike the other participants he did not speak English with an accent which he linked to a convergence between Amharic and Tigrinya his L1 and L2 to English, and also credited the time he invested in reading especially sports magazines and novels, and online resources. Mwezi had attempted the OSSLT for the first time and was hopeful of a passing grade though he had experienced challenges relating to content, vocabulary and structure of the test. Mwezi had spent two years in elementary school upon migration which had supported his English skills before joining secondary school. Also, of the six participants, he had moved between two countries in Africa where his parents were born and L1s were the languages of instruction in school. He had a more stable schooling compared to the other participants who needed to learn new languages in their transmigration ecologies. Figures 3, 4 and 5 below represent Mwezi's perceptions about literacy and his literacy practices both at school and out-of-school .

Out-of-school literacy, identity, and community

Mwezi's experiences from out-of-school or what the students generally referred to as home were relevant at school especially when he had opportunity to draw on those to help others and build friendships. Figure 3 represents Mwezi's map of literacy practices across sites.



The Third space in the Venn diagram referred at the in-between space where home and school practices fused and the literacy practices in that space represent the knowledge that is generated when two cultural worlds meet (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

Friday April 12, 2012

Cobra Strike: An interesting mystery dramatic sports novel

Cobra Strike, written by Singmund Brouwer is an interesting mysterious dramatic sports novel. This story is about a football player named Roy Linden and his high school team Johnstown Cobras. Roy Linden is a senior star athlete for the Johnstown Cobras. Roy Linden is happy because his team just got a new quarterback Waymen Whitley and he is also his best friend. The cobras have a chance at having a winning season and there maybe even a college scholarship for Roy. Roy would love to focus on football he is good at it but he comes upon a terrible secret that could change his life and his relationship with his new best friend.

Cobra Strike is a great book because it's a realistic characters, the mysterious plot, and it teaches you some life skills. First of all, I enjoyed this book because of the realism of its characters. Roy Linden is a senior high school football player and has a severe stuttering problem and can't find a cure for it completely. But one thing that he does to overcome his embarrassing problems is that he recites and memorizes Shakespeare's poetry. When he does these saying he doesn't stutter at all and feels normal. Roy loves football so much because he doesn't have to worry about stuttering and is a really good wide receiver and kick returner. In one of Roy's home game was ready to catch an opening kick off and is so good that he ran 101 yards back for the touch down but his team was not very good. It's a realistic book because he reacts to his problems by reading Shakespeare's poetry. Everyone has different ways of solving their problems for example I play basketball and listen to Tupac when I am stressed.

Second of all I enjoyed this book because it is a mysterious. Off the field Roy finds a big problem at his grandma's house. At his grandma's house he finds that all her birds are dead in her backyard. This is because the water the birds were drinking is toxic. Roy immediately tells the health department and reports about this and they do nothing about it. For example the Johnstown cooperation offers Roys grandma 3 million dollars to buy the land grandma wants to accept the money but Roy says "Do you want to do what is easy but wrong or what is right but hard?". The mystery makes the story good because he's ignoring the 3 million that Johnstown cooperation offered his grandma and doing what is right thing to do.

Third of all I like this book because it teaches you some life skills. It teaches you that there are no shortcuts in life. Whatever situation in your life that might seem easy probably will be wrong and whatever situation that would be hard probably is going to be right. He could easily give up on life because he gets made fun of a lot but he doesn't. He keeps doing what he thinks is right. For example he saves his grandma's house and stops the cooperation from dumping harmful chemicals into the water. The life skill on this book teaches you that not to give up in your life and it motivates you.

I thought Cobra Strike was a really good book. I recommend this book to people who really like to read about football also people who like to read mysterious books. This book was inspiring and motivating because Roy never gave up on his life. Cobra Strikes is a great book because you can relate to the characters and it's a very interesting story and it also teaches you not to give up and follow what you think is right.

Figure 4: Mwezi's Writing sample on lessons from a sports' novel.

Mwezi's writing sample above indicates his interest in reading sports magazines and novels and also supports elements of identity generated from interviews.

In his maps and interview responses, Mwezi valued the role of community in enabling understanding, support, and respect which were necessary in interaction and co-construction of knowledge as indicated below:

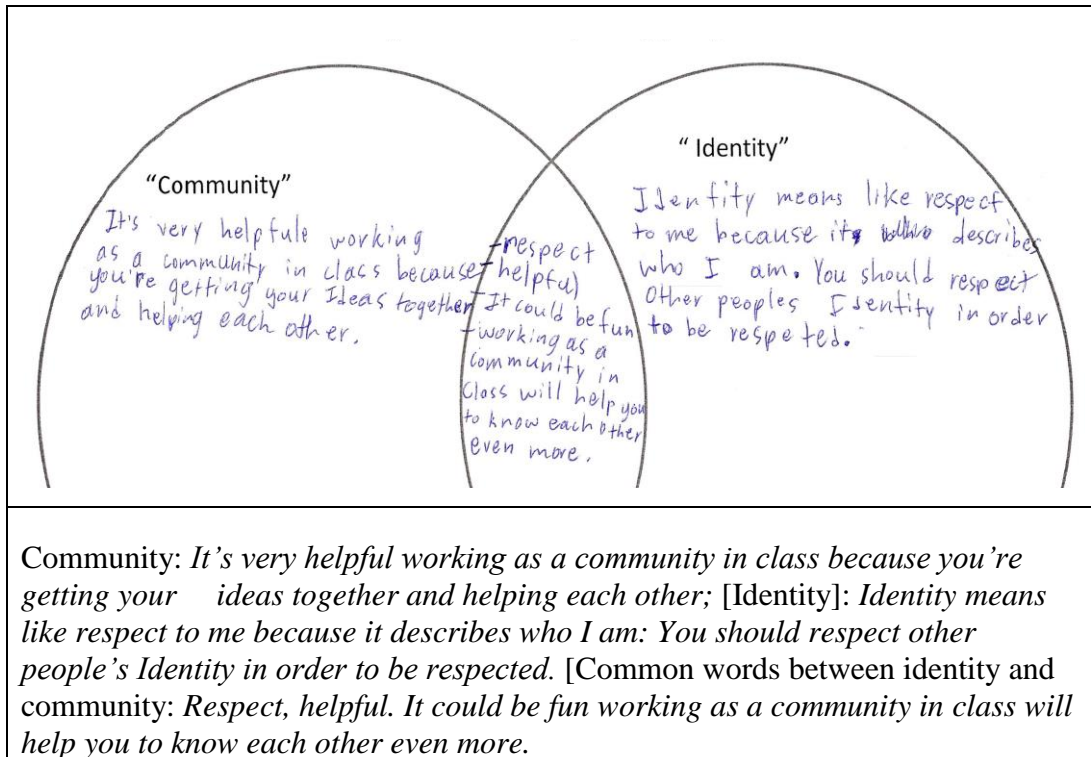


Figure 5: Mwezi- Identity & Community

4.2.2 Meet Nyota

Nyota was born in Congo in 1994. She moved to Kenya in the company of her aunt and lived there for three years before the two migrated as refugees to Canada in 2009. Nyota had completed grade 5 in Congo, and grades six and seven in two separate schools in Nairobi. At the time of this study, Nyota was in grade 12 which was based on her age, but participated in courses at grades 9, 10, and 11 levels. She also enrolled in night school for additional courses to catch up with peers in her age grade. During the two years she had been at her current school, she completed ESL B to E levels and had joined

mainstream classes at grade 10 level of English. Nyota was literate in Marshi and Swahili and was gaining proficiency in English. She spoke some French and attributed her loss of French to non use and the demands to learn school languages in Kenya where teachers code switched between Swahili and English. She had limited French and English language skills at the time of migration. Nyota had a warm and enthusiastic personality and actively participated in school and community activities. She also helped her aunt with acquiring English skills, and applications and follow up with service providers. Nyota like Salama, Shujaa, and Mwangaza bracketed out experiences or tended to ignore the transition countries in favour of her country of origin Congo. Her best experiences were lived in Congo where she went to what she termed a “good school” and spoke her own language at school. In Kenya she met educational challenges experienced by urban refugees who resisted decampment. In Canada, she faced challenges in adaptation, language learning, and the need to belong to the Canadian society.

Nyota, like most immigrant youth, shared in the opportunities provided at the school, and also met challenges especially literacy learning in English, and experiences of loneliness and discrimination based on language, accent, and race. The negative experiences however did not discourage Nyota from working towards her goal to get a good education. Her adaptation and learning improved with mastery of English skills, an outgoing personality, and support of new friends. Unlike most immigrant students, Nyota recognized her home language Marshi as important in her learning. She participated in church youth groups and was in the choir. Nyota loved to participate in drama and music and was concerned that her school did not provide opportunities in which she could showcase her talents and gain recognition from her peers and teachers.

Identity and literacy learning in English

Nyota expressed her notion of identity through the lens of difference in levels of ability, race, and language. Identity for her meant the ability to read, write and communicate, L1, country of origin, personality, image, and being “who I am”. Also, levels in EAL,

speaking with an accent, and wanting to be like the other (native speakers of English) constituted identity as illustrated below:

[ELL means]: *Learning English. It means like the different levels. Like when I see ESL A, it shows you don't know nothing, it's like starting, like grade 1. You may speak in English but cannot write; that tell me some people from different countries who don't know English and are learning English; [Immigrant]: Like you are at different level with other students; you are left behind because you don't know what to do when you are new; [Accent]: I pronounce words differently. It's hard for me but I try my best. For now it's hard to forget my accent; I want to learn to speak English without accent. So I am at the same level as other people; I feel different; [L1]: It's important... I think in my language before I put it in English. I think about my experience in my first language and translate in English; Drama is my favorite thing.*

Nyota was proud of her new identity as Canadian. Her most valuable items were her Canadian passport and citizenship card which served as important identification documents, and a photograph of her aunt who facilitated her migration to Canada. Nyota had wanted to represent her passport through drawing but could not find enough time to draw. She did not have a reliable camera for a photographed image, and made a choice to represent her artefact with an image from the internet as presented below:

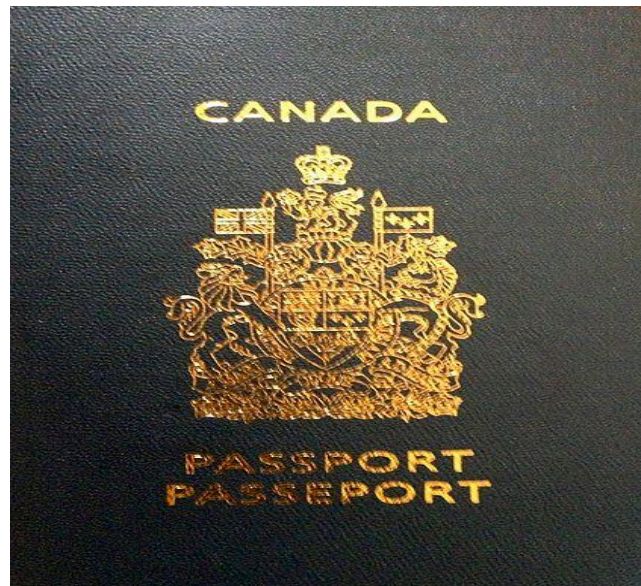


Figure 6: Nyota's Canadian identity

Literacy learning in a new language was initially a challenge for Nyota who enjoyed reading interesting books such as historical fiction and nonfiction and aspired to improve her writing and reading in English for effective communication with more people and to pass the literacy test. Nyota was enthusiastic about her learning and believed proficiency in English would allow her mobility to memberships that only Canadian-born and other English-speakers belonged such as enrolment in academic courses, and in courses for her age and grade level. She would make more friends, do well in school, and earn respect from her peers. Nyota also aspired to learn complex English as an indicator of her mastery in the new language and overcome speaking with an accent. Her out-of-school literacy practices involved choice over what to read and write. At school, decisions over learning resources and topics of study were decided by her teachers from the curriculum specifications. The following quotes are from Nyota's responses about language and literacy learning, and her school and out-of-school literacy practices:

[At school]: Learn skills and experiences. English language, read, writing, play, thinking, listening; participate with other, communicate with other... I don't choose novels at school. I read what they give us at school; for school I do what my teacher wants. The teacher wants us to write paragraphs. Sometimes I ask the teacher if I could write a poem because I don't like paragraphs; [Literacy demands]: working to improve, I think would be my language level, then writing skills, spelling, if I have good grammar, I can pass a literacy test; [OSSLT]: It was kind of hard and writing was in a new language. Some questions I did not understand. Some vocabulary was hard and I did not know the meaning. I have taken it twice. Last year I did not do well. At that time my language was still poor; [Out-of-school]: Write poems and songs; sing and dance competition, cultural celebration with food and dress, share about talents. I choose to read something interesting like a story book. I like to read about people and history. If it's a school poem it's different from what I do at home. For home it's whatever I want to write. I write what I like to write. I like to write poems. I like to write about life. I write in Swahili and in English. But now I am writing more in English.

Data suggests school literacy was governed by demands whilst out-of-school literacy practices were informed by choices.

School support

Nyota attributed her improvement in learning to the support from the , her friends and family, teachers, and availability of resources and technology. Nyota loved to express her thoughts through writing poems. Paragraph writing that was common at school limited her expression because she was still mastering the conventions of writing. Her writing sample highlights the support at her school:

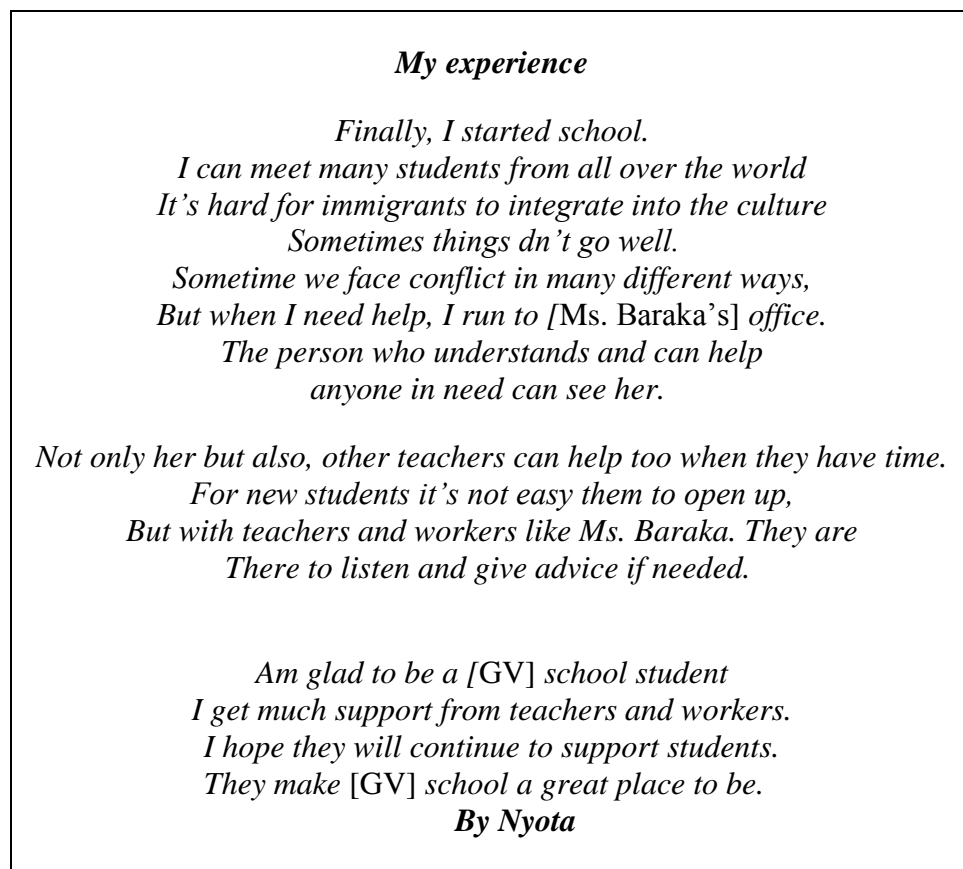


Figure 7: Nyota's Poem of Experience as an immigrant student

4.2.3 Meet Salama

Salama was born in Somalia in 1993. At the age of two, her mother travelled to Kenya and left her under the care of an uncle for 16 years. Salama was reunited with her mother in Canada in 2011 under the government assisted refugee immigration class and reported

being lonely following separation from her uncle and a familiar environment. Salama was literate in Somali and spoke Swahili. Swahili was the language of instruction in the school she attended in Kenya. She had gaps in formal schooling having left school early at the age 14. Salama blamed her poor performance and dropping out-of-school on gender inequalities that left girls overloaded with domestic chores while boys were free to play and learn.

At the time of this study, Salama was in grade 12 determined by her age by age and participated in EAL level B in English and Mathematics. Her other courses were grade 9 Family studies and Art. She had been at her current school for only 6 months. Salama's cultural and religious teachings had prepared her to respect and obey, which she reported were the two most important values for her at school and out-of-school. She was careful when responding to questions about authority such as the school or her teachers. Also, she avoided responding to questions directly and instead offered what she thought was a solution or what she imagined the researcher wanted to hear. Salama was happy to speak in Swahili during informal conversations but not to respond to interview questions, citing a need to practice English. She aspired to learn English, join mainstream classes, and take more challenging courses like Canadians, and perhaps go to college and study nursing.

Challenges in adaptation and learning for Salama involved feelings of loneliness, being new, discrimination, and limited English skills. She was calm and always ready to help others. Salama was early to school every morning and stayed after school to complete homework. What stood out from Salama's mapping activities, artefacts, and artwork were her family ties, religious practices, leisure, and also school literacy practices. Eid, an Islamic religious holiday, provided Salama an avenue for religious and cultural literacy as she learned from the Imam and from her community during festivals when they celebrated with food, dress, and henna artwork. Salama named Somalia as the country where activities took place however all her pre-migration experiences were in Kenya. The maps below represent her pre and post migration school and out-of-school activities.

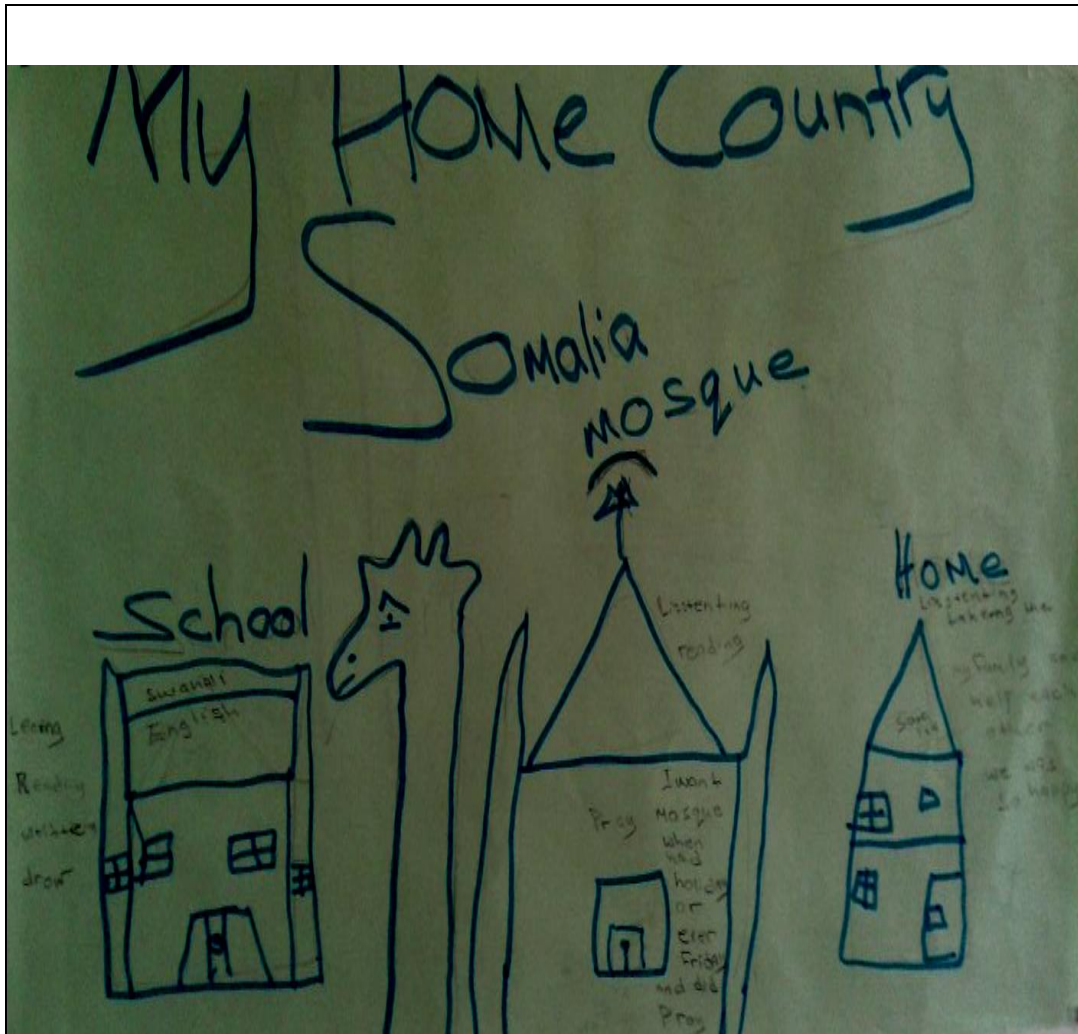
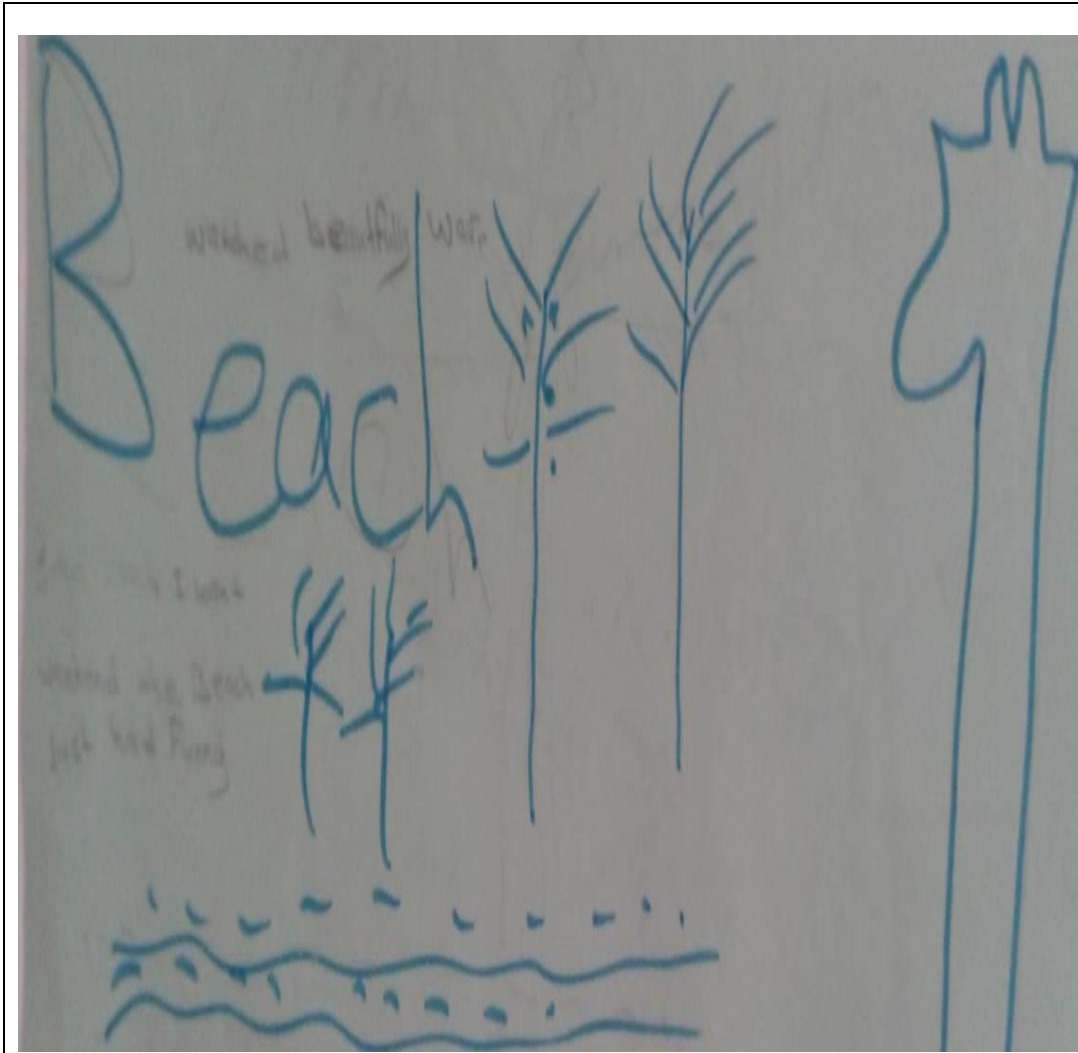


Figure 8: pre-migration literacy activities

School: *learning, reading, writteing [writing], drow [draw]; Swahili, English;*

[Mosque]: *Lisstenting [listening], reading. I want [went to] pray [in the]mosque when [we]had holiday or every Friday and did pray;*

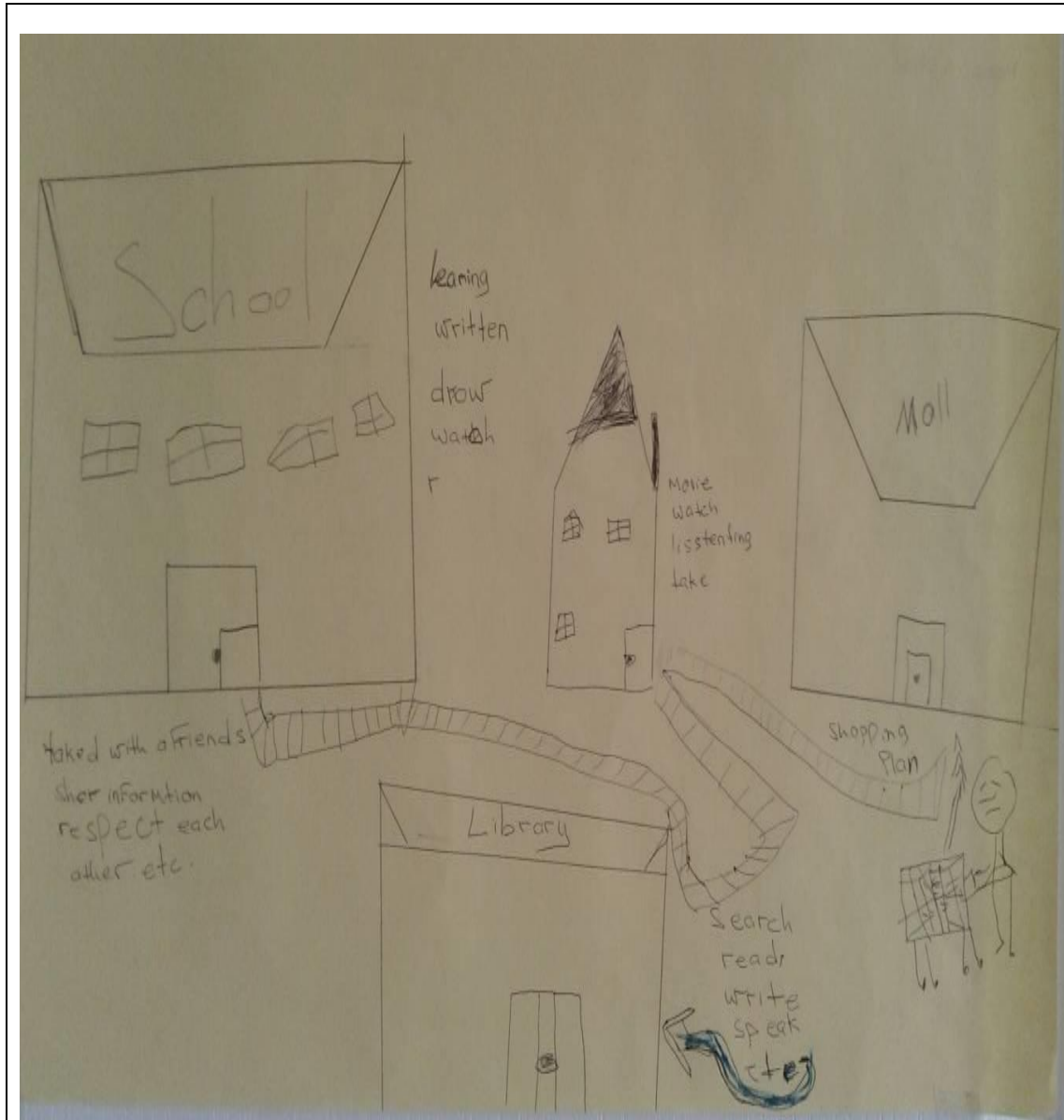
Home: *Lisstenting and takenng [listening and talking] to my family and help each other. We was [were] so happy.*



Beach: *watched beautifully wares* [beautiful waves]. *I went weekend the beach just had funny* [fun].

Figure 9: Pre migration literacy practices

In Canada, Salama's school and out-of-school activities represent a shift in her literacy activities in the various sites where she participated. These are represented in the following maps.



School: *learning, written, drow, [draw], watch, talked with a friends, share information, respect each other, etc;* **Technology,** *there is computer, my teachers; [interviews]: Learning English, learned the school subjects, reading, writing, draw, talk with others, borrow library books, use computer; **Out-of-school:** *[At the mall] watch movie, Lisstenting, take [listening, talk (to my mom and my friends-from interview data, shopping plan [list].* **Library:** *Search, readr, write, speak, etc.**

Figure 10: Out-of-school activities in Canada

Literacy learning in English and identity construction

I think when you want to learn English it's very hard. Sometimes you have to use a lot of things tenses, verbs, pronunciation which my language does not have. It takes you a long time to be in ESL. My English is still low. What I do here is to improve English. That's it! ESL takes too much time. I want to learn English so I can speak very well. I read books, I practice. I want to speak better than I am doing right now. I would like to do more hard classes because I am working hard. I have to complete ESL and then go to mainstream like Canadians; When I write I have writing mistakes. I want to improve. Like when I read a story, I like to write about how it made me feel, how the character feels; Like in my classroom sometime when I speak to my teacher. I want to ask a question about something but he does not get it because of my accent, so I leave it. It's different when you come here. You don't know a word people laugh at you when you say a word. Sometimes people understand. Sometimes they don't. I speak again, and again, like repeat the word again to make them understand (Salama).

Salama perceived difficulties in learning English to reside in her low English skills and divergence between her language Somali and English. She invested herself in working towards improving her language and literacy skills. For the sections of the study that required writing responses, she asked the researcher for help with spelling of most words. Salama represented meaning through art and oral language. Data suggests reliance on a single mode such as language and especially when the learner had not acquired proficiency constrained their learning and communication. Despite her reported and observed challenges in using a new language, Salama aspired to learn English and become a better reader and writer. She repeated herself to get understood but gave up when this goal was not achieved. Salama aspired to learn English and gain access to mainstream classes which were dominated by Canadian born students and English-speaking peers.

Following a class reading of *Mieko and the Fifth Treasure*, the students in EAL level B were individually assessed for reading proficiency and comprehension abilities. I was invited to observe Salama's assessment which indicated her reading comprehension was improving albeit slowly. Salama read fast missing out some of the words. From her responses, there was a likelihood she did not understand some questions and for others,

she may not have had sufficient vocabulary to respond appropriately. Mr. Green indicated the challenges of assessing ELLs. Assessment for this group was more of a learning experience during which the teacher learned where the student needed support. From Salama's responses, he had learned what strategies he would devise to guide her in reading. Also, to avoid demoralizing ELLs, teachers often assigned them a passing mark and reminded them to keep improving towards a higher mark required to pass OSSLT and to complete OSSD. The following highlights Salama's performance on the reading comprehension.

Figure 11: Salama's reading comprehension with grading

Mieko and the Fifth Treasure				3.7 Fiction			
Accuracy	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Score	Comprehension	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Score
33%	<90%	90 - 100%	___%	70%	<80% 0 - 8	80 - 100% 9-11	___%

If accuracy is 90% or above (Proficient) and comprehension is 80% or above (Proficient), test the student at a higher level.

Name: _____ Grade: 12 Date: 04/17/12
 Classroom: (Last, First) _____ Administered By: _____
 Teacher: _____
 School: _____

ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING

Task Description: The student will read the story, summarize the story in own words, and answer questions about the story.

Administration Conditions:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Individual administration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Group administration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Student reads independently
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Student reads aloud
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Written response
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oral response

A. Prereading Diagnostic:

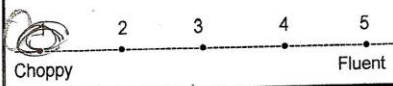
Before Student Reads:

1. Ask the student to read the title and the front and back cover, if appropriate to support the prediction.
2. Ask the student to predict what might happen in the story. (Any logical answer)
N/A
3. Ask the student "What do you think is the author's purpose for writing this book?" (Any logical answer)
N/A
4. Administer the oral reading sample with the student at this point. See Box B and Form B. Then student will read through to the end of page 14 independently.
5. Questions will be answered in writing. Tester is to hand the Response Sheet to the student, read the directions out loud, then ask the student to write their answers to the questions on the Response Sheet when they have finished the independent reading.
6. Do fluency rate check after student has finished questions.

B. Oral Reading Sample (optional running record): Inform the student they will be answering questions after reading.
 Oral reading: Page 9 through the top of page 10. See Form B

C. Questions:

Questions:	Suggested Answers	Student Response	Points
1. Write a summary of what you just read. Be sure to include 3 events from the story.	Grandma calls Mieko to breakfast; Mieko feels sorry for herself; Mieko thinks back to when her art teacher told her she had the fifth treasure: beauty in the heart; Mieko remembers how she used to love to paint; Mieko recalls the day the bomb was dropped and her hand was hurt/ any other event from the story	<u>(4 points)</u>	<u>3/2/1/0</u>

Mieko and the Fifth Treasure		3.7 Fiction	
Name:		Date:	
Questions:			
2. Who was the main character in the story? (Literal)	Mieko	✓	1/0
3. Why did Mieko's parents stay in the city? (Literal)	To care for the injured	✓	1/0
4. What did Mieko do well that showed she had the fifth treasure? (Inferential)	She painted well / was good at calligraphy	✓	1/0
5. Why does Mieko feel she no longer has the fifth treasure? (Inferential)	Her arm (fingers, hand) was injured by the bomb and she can no longer paint.	✓	1/0
6. The story says that, "Mieko was bitter about leaving her family and friends." What does the word "bitter" mean in this sentence? (Vocabulary)	Angry, mad	good.	1/0
7. Is this statement a fact or opinion? It's better for Mieko to live on her grandparent's farm because cities are noisy. (Inferential)	Opinion	False	1/0
8. Why did Mieko not believe her father when he said that her hand injury was "nothing serious"? (Literal)	The wound looked awful; three weeks later it still throbbed painfully; her father had said the same thing to people with worse injuries than hers/ Father says that to make his patients feel better (only need one answer)	Accept. ✓	1/0
Total Score (10 possible)			
CALCULATIONS Error Rate $\frac{E}{RW} = 1: \underline{\quad}$ Accuracy % $\frac{RW-E}{RW} \times 100 = \underline{\quad}\%$ Self Correction Rate $\frac{E}{SC} + SC = 1: \underline{\quad}$ Text Level _____		Error Rate 1:200 99.5 1:100 99 1:50 98 1:35 97 1:25 96 1:20 95 1:17 94 1:14 93 1:12.5 92 1:11.75 91 1:10 90 1:9 89 1:8 87.5 1:7 85.5 1:6 83 1:5 80 1:4 75 1:3 66 1:2 50	SUMMARY STATEMENT Strengths/Attempts: Next Teaching Steps:
FLUENCY SCALE Circle where the student is on the Fluency Scale. (Refer to Level Instructions) The student's oral reading at this level is 			

Mieko and the Fifth Treasure

3.7 Fiction

This form may be used for fluency and/or accuracy assessment

READING FLUENCY AND ACCURACY CHECK

Student: _____ Date: April 17/12
 Teacher: _____ School Term: 2345

Accuracy Directions: (MONDO Program Only) Accuracy is reported as a percentage = # of words read correctly divided by TOTAL number of words read. See chart below for performance levels. When using this script for accuracy, do NOT time student; follow procedure for a running record.

Partially Proficient	Proficient
<90%	90-100%
20 words or more missed	0-19 words missed

Fluency Directions: (Test student only on highest DERA proficiency level) Student reads for one minute. Tester counts only those words read correctly. Tester hands student the fluency script, sets timer for one minute, and says: "When I say START, please begin to read out loud. Keep reading until you hear me say STOP or when the timer goes off. Try to read as many words as you can. Ready? Start." Timer hits start button as he/she says START. If a student gets stuck on a word, count to three seconds then tell the word, mark it wrong, and go on. Fluency is recorded as a flat rate of correct words per minute.

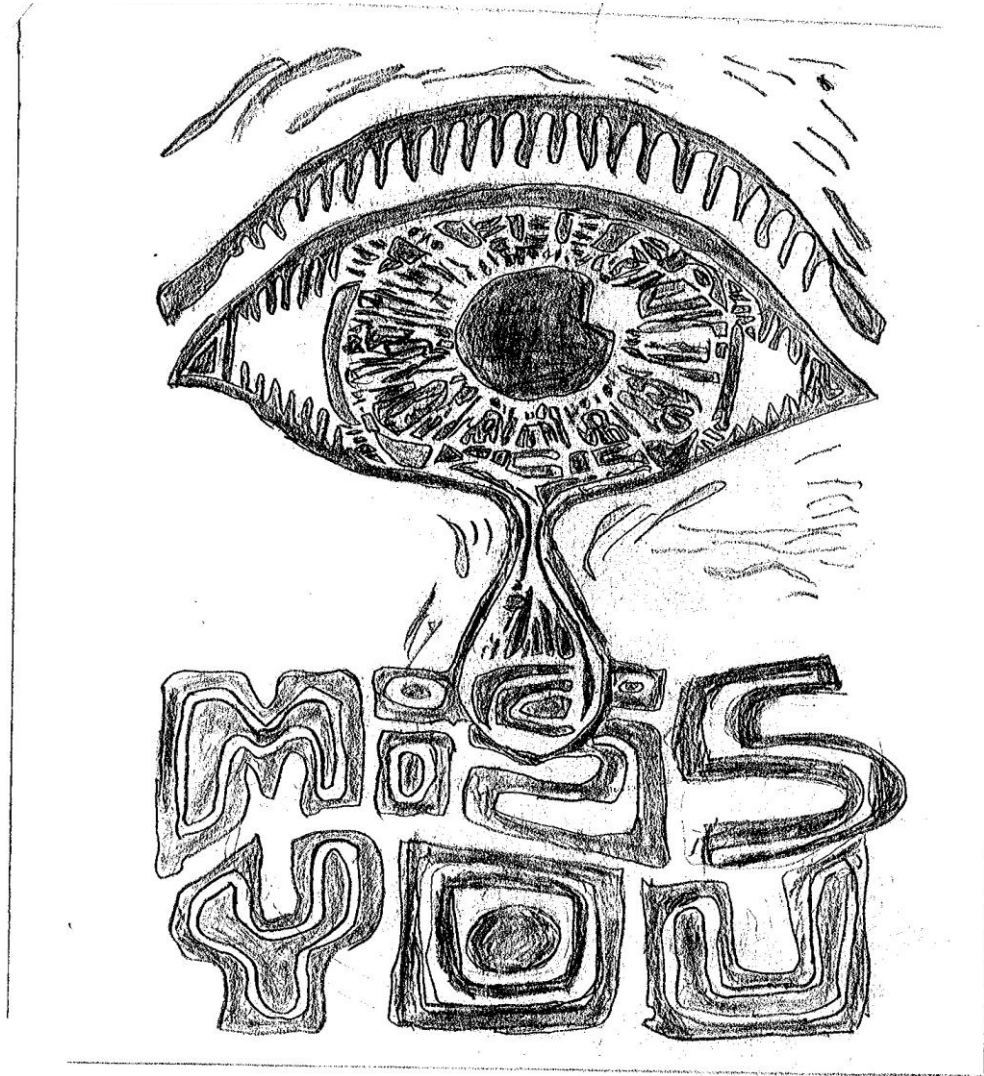
page	Total Words: <u>160</u>	Fluency Total: <u>133 = 7</u>	Fluency # of words
9	"Mieko, come down to breakfast!" Grandma's cheery voice floated up from the kitchen. "It's time you got out of bed."		11 2. 20 5
	But Mieko was not in bed. She was sitting very still and feeling very sorry for herself.		34 2. 37 1
	"In a minute," she called back.		43 2.
	Mieko stared at the art supplies lined up on the red lacquer chest. Her art teacher, Mr. Araki, had called them "the four treasures." There was a fine sable brush, an ink stick, an ink stone shaped like a tiny pond, and a roll of rice paper. Mieko had used them to paint Japanese word-pictures. Calligraphy was what she liked to do more than anything else in the world.		57 6. 71 4. 87 7. 97 5. 110 4
2	Mr. Araki had also told her, "Mieko, you are one of the lucky few who are born with the fifth treasure—beauty in the heart. When you paint, that beauty flows from your heart to your hand, to the brush, and out onto the paper. With lots of practice, you will surely become a great artist."		125 2. 139 3. 154 3.
	Mieko didn't really understand what beauty in the heart meant, but she knew that she was never so happy as when she had a brush in her hand, with every stroke getting better.		166 178 195 199

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 Oral Reading Level is 1 (border line)

Salama's gaps in schooling and her limited English levels may have presented challenges in her learning. Like most of her peers who had gaps in schooling due to experiences in refugee camps, Salama did not receive specialized support to bridge the gaps in her literacy education. Social positioning as new immigrant student, ELL, age, race, L1, religion, gender, and difference were important to learning. Salama had a strong sense of community and relationships where she could work with others to solve problems. She was comfortable with her heritage as a black African youth. Salama described her L1 as important for home functions but not for use at school. Age was an important determinant for Salama's learning and identity at the school. She was frustrated at being 18 years old and yet her English level was low. Often teachers and support staff did not understand her needs. Salama shared sentiments of other ELLs about the length of time it took to complete EAL. Use of multimodal artefacts provided an outlet and opportunity for Salama to communicate her thoughts, use language, and build confidence. Her uncle's

photograph helped her to deal with loneliness and connect with her past experiences. In her art class, Salama drew a tearful eye which she attributed to her uncle who cared for her:



Cherie #1 very interesting
A

Figure 12: Salama's artwork of a tearful eye: MISS YOU

4.2.4 Meet Shujaa

Shujaa was born in Congo in 1998. At the height of political turmoil, he migrated to Uganda in the company of his grandmother where he lived for 8 years and went to school. He migrated to Canada with his parents in 2008 for what he described as a better life. He was placed in grade six in Canada which was his last grade attended in Uganda. He was at EAL level B, in grade 9 by age and enrolled in courses from lower grades at the time of study. Shujaa had been receiving EAL since grade 6. He spoke Luganda, English, and understood Kinyarwanda. The language of instruction in his school in Uganda was Luganda, with occasional classes in English. Shujaa was out-going, detail oriented, and like most adolescents, enjoyed the use of technology. He engaged in hip hop music and dancing, and was actively involved in sporting and athletic activities at the YMCA and the parks. Shujaa enjoyed face painting and volunteered to work with children attending summer camps. He also practiced math and writing on pavements near his home. He was an avid church goer and volunteered in a variety of activities. His school and out-of-school activities included:

[Out –of school]: *Sometimes I read to my parents about sports and stories in English; I write school work, texting and email. I do face painting; I write some words on the ground, outside on cement; I sing and dance in church. I do homework; at home I read, listen to music, hip hop; Reading with my friends when playing video games, computer games, we read the maps and rules; [At school]: I do weights at the weight room, learn, listen, use library; Writing paragraphs, talking to my friends, listening to my teacher; Group work in reading and writing. Some texting; What I like about high school I want to know more about English, math, science, geography; I read a quick email, I use the cell phone so I text at home and at school; Go to my classes like reading, writing, English, Math, Art, and family studies. I just came to school to learn new stuff like English (Shujaa).*

Shujaa explained that his main interest in his new school was to learn English and other subjects. Outside of school he engaged in multiple practices that allowed him to learn English and interact with friends.

Experiences of literacy learning

Shujaa's pre migratory schooling had not equipped him with print literacy skills. He began reading in 2011/2012 when he joined grade 9. He had been in the Canadian school system for nearly 4 years since grade 6 and continued to receive EAL support. Shujaa was in EAL level B which implies that for the 4 years, he had not made much improvement in print literacy. He was confident and demonstrated understanding of concepts. He also asked for clarification if he did not understand. Shujaa was not happy with his EAL classroom composition which he viewed as not enabling to literacy learning. He felt isolated and much time was lost as L1 majority students interacted in L1. His spoken English was more advanced than his written, and he did not enjoy reading and writing. He sometimes read interesting magazines on sports and music, text messages and emails. He often participated in math lessons. Shujaa narrated his experiences with language and literacy learning as challenging,

It's pretty hard. ... I need more English language to read and write. It's just too hard, you know like a teacher is teaching like math class and the students speak their own language. It's a new language for me; [Reading]: It's been hard for me like pronunciation I am not used to it. I started reading in September when I came here. I only read a little bit in elementary school. I did not read before coming to Canada: I don't like to read. I only like to read magazines, stories what happened long, long time ago, about real things that happened, text messages, emails;

[Writing:] I am ok with writing and speaking. I don't have anything to write about. I write a message, something like writing paragraphs in class; I call friends in Uganda, I don't write them; [Representing]: Sometimes I explain with my hand If I don't have words to explain. Sometimes I show them a picture on the internet, if I don't know how to say it in English. We were doing division and I was talking about soft ball I showed how to measure, how far it goes I like this because I know about soft ball.

Identity

A sense of community was important in Shujaa's CLD classroom with students at EAL B. Shujaa understood that despite the differences in his EAL classroom they all had a

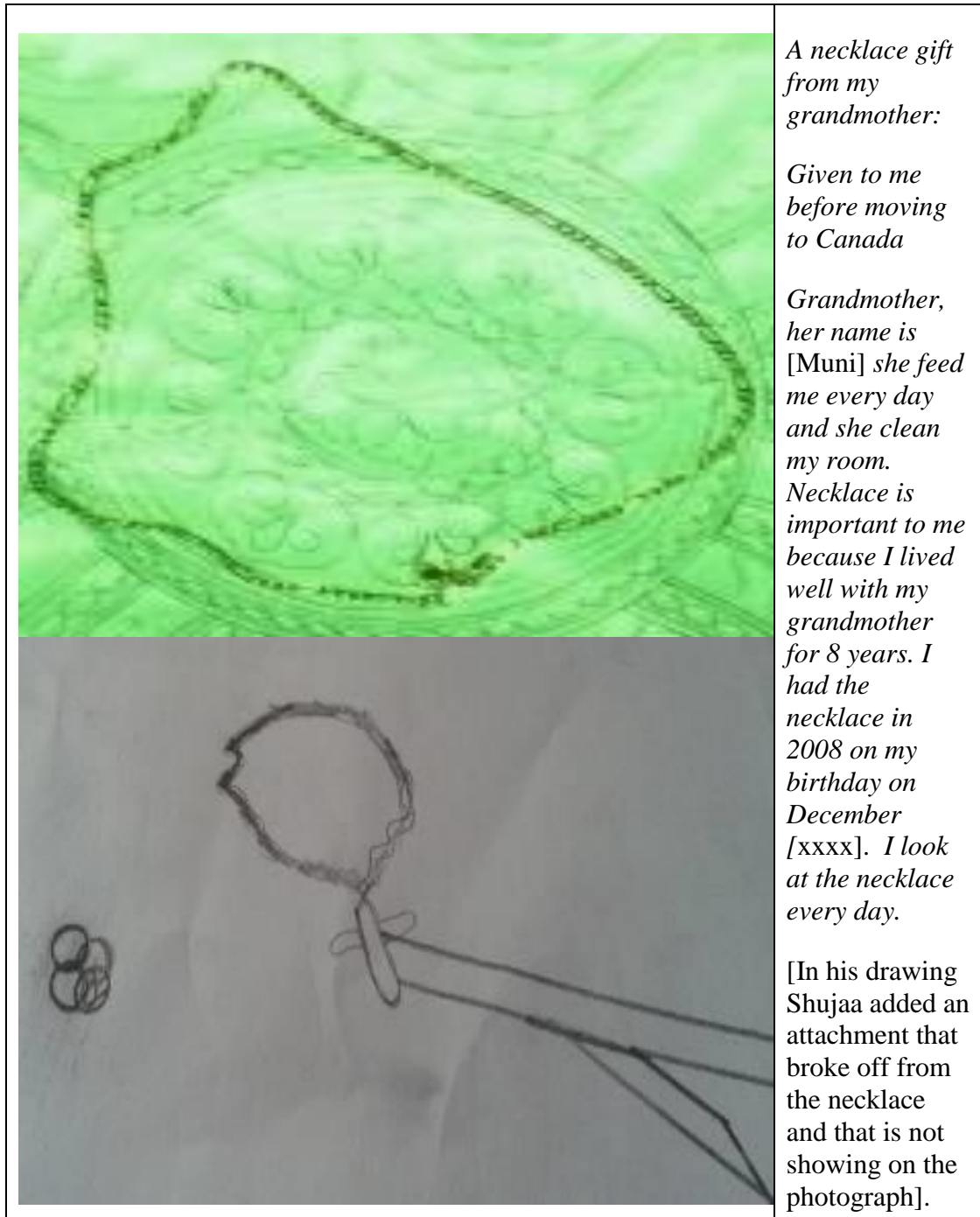
common agenda to learn English. He, however, noted that belonging to his current ELL community was not optimal for his learning because it did not provide ELLs opportunity to interaction with English speakers. Like the other African youth, race, language and ability were important to identity.

As an immigrant student learning English, Shujaa had acquired a fragile identity and he could not communicate effectively as he did before in a familiar language. He had also become different. He aspired to attain enough English skills to gain access to employment. Being an immigrant student also allowed Shujaa to meet new people and learn new skills like playing rugby. Shujaa had a positive relationship in his L1 for social and family engagements but he did not think it was essential for his learning. His response to an interview question about his experiences as an immigrant student was:

I don't feel I am the same Shujaa who was in Uganda. In Uganda I was more different. I could speak. In Canada I did not know how to speak English, I just say hello and bye. If I speak English well, it will help me find a job. I want to get a good job and support my family. I am trying to speak good, to learn more; Meeting new people. New people you don't know you have never seen. Learning new skills, like when I came to this school I was playing rugby, I did not know about rugby from Africa; [To learn English, Shujaa had figured that]: Having people who have been here for 10 years or were born here and speak English help me speak English all the time. First it was very hard. TV is helping me with English; I need more English so I can speak better and learn. I am good in math, I understand. I am doing better now at school.

Shujaa's artefacts included gifts, and samples of artwork and writing that demonstrate his interest in sports, video games, and also his emerging writing skills. These are presented below.

Figure 13: Gift from my Grandma



<p>My Ideal Room</p> <p>King Side Bed</p> <p>Side table</p> <p>clock radio</p> <p>Flat Screen TV</p> <p>Xbox 360</p> <p>laptop</p> <p>Vacuum cleaner</p> <p>Air hockey</p> <p>Weights</p> <p>rug</p> <p>closet</p>	<p>My Ideal Room 03/23/12</p> <p>My ideal room is a bedroom. My bedroom has king side bed and beside the a side table on the a clock radio. It has weight to work out. On ground I have a rug is red. The closet is beside the bed. The tv is in front of tv. It is Xbox 360 is under the tv and beside the tv, Xbox a laptop. The air hockey is beside the vacuum cleaner.</p>
<p><i>My ideal room: flat screen TV; Xbox 360, laptop, vacuum cleaner, air hockey, weights, rugs, king size bed, side table, closet, clock radio.</i></p>	<p><i>My Ideal room 03/23/12</i></p> <p><i>My ideal room is a bedroom. My bedroom has king side [size] bed and beside the [there is] a side table on the [it/side table is] a clock radio. It has weight to work out. On ground I have a rug [which] is red. The closet is beside the bed. The tv [TV] is in front of tv [...]. It is Xbox 360 is under the tv and beside the tv [and] Xbox a laptop. The air hockey is beside the vacuum cleaner.</i></p>

Figure 14: Shujaa's Ideal Room

Shujaa like the other participants noted progress in his adaptation and language and literacy learning. He was confident that with more practice, he would improve in all areas

of learning and join a career in sales. He recommended that the school provide more support to ELLs and allow opportunities for them to learn with mainstream students. He expressed resistance by challenging the depth of math lessons and the limited practice in the absence of planned homework.

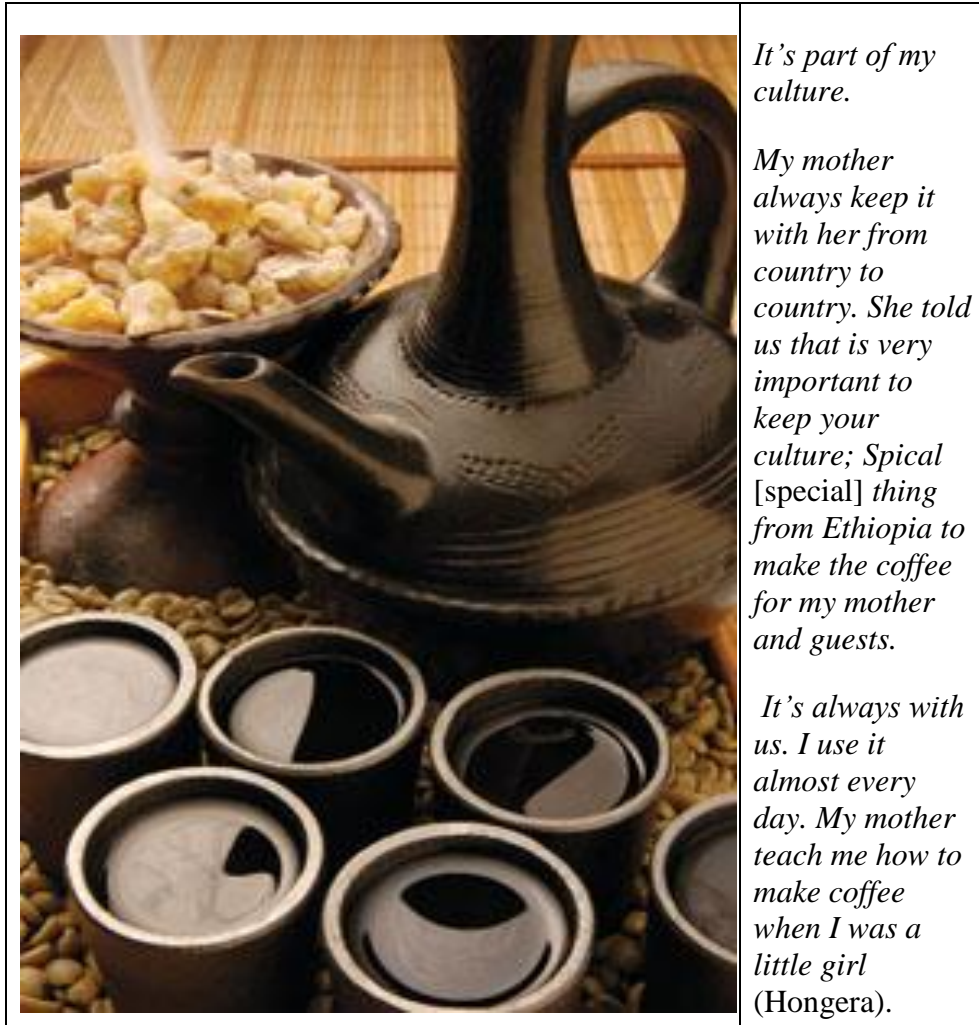
4.2.5 Meet Hongera

Hongera was born in 1992 in Sudan to Ethiopian parents and identified herself as Ethiopian. She migrated to Canada in 2010 with some members of her family. The last grade level attended before migration was grade 9. Hongera was 20 years old at the time of the study. She was in grade 12 by age and was enrolled in grade 9 courses. Also, she was in EAL C level and read class novels for readers in grade 5. She had been at her current school and received English support for one year. She was literate in Arabic, the language of education in Sudan and spoke Amharic, her parents' first language. Hongera is a mother of a half year old son. She often missed classes or arrived late for classes when her son was unwell. Missing classes was not uncommon with other secondary school students. One teacher indicated that attendance was usually better for ELLs than for non ELL students. Hongera actively participated in classroom reading, writing, responding to questions, asked for the meaning of words and phrases, and helped her colleagues. For example, during the reading of a class novel the "Hydrofoil" she asked the teacher, *what does it mean to take risk?* She completed her unfinished homework during her lunch break and sometimes got help after school when her mother was available to take care of her son.

Hongera expressed frustration at the lengthy process of completing ESL before she could join mainstream classroom and study courses that were more challenging. Hongera's goal was to get a good education and, probably, get into nursing or psychology, and return to Sudan to make a difference and to be reunited with her child's father. Being in a new environment and learning to be literate in English were challenging for Hongera. She was cheerful and always ready to help other students. Owing to her English language level and fear of isolation, she mainly interacted with ELLs although she would advise new

immigrants to interact with every student including those in mainstream in order to learn English faster. Literacy activities among the Ethiopian immigrant community in the region were important funds of knowledge that could support Hongera's identity and literacy learning at school. Hongera shared the importance of activities she engaged in during special holidays in her community when members came together and shared Ethiopian food and coffee. They also wore a special Ethiopian dress and listened to cultural music. Special occasions provide immigrant families an opportunity to interact, share diverse ideas about issues confronting their community, education, business and employment among others. Transmission of cultural values and language are also common in those occasions. Hongera brought photographs of a special coffee maker which was commonly used in Ethiopia and wrote about the artefact as presented below.





It's part of my culture.

My mother always keep it with her from country to country. She told us that is very important to keep your culture; Spical [special] thing from Ethiopia to make the coffee for my mother and guests.

It's always with us. I use it almost every day. My mother teach me how to make coffee when I was a little girl (Hongera).

Figure 15: Hongera's artefact of an Ethiopian coffee maker

Hongera's writing samples demonstrated her thoughtfulness and also her emerging writing skills. Her BICS were developed and she was working towards other forms of print literacy. Her writing included topics such as gender inequalities in Sudan and Ethiopia illustrated in her writing about mourning in her culture. On Mother's day, Hongera wrote a special thank you note to her mother shown in figure 16 below.

May 11th 2012

Dear Mum

Dear mum I love you so much. I just writing this letter to thank you for a lot of thing when I was at school I know how hard you was working for me to buy for school and food for us.

Dear mum I will never forget how much you help me to be in a life. I know how hard for you to have your daughte having baby but you just take it easy for me. I know how you was helpfull at that time for me, you did very we-spical in Afric but when you take to Canada to change or life if I was still in Africa I maybe crys really thank you mum.

I love you

Figure 16: Hongera writes: Thank you mom

<p><i>Dear mum, 11th, 2012</i></p> <p><i>Dear mum I love you so much. I [am] just writing this letter to thank you for a lot of thing when I was in school I know how hard you was [were] working for me to buy [pay] for school and food for us.</i></p> <p><i>Dear mum, I will never forget how much you help me to be in a life. I know how hard for you to have your daughter having [to have a] baby but you just took it easy for [on] me. I know how you was [were] helpful at the time for me. I know it's hard spicaly [especially] in Africa but you did very well.</i></p> <p><i>Spical [special] thank you for you when you toke [took/brought us] to Canada to change or [our] life. If I was still in Africa, I maybe crys [would be crying?] really thank you mum.</i></p> <p><i>I love, you, [Hongera]</i></p>	<p><i>May</i></p>
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Figure 17: Transcript - Hongera's note to mum

Relevant school support for all students and especially those experiencing barriers to literacy learning is one of the goals of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009) to facilitate access, equity and social justice in public education. Hongera's school supported her learning in a number of ways, especially in the provision of learning materials and technological resources which she reported made school in Canada better than in Sudan. She however aspired for intensive support by her school towards her goal to become a better writer. In addition, she hoped the school would review the EAL program to enable her participation in more challenging courses while at the same time supporting her to do well. I had observed that Hongera asked many questions in her language classes however, she indicated in an interview that she was not comfortable asking many questions even when she did not understand. She did not want to seem not to know and may have wanted to preserve her identity as knowledgeable by not asking questions. Also, language barrier may have prevented Hongera, like other ELLs from understanding the content well enough to articulate questions. In this case, the teacher could have strived to create an environment in which ELLs felt supported to communicate in diverse modes, where the

students' everyday out-of-school literacies were incorporated in the topics taught, and their L1 was legitimized so that they felt enthusiastic not shy about expressing opinions or asking questions. Hongera's concerns seem to suggest the need for her school to create more opportunities that invite immigrant students' funds of knowledge, to enable ELLs to feel comfortable to express themselves freely.

4.2.6 Meet Mwangaza

Mwangaza was born in Ethiopia in 1997 and migrated to Sudan where he lived with his family for 8 years before moving to Canada in 2010. The last grade attended before migration was grade 8. He was 15 years old and in grade 10 by age at the time of the study. He was in EAL level D and was enrolled in some grade 9 courses. He read grade 5 level novels selected by the EAL teacher and the school. He had been at the school and receiving EAL support for 1.5 years. Mwangaza was literate in Amharic and Arabic. He could also read, write and speak in Tigrinya to some extent. Before moving to Canada, Mwangaza had studied at a school established by the Coptic Church to cater for Ethiopian families in Sudan. Most courses at the school were taught in Amharic and Arabic (language in northern Sudan), and English was taught as a subject. The school had grades K-10. In grades K-5 Amharic was the language of instruction in all subjects, and English and Arabic were taught as subjects. English was the language of instruction in grades 6-10, and Amharic and Arabic were taught as subjects. Mwangaza was actively involved in sports. At school, he was a member of the basketball, soccer and athletic teams and participated in the competitions. He also played soccer and basketball out-of-school. Mwangaza regularly attended his church and received support in homework and social emotional needs. What he loved most about his school in Sudan was oral story telling which was not among the literacy practices in Canada. He also enjoyed partying and camping. In Sudan, Mwangaza utilized Arabic, Amharic and Tigrinya in his school and out-of-school activities.

Mwangaza was surprised that English was the only language at his school and also that in spite of his multilingual abilities, he could not participate fully in activities at school and

out-of-school. Mwangaza spent more time outside his home after school and weekends for the opportunity to interact with English speakers and learn the language. He engaged in many literacy practices at various sites in Ethiopia, Sudan and Canada. His visual representation also linked activities at school, church, house, and a soccer field and wrote the activities below.

Mwangaza informed me that his thoughts about home were fixed to Ethiopia although the literacy practices that he mapped took place in Sudan. Mwangaza captured every detail about his involvement in literacy related activities at various sites. His out-of-school literacy activities represented his life in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Canada. Below are maps of Mwangaza's literacy practices in Ethiopia:



Ethiopia: Literacy Mapping Activity. School: *reading books used Amharic language and Arabic [Arabic], wrote essays, planting trees and flowers, camping*; Church: *Read the Bible, sing in the church, play music, help in Sunday school*; House: *Watch TV, spoken Amharic and Arabic [Arabic], do school home works*; Soccer field: *play with my friend*.

Figure 18: Mwangaza's literacy activities in Ethiopia

The following map represents Mwangaza's literacy activities in Canada:

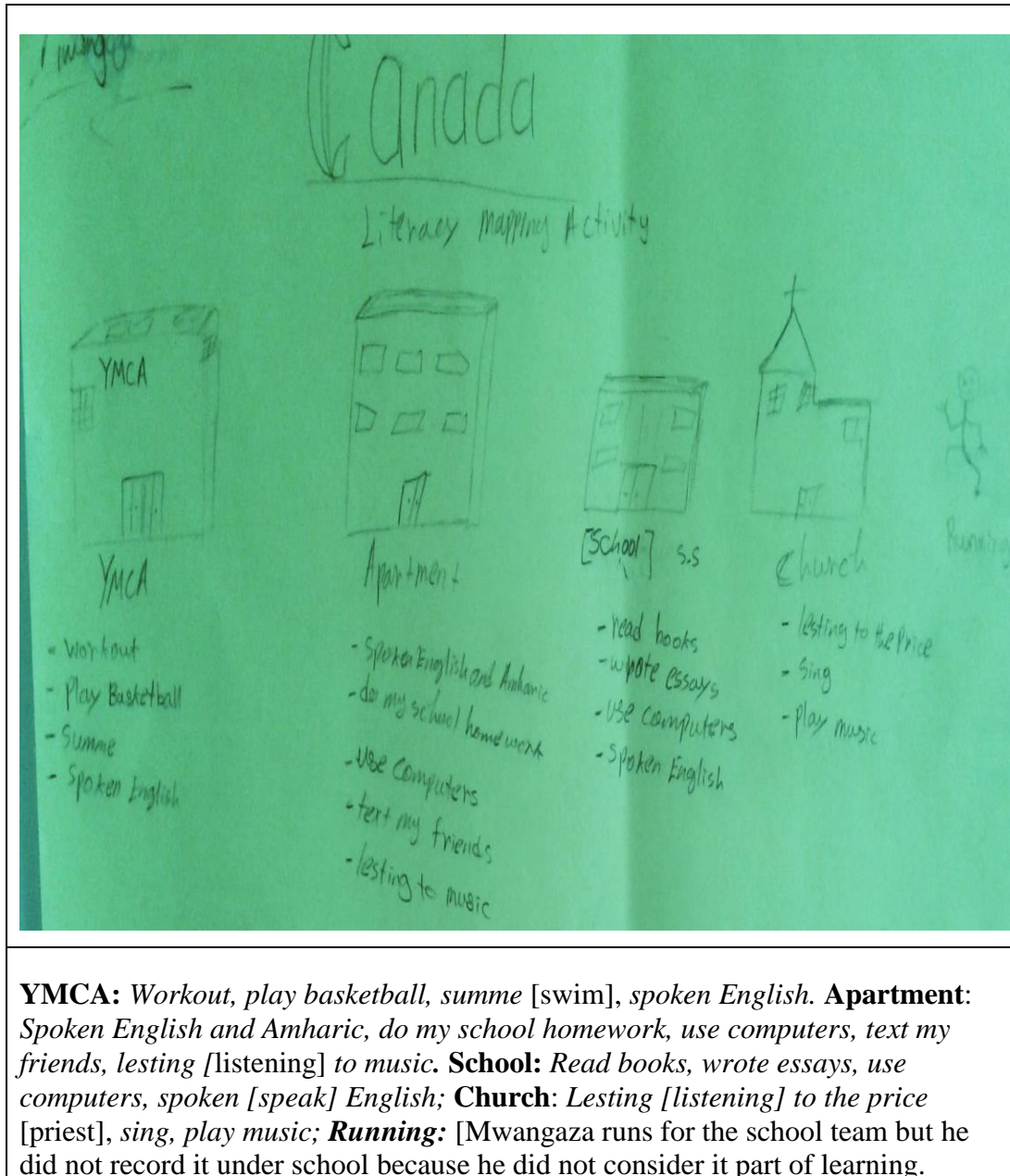


Figure 19: Mwangaza's literacy activities in Canada

Mwangaza's home and school practices taught him how to communicate with other people and work towards his goal as indicated on his maps below.

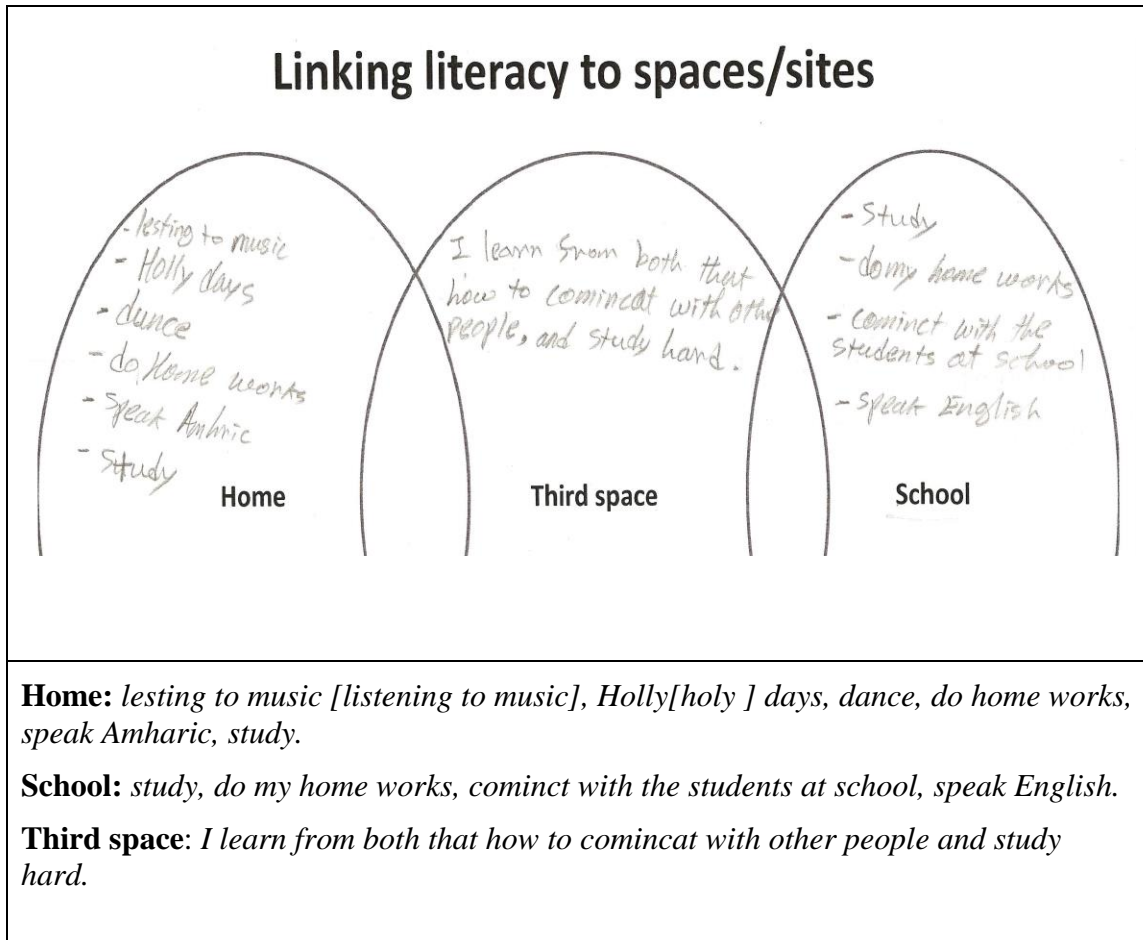


Figure 20: Mwangaza's literacy in the Third space

Identity

The word identity for Mwangaza related to events surrounding migration that positively or negatively affected his life. His view echoed a previous class project around identity and events that led the ELLs and their families to migrate to Canada. Mwangaza was quiet and appeared thoughtful. He carried with him a key holder with Ethiopian national

colours hanging from his pocket which was his way of representing his love for Ethiopia and also an expression of his identity and aspirations as noted below.

I love my country so much I want to tell everyone I am Ethiopian; I am proud of who I am; I am happy to be black. I want to get a good education and feel good about myself.

Artefacts may also constitute the home and community funds of knowledge that diverse immigrant students bring to their learning environments. Mwangaza's most valuable item was a photograph of himself and his childhood best friend which was the last picture together before his friend died of illness. The photograph represented the friendship and the moments they had shared together. The picture is not presented for confidentiality reasons. Below was Mwangaza write up about his artefact:

<p><i>Photograph not displayed for confidentiality reasons</i></p>	<p><i>Picture of me and my best friend: Is valuable to me because it's a picture of me and my best friend that we grow up together. We were friend since the daycare and we were like brothers. This picture is very valuable to me because it is the last picture that we took before he die [died]. My friend died 6 years ago. It means everything to me. It is the most valuable thing I have. I got this picture 6 years ago. I look at it almost every day. (Mwangaza)</i></p>
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Figure 21: Picture of me and my best friend

Mwangaza's maps below illustrate his perceptions on the relationship among identity, community and literacy learning.

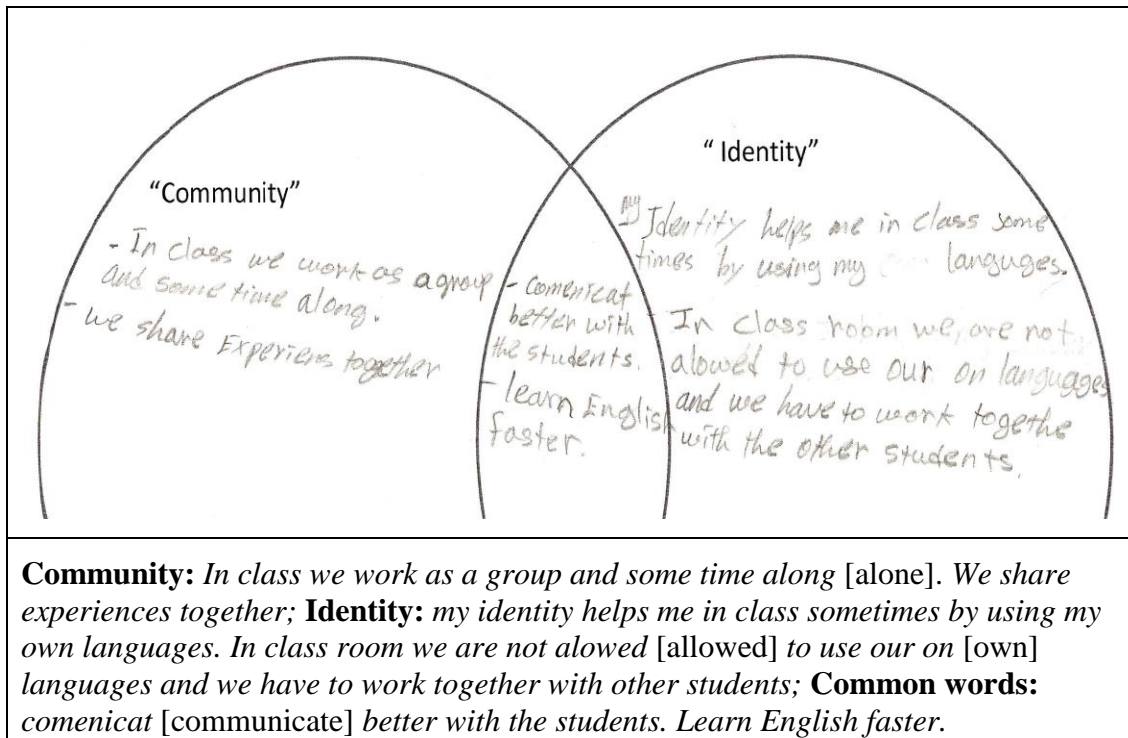


Figure 22: Mwangaza's identity in the classroom community

Interaction with other students was important to Mwangaza's learning especially of English. For this reason, he did not think L1 use however important to learning, was helpful for interaction in a CLD classroom such as his. Also, L1 was not allowed in his classroom. The maps above indicate his understanding of the importance of learning together and being able to communicate and learn English.

School experiences

Mwangaza was working to improve his language and literacy learning which he felt challenging. He did not always enjoy reading in English because it took him too long to consult the dictionary for meaning of words. Reading, use of technology and speaking with other students supported his learning. He also encountered challenges with writing and spelling. Mwangaza was interested to see change in Ethiopia, especially in the area of the freedom of speech. Using multimodal design, he made decisions about the material to use, how to bring together drawings, internet images and writing to communicate his

hypothetical plan. He hoped to transform the situation in Ethiopia through a class project that allowed students in EAL D classroom to engage in social injustices in different societies. Prior to the project on Right of Speech, Mwangaza had reflected on the quality of life in Ethiopia as follows: Figures 23 and 24 above and 25 below illustrate Mwangaza's project on how he would raise awareness about the *right of speech* in Ethiopia.

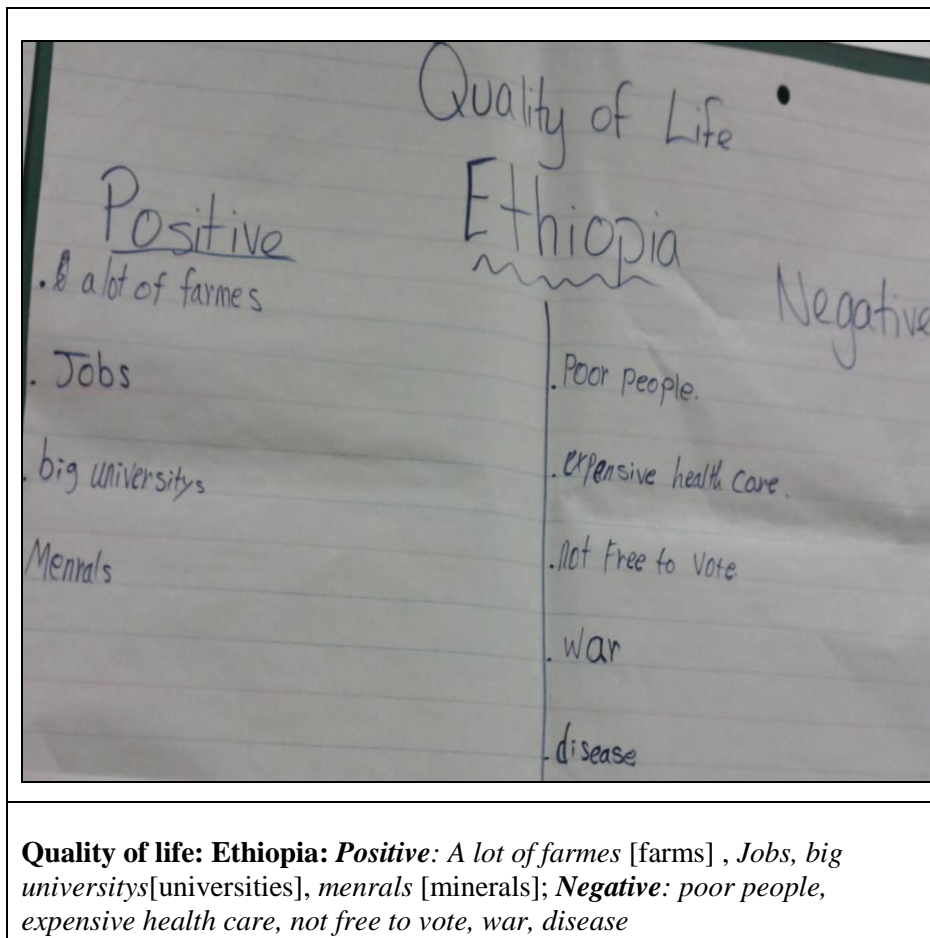


Figure 23: Mwangaza-Quality of life in Ethiopia

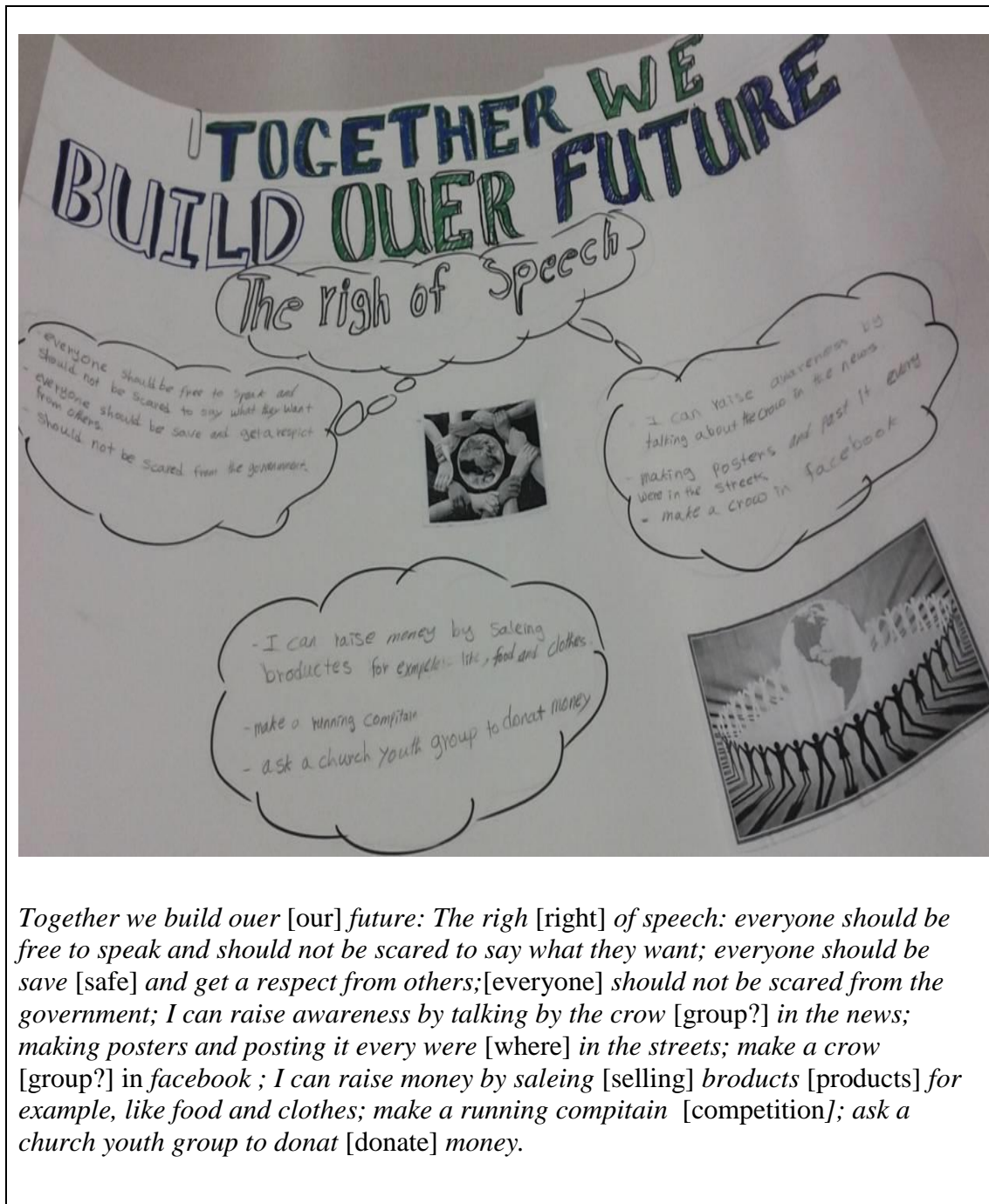


Figure 24: Mwangaza- The Right of Speech

Figure 25: Mwangaza- Grading Mwangaza's Right of Speech project

Human Rights Poster
Final Rubric

	1	2	3	4	
KNOWLEDGE					
The organization has a title that is related to the topic, and lists the specific right from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.			✓		5/10
The poster gives a thorough description of what happens when people lose the right that is being discussed.					
THINKING					
All rough work has been included. Organizers and rough work show strong effort during planning.					6.5/10
Student used time well both during and outside class, and required little extra support to complete tasks.			✓		
All pictures, drawings, etc. are clearly relevant to the issue being discussed.			✓		6/10
The organization and the ideas are original, creative, and realistic.			✓		
COMMUNICATION					
The poster covers each written section (consequences of losing the right, what should happen, how the group works) in detail.			✓		5.5/10
The writing flows smoothly, and the vocabulary used is academic and strong.			✓		
APPLICATION					
Spelling and grammar are correct and punctuation has been used properly throughout the written portions of the poster.			✓		6/10
The poster is visually interesting, and displays a clear point of view through its design, images, and coloring.			✓		
Comments	??	not really			Total: 21.5/40

Students' compared your poster to the other students' (along with their marks) you are missing important information and have errors. Colour would have made your poster more appealing (effective?)

Grading of Mwangaza's project followed a rubric that specified knowledge, thinking, communication, and application students were expected to demonstrate. Mwangaza had missed lessons due to illness and to participate in the athletic team's competition, and did not hand in his work by the deadline. Ms. Alexis' comments on his work indicates that he had not put in as much effort as other students. In addition, Ms. Alexis commented that

Mwangaza may have made his project more appealing by adding colour. Also, he had not provided a detailed description about human rights in Ethiopia and his rough work was missing from the organizer. His communication and application were not rated high. By these comments, Mwangaza did not appear to have been meeting expectations for his grade through this project. He had however demonstrated knowledge of Ethiopia and had reflected on ways to enact change.

4.3 Summary

African youth portraits highlighted key areas that are important to the literacy learning and identity of African immigrant youth. I identified the following themes, which will be discussed in detail in chapter five and six.

1. Challenges and opportunities: Global-local inequalities and literacy learning: Subthemes include displacement, pre-migration education experiences, and literacy in home language; post-migration transition and challenges to adaptation; learning a new language, engaging difference and becoming the *Other*
2. Literacy learning opportunities at the school: understanding literacy and literacy learning in English: Reading, writing, speaking, representing, communicating; conditions for learning an additional language- the role of teachers and peer interaction; OSSLT and accountability in public education
3. Funds of knowledge: out-of-school literacies, artefacts, interests, and aspirations
4. African youth identities in figured worlds: Fragile, shifting identities; immigrant, ELL and L1 identities, gendered identities
5. Identity texts: extending learning beyond curricular texts.

Chapter 5 –Challenges to Adaptation

5.0 Introduction

Study findings were derived from triangulation of multiple data sources as described in chapters three and four: interviews, classroom observations, mapping literacy activities, and artefacts. The data draws attention to the pre migration experiences of relocation, learning new language/s for some, attending school and literacy in L1. In addition, post migratory circumstances such as school factors that include policies, curriculum and language programs, the Ontario Secondary School literacy test (OSSLT), and supports for diverse students shaped literacy learning and identity options of immigrant students. Running through the themes are notions of location, language, identity, and related opportunities and challenges. Use of repetition such as “the, the, or like, like”, and also long pauses and hesitation marks such as “uuumm, uh, eeh” were common throughout the transcripts. I have minimized use of these natural language features to make the text more readable.

By working within a critical interpretive tradition, my aim was not to produce certain deterministic identities for example, about ways new ELLs use their new language, but to understand their experience as socially situated. I considered the context of the research questions to avoid the loss of intended meaning, ignored grammatical errors to preserve the youth’s voices, and used boxed commas wherever I added my own words for readers to understand the text. The voices of African youth were also supported by data from mapping activities, observations, and documents, where relevant. In this chapter, I present findings on the pre and post-migratory experiences of African immigrant youth analyzed from responses to the question: *what are the experiences of African immigrant students who are learning to be literate in an additional language?* The main threads running through this section included the interaction of the pre migratory circumstances and educational experiences and the post migration transition, and their combined impact

on language, literacy and identity. Inequalities in literacy learning, encounter with newness, difference and discrimination were also highlighted.

5.1 Negotiating Global and Local Spaces for a Place to Belong and Learn

Transitioning from one country to another especially countries with differing sociohistoric contexts (Samers, 2010) for example Africa and Canada, affects family dynamics (Adams & Kirova, 2007) and identity. African youth, like most newcomers, faced marginalization for lacking the host society and school's social and cultural capital, and non recognition of their own cultural knowledge and languages (NLG, 1996). Transition shaped social location, voice and identity, which are important to the literacy learning of the transnational youth who had to begin important aspects of life all over again. Migration to Canada for the youth and their families was driven by safety concerns and hope for better opportunities. Smooth transition and adaptation of immigrant youth (Graff & Fu, 2009) are key to the realization of opportunities, and therefore require relevant programs and supports both in schools and the community for the youth to overcome pre migration and post migratory constraints. A brief introduction to the students' pre migratory conditions illustrates the shift to new experiences in Canada. Salama, Nyota, Shujaa, Mwezi and Mwangaza migrated to Canada from four African countries (Figure 26). Hongera was born in Sudan to Ethiopian parents where she lived until migration to Canada. An analysis of the youth's mapping activities with an emphasis on language use before migration provides background information to their experiences. Figure 26 below summarizes the country and language background of the six youth in this study.

Students' Names	Birth country	Relocation in Africa	L1	Language-education Canada-L2/L3
Hongera	Sudan	Sudan	Amharic	Arabic/ English
Mwangaza	Ethiopia	Sudan	Amharic	Arabic/English
Mwezi	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Amharic & Tigrinya	Both L1 & English
Nyota	Congo (DRC)	Kenya	Mashi	French/Swahili/ English
Shujaa	Congo (DRC)	Uganda	Kinyarwanda	Luganda/English
Salama	Somali	Kenya	Somalia	Swahili/English

Figure 26: Participant by country of origin, L1 & language of education

The dislocation, movement, and adaptation implied in the process of migration marked the onset of change (Rushdie, 2002) in the lives of the African immigrant youth. Data from mapping activities indicates that shifts in place impacted language use and literacy learning. In their respective countries in Africa, place served as curriculum for the youth who interacted with the natural features such as lakes, mountains, beaches, and rivers, which offered them space to connect and learn. The youth were socialized in African ways of knowing and life (Abdi, 2012) and acquired skills relevant to their communities' survival, learning, and meaning making. They also participated in formal school literacy practices. All the youth completed a table of activities, drew maps of sites/places that were important to them, and recorded activities and languages used.

5.1.1 Pre migration, transition and challenges of adaptation

Pre migratory circumstances of the African youth revealed important experiences that shaped how they transitioned to Canadian society and school. The shift from familiar environments to new ones with demands to learn a new language and attend new schools had implications for the youth's adjustment to their new society. The youth were

overwhelmed by the new experiences which replaced their ability to communicate, read and write in L1, with being tongue-tied until they had acquired English skills to participate in out-of and school literacy activities in Canada. Data drawn from interviews, mapping, and talk around literacy activities point to the supports necessary to bridge the youth's pre and post migratory experiences in Canada. Shujaa's case illustrates the transition:

I don't feel I am the same [Shujaa] who was in Uganda. In Uganda I was more different, I could speak. In Canada I did not know how to speak English; I just say hello and bye (Shujaa)

Similarly, Mwangaza expressed the transition in the following manner:

It's very different. Here it's only one language, all English, In Sudan it's many languages, Arabic, Amharic and English; [In Ethiopia/Sudan] At School: reading books; planting trees and flowers, camping (Mwangaza).

The quotes above suggest that moving from the familiar to the unknown disrupts continuity as the students engaged in the adaptation process. Moving from Ethiopia to Sudan and then to Canada disrupted Mwangaza's activities, language/s and learning and at the same time presented him with opportunities to explore different activities and learn new skills. The opportunity for the participants to map their pre and post-migration experiences and literacy practices offered important connections among location and language and literacy practices. This background knowledge may provide important insights into the supports and strategies most relevant for orientation, adaptation, learning and identity construction of immigrant students to Canada. The activities highlight the funds of knowledge the youth brought with them to Canada. Differences in activities, languages, and avoidance to mention transition sites in favour of home countries indicate the significance of location and belonging. Transition from one context to another, especially with different social, cultural, linguistic and economic systems such as Canada, presented the youth with challenges of adjustment and especially learning in a new language.

Challenges to adaptation and literacy learning

Data from interviews and observation suggest that successful adaptation and integration of newcomers in the host society are central to learning and the construction of identities. Literacy learning for the youth in this study was shaped by multiple forces including migratory circumstances, prior education and literacy level, and the family's social location in Canada. African youth encountered unique challenges that were related to the effects of migration stress, adaptation, learning a new language, in addition to meeting curriculum content and requirements. Experiences of isolation and discrimination on the basis of 'newness', language, and nationality interfered with the youths' adaptation and learning. Instructional school practices excluded the youth's funds of knowledge yet the youth had not acquired school literacy and language to navigate the curriculum expectations, which limited opportunities for participation in learning.

Nyota, Salama, and Shujaa had gaps in schooled literacy due to displacement. As refugees in neighbouring countries, they negotiated identities and learning in a third space between home and transition countries where they awaited ruling on their migration to Canada. The in between locations did not offer enabling learning environments, and they also needed to learn new languages to fit in their transition spaces. All the youth in this study had limited exposure to the English language upon migration to Canada and reported challenges such as making new friends, maintaining positive identity, and literacy learning. Acculturation stress experienced by the youth was related to the loss of support from familiar environments, family and friends. Salama reported in her maps that she had enjoyed listening and talking to her family and for the support they provided which was not available for her in Canada. The students' initial encounters with their new school triggered emotions such as feeling *shy, weird, alone, frustrated, angry, and hurt* (drawn from common words in their responses) which pointed to difficulties they encountered as they began a new life. Having friends and peers to talk with and for support was necessary to ease the anxiety of adapting to the new school contexts. Mwezi's response to an interview question about his experiences as a new student supports this claim:

When I first came I did not know anyone. On the first day, I was sitting alone. I knew like a bit of English ..., but it was not enough. Like I could communicate and make some few friends. I had to wait like two months to get better then I made more friends; It was hard to learn a new language. It was hard at first like I would not get what the teachers said. I had difficulties but I started reading books, did extra work at home and I am now good. The language is my main challenge in my learning. Mmm..., like in English, there are some words that I don't know (Mwezi).

An excerpt from Nyota's interview articulates the finding on challenges of the new environment, lost friendship, isolation, limited English skills and the effects on her literacy learning:

First when I came here to a new country I had to learn everything new, learn a new life, language, weather changing, meet with new friends; In Africa it's not cold and you are not used to it, communication like use of language, meeting new people. Coz like if I grew here I would know what to do and where to do it. But here I don't know where to find stuff; At first school was very hard, I did not know what class to go to, where it was, and I had to get someone to show me. First of all when you talk to other students they don't treat you like they treat other people. May be because of my skin color, maybe how I speak; But it was very hard, they made fun of me, I can't say what they said, but it was not good. I did not feel comfort because I did not know what the teacher said but when they speak slowly I understood. Here [school] if you don't have any friends in your class you work alone, it's like when you are new, you feel lonely with nobody to talk to; It is difficult to learn everything new but I am trying hard; When I look at where I have been before, everything has changed; In Canada the way people communicate, share ideas is different; I feel different like the people who surround me are different here than Congo and Kenya. Back in Africa we worked together, we made our own friends and supported each other. Some people here don't want to work with you unless the teacher says so; In my gym class I don't feel lonely because I have some friends (Nyota).

Likewise, Hongera was anxious about her new environment as illustrated below:

I feel a little bit shy...aaah, feel a little bit weird, just because everything is new for me. I felt weird in the classroom for a little while during the first days at school. In Sudan you know the people more and you can ask questions if you find difficult things. But in Canada, it is different. Yes, you can ask but I cannot ask all the time..., now, I feel normal not like the first days (Hongera).

Data from interviews indicate the importance of English in the adaptation and literacy learning for the youth. This finding is in agreement with studies such as Pahl and Rowsell's (2005) that emphasize the central role of language in enabling social relationships, thought process, and learning through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1987). Additionally, literacy learning is considered "part and parcel of collaborative interactions with others of diverse skills, backgrounds, and perspectives joined together in a community of learners" (NLG, 1996, p. 30). As such, social relationships among the students were necessary for learning. Limited English skills limited communication and collaborative work in the classroom. Learning everything new with limited social support at school constricted learning. Therefore, the African youth's learning in Canada was partly shaped by an interaction of prior school experiences and inadequate knowledge of these experiences by the new school, coupled with the school's non recognition of the youth's experiences, and knowledge. School support in settlement and intensive English as additional language teaching to the youth will be addressed later in this chapter.

5.1.2 Prior education experiences and literacy in home language

The Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum guide *Many Roots Many Voices* (2007) for supporting ELL/ELD acknowledges the important role of connecting instruction to students' prior experiences. Immigrant students' L1, when used in instruction, reactivates prior knowledge acquired through that language (Cummins, 2010). Proficiency in the language of society and education enhances positive experiences of school and society (Cooper, 2008). The youth mapped language use before immigration, which linked to the prior experiences of learning and the language/s used. Most of the youth were bilingual and brought with them different language experiences that did not form part of their instruction at school. Nyota and Shujaa, who were refugees in Kenya and Uganda respectively, had limited pre migration literacy education. Similar to refugee students in other studies (Clark-Kazak, 2011a & 2011b; Dryden-Peterson, 2006 & 2007; UNHCR, 2007) they enrolled in low cost privately run schools, popularly known as private schools

for the poor (Tooley & Dixon, 2005). They also attended alternative non formal schools because access to public schools in the city was limited for them.

Although UNHCR (2007) recommends the use of refugee students' L1 in transition host schools, there were not adequate resources and supports for the schools to implement L1 literacy or for additional language support for new students. Limited L1 literacy and content knowledge may have interfered with L2 literacy upon migration, for example for Nyota and Shujaa. Shujaa who joined grade 6 upon migration began to read at EAL B level when he joined grade 9. In his response to an interview question where he was invited to talk about his speaking, reading, writing, and listening he explained:

Reading and writing, it's been hard for me because like pronunciation I am not used to it. I started reading in September when I came here [Green Valley School]; I only read a little bit in elementary school [in Canada]. I did not read before coming to Canada. There were no enough books in Uganda. We had to share one book. It's pretty hard learning a new language. Like if you read more books and see good movies it may make it easier to learn English, and speaking to your friends in English; I know I need more English so I can speak better and learn (Shujaa).

Data indicate that students who joined elementary school at migration adjusted easily and had more opportunities to acquire local knowledge and learn English than those who join secondary school. Mwezi and Shujaa joined elementary school and received EAL support for one year before joining Green Valley secondary school. Unlike the other youth, the two did not encounter many challenges in the adaptation and were comfortable working with English-speakers. Hongera, Salama, Mwangaza, and Nyota joined Green valley secondary school upon arrival to Canada. Circumstances surrounding displacement of the youth from their home countries coupled with limited schooling for Nyota, Shujaa and Salama may have contributed to challenges in learning in the transition countries and Canada.

Immigrant youth with gaps in education face challenges in EAL and mainstream classrooms owing to “minimal literacy in their first language, learning complex content

in a new language and struggling with limited [...] vocabulary and conceptual development due to interrupted schooling” (Miller 2009, p.572). Findings from the study suggest that students’ initial struggles with literacy learning in Canada related to limited formal education opportunities. Also, there were challenges related to learning English as an additional language and integration issues such as discrimination and limited social support networks for all the youth. Teachers also experienced challenges of teaching youth with limited L1 literacy and gaps in schooling. Mr. Green who taught ESL-B level students who had gaps in education experience had limited training and experience teaching his group of students.

Based on interview and observation data the youth aspired to learn English and do well in school. The curriculum and pedagogical and linguistic expectations placed on the youth were often unmatched with the youth’s aspiration and the proficiency required to meet expectation. Data indicate that specialized support programs were necessary to support language learning and literacy engagement (Cummins & Early, 2011). The Ontario curriculum goal for EAL programs is to create learning environments where ELLs recognize their identities as multilingual readers and writers, through instruction that values their cultural knowledge, language, and daily experiences. The weight placed on literacy instruction was directed towards accountability demands of the OSSLT. Thus, the emphasis was on preparing the students to move up to higher EAL levels and prepare for the test, leaving limited room to engage in literacy practices outside the test. Nyota and Mwangaza’s struggles in writing OSST relate to limited language skills, unfamiliar vocabulary, content and structure. Passing the literacy test is a requirement for graduating with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), (MOE, 2007), a gate keeper for college and University admission, and for employment that the African youth aspired for. Mwangaza narrated his experiences with literacy learning and challenges with OSSLT as follows:

I have difficulties like in writing and spelling, in reading and grammar and, .yah! Like I could hear what people said because I knew a little English before coming to Canada; but English, it was really difficult to learn for me. I had to learn like

new vocabulary. I knew a bit of English before coming to Canada. I could understand what people are saying but had problems speaking [On OSSLT]: I took it this year. It was really hard. They give you like a paragraph; you have to write your opinion paragraph. Like they count every grammar mistake, like the way you write the paragraph. It was kind of difficult. In my opinion paragraph I think I had a lot of grammar mistakes. And you are not allowed to use the dictionary. We were asked to write in a certain order, I never heard about the story or some words before. It was very difficult. I got extra time, double amount of time Canadians get but it was very hard (Mwangaza).

Nyota's concurs OSSLT poses a challenge to students learning in English as an additional language:

It was kind of hard and writing was in a new language. Some questions I did not understand, some vocabulary was hard and I did not know the meaning. I have taken it twice, last year and I did not do well, I tried again this year and tried my best. Will see how I did this time. It was better than how it was last year. At that time my language was still poor (Nyota).

Mwezi had received one year of English support at elementary school in Canada before joining secondary school, which gave him an advantage over the other youth in his EAL classes and a differing experience in OSSLT. Though he had some difficulties with the test, he remained positive about passing the test, which he credited to his efforts and help from his teachers as indicated below:

Well, I did the practice test and in the class we had 2 days to practice, I only used the one day and I had an 80%. I did the test last week and I think it was good. I did not know how to write something so I needed support and my teacher gave me a chart and this helped me to organize my ideas. This was good, I think I did well (Mwezi).

Data indicate that African youth were not familiar with the content of OSSLT and they struggled with English language, comprehension, and the structure of the test. They had not become proficient in the language and demands of the Ontario English literacy curriculum.

Teacher-student and student-student social interactions are important in literacy learning and in co construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1987). Attitudes and expectations of teachers' and peers on ELLs may empower or diminish classroom participation (Cummins, 2001). Immigrant youth require relevant and adequate support from teachers (Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2010) who connect teaching and learning with the needs, interests and daily experiences of students (Dewey, 1997; Freire, 2004). Teachers at Green Valley School needed to support CLD students by relating learning to their pre migratory experiences and out- of school literacy practices with school literacy for the benefit of all students. These funds of knowledge were accessed and documented in the study using mapping methodology and artefacts. These strategies were present in the classrooms to some extent, and will be discussed further in chapter six.

Understanding others and being understood are relevant in any social transaction such as literacy learning and overall experiences at the school. The youth reported a lack of understanding of and by their peers, some teachers, and support staff at the school. The youth perceived pronunciation of English words with an accent as the reason for not being understood. Bhabha (1994) refers to the youth's experience as being, "in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity [...] inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (p.2). Salama's experiences provide a case in point. On one occasion, she went without lunch because the attendant at the school cafeteria claimed not to understand what she was asking for:

Like I go to the cafeteria I want to buy something the person does not understand and keeps asking me to say it again, and then again, I did not feel good, so I just left and I ask for something and the person keep asking what I mean and I say again and they still don't get so I don't buy anything, I just left. But my friend buys his [In her classroom she used repetition strategy]: I speak again, and again, like repeat the word again to make them. In class I speak again and again in a better way than before for people to understand. In my classroom, sometimes when I speak to my teacher [...] I want to ask a question about something but he does not get it because of my accent, so I leave it (Salama).

Salama's goals for the year were to improve English skills through practice in pronunciation and repetition. She wrote her goals as:

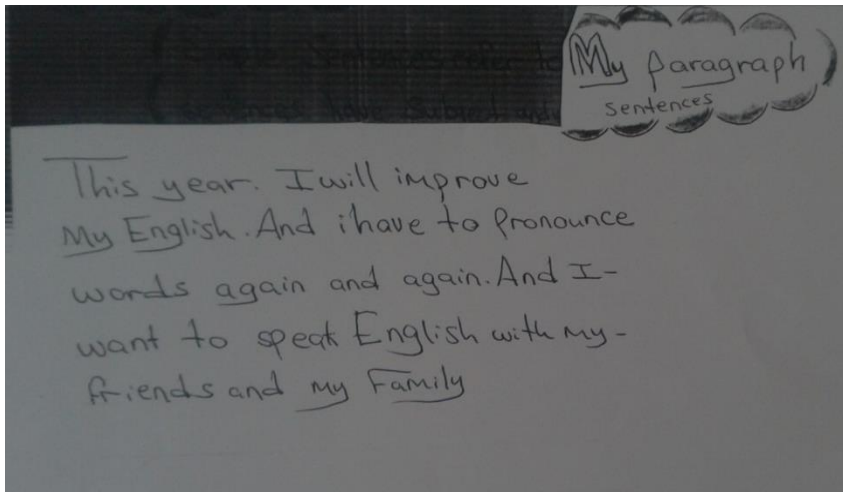


Figure 27: Salama's goals for learning English

Learning in a new language poses challenges and may have a negative impact on the identity of the ELL who is not confident to use a new language (Miller, 2004). In her interaction with peers, teachers, and support staff at school, Salama had devised a strategy where she would repeat what she needed to communicate until she was understood and gave up trying when this tactic was not fruitful. During classroom sessions she often did not comprehend the content, and did not always articulate her questions and answers adequately, which meant her learning experiences were hindered with unanswered questions and responses to questions because her teachers did not always understand what she said. Salama was also afraid to speak in public because she had not mastered English skills.

Observation of a math literacy class about finding the area and perimeter of a circle suggested Salama encountered difficulties in understanding the content and had limited vocabulary to express herself adequately in English. Before the activity, Mr. Green had demonstrated formulae for finding the diameter of a circle on the Smart board and asked students to copy those in their note books and to make reference to the Math text book. He asked a number of students to draw a circle and label the radius and diameter and to write the formula for each. When Salama was called to illustrate, she drew a circle but

struggled to draw/add the radius and diameter, and could not spell correctly. Her voice was also too low which got her classmates to ask her to speak up. With the help of the teacher and some of the students, she completed the task. The conversation went on as:

Mr. Green: to Salama, *come up and draw a circle, add the diameter and radius, and write the formula for finding the area of a circle*

Salama: Draws a circle

Mr. Green: *which is the diameter?*

Salama: Draws on the outer side of the circle

Students: some laughter

Students: to Salama-draw a line across

Salama: draws a line across the circle, then she softly and quickly said, *this diam-t-er* [diameter]

Mr.Green: *Well done* [Salama!]

Mr. Green: to the whole class. *The exercise* [speaking in front of others] *helps to build confidence in speaking and to express what you have learned.*

Through the above activity Salama had an opportunity to practice speaking to her peers and also learn from them. During an informal conversation, Salama explained that she had basic understanding of English before migrating to Canada but was afraid to speak in a new environment and with new people. Sometimes she knew what to say but was also afraid of making mistakes. She required patience, repetition, and clarification and hoped to learn to speak English with confidence. Literacy learning for the youth was also impacted by the experiences of isolation and discrimination especially by some of their peers. They reported encountering difference at various levels at the school, and feeling different from other students. The interaction and school literacy activities may not have offered alternatives to respond to differences or to engage the youth's funds of knowledge and talents outside expectations.

5.1.3 Engaging difference as resource and deficit

The notion of difference was expressed in the study as both a resource and a deficit, and a basis for discrimination. As a resource, Giroux (1992) and Trifonas (2012) view difference as a lens to look at ways school curriculum may respond to the education of groups and individuals who are minoritized in society. In this sense difference becomes

important to the literacy learning for diverse students who have been marginalized by the dominant educational practices (Giroux, 1992). According to Giroux, the relationship among difference, culture and identity presents an opportunity for educators to explore how they may restructure school curriculum to provide opportunities for CLD youth to shape social futures and resist subject positions. Difference in this sense is understood as a resource for literacy learning, and is articulated by the NLG (2000) as, To be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase the different subjectivities, interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes that students bring to learning. Curriculum now needs to mesh with different subjectivities, and with their attendant languages, discourses, and registers, and use these as a resource for learning (p.18).

Utilizing difference as a resource in literacy learning and identity negotiation implies the multiliteracies pedagogy (NLG, 1996) notion of recognizing diverse knowledge, languages and other communicative resources among other funds of knowledge as important in the teaching and learning in the classrooms that are becoming largely CLD. This will be taken up in chapter six.

The youth in this study encountered the deficit form of difference manifested as discrimination by ability, color, race, language and nationality. They engaged difference as a new lens to define themselves and also to interrogate social relationships in which they were excluded by mainstream students and others in their new social location. The youth viewed difference as *not being treated the same* (Shujaa, Mwangaza, Mwezi and Nyota) to make connections among different experiences. For example, the youth had come to understand that they were not as valued in Canada as they were in their home countries in Africa.

The participants identified difference and were not comfortable in their relationship with English speaking peers, and harmony and comfort with other minoritized students who were more accommodating and friendly than Canadian-born students. Hongera stated: *the people are nice. It may be because the [they] are from different country too.* Difference

also emerged as a marker of identity, ability, language/s, colour, and country, among others. Being different was a new experience for the youth that may have changed their everyday functioning.

Difference was also located in various experiences such as: learning new and different things; enrolment in applied and locally developed courses; being at different levels of English language and ability with other students; being ELL segregated in classrooms with students from many different countries; and being embarrassed and discriminated against because of bearing a different race, nationality, language, accent, and color. The youth's contact with difference meant they needed to learn to negotiate and cope through difference. Excerpts from the data illustrate youth's encounters with difference:

When I am here from different country, it's hard for me to do different kinds of stuff; like you are at different level with other students. First of all when you talk to other students they don't treat you like they treat other people. Maybe because of my skin color, maybe how I speak, but it was very hard. They made fun of me. I can't say what they said, but it was not good. I feel different like the people who surround me are different here than Congo and Kenya. Back in Africa we worked together, we made our own friends and supported each other (Nyota).

Mwangaza shared similar sentiments:

Well, it was very difficult for me. It was different. Things are different here than in my country. I was in a lot of trouble and got suspended from school. I was suspended twice because of fighting and this affected my learning; my experience with other students was not good. There were racist people. The way I was treated was different because of who I am; I came from a different country and speak a different language, and I have a different accent. The way they treat me is not how they treat other people. Like Canadian students they did not treat me well and I had a lot of problems; I never felt different before. When I came here it was evident [word for the week] that I was different than other people; I did not know I was different before. Now I don't feel different. [What he would say to new students from Africa]: because of who they are, they will not be treated well like in Sudan because here they are different. They need to do well. They will be treated different and they need to know to be patient with it, like not to get in trouble like I did (Mwangaza).

Mwezi concurred:

Well, like my friend, back home we are like more close but here it's not the same. Like we are not treated the same.

The findings suggest that discrimination was constructed in the social structure of the school and classroom, and in the cultural world of the wider society. In the school, it was manifested through actual and perceived problematic representation and treatment of ELLs by some English-speaking peers, which may have constricted language and literacy learning and identity of the African youth. Learning for immigrant youth undergoing adaptation and learning challenges was complicated by acts of discrimination, racism, and exclusion (as in Dlamini et al 2009; Gunderson, 2009; Stewart, 2010; Kanu, 2008). Discrimination also inhibited interaction with English- speakers and limited the opportunity to interact and learn together. Social isolation and conflicts, for example, led to Mwangaza's suspension from school, which interfered with his learning. Suspicion and discomfort among the students also complicated learning environments.

Chapter 6 Understanding of Literacy and Identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter reports findings on the state of the participants' language and literacy learning, expectations, and the opportunities and constraints at the school to address them. The challenges to adaptation that the participants found themselves in, discussed in Chapter 5, interacted with the nature of the school structure to shape their education in Canada. The new students required opportunities at the school to address these lived realities (Campano, 2007) and at the same time support literacy achievement. Data suggested that the students needed support to learn English as an additional language, some youth had gaps in educational experience and limited L1 literacy, and others were bilingual and biliterate. They also had vast prior experiences from their environments, cultural knowledge, in and out-of-school literacy activities, and engaged in technology at various levels depending on accessibility and affordability. The youth presented strengths and needs for educators to consider when planning instruction and for creating enabling environments for diverse students' participation and identity options. African youth were of the opinion that the school could do more to support their learning. They shared sentiments of feeling left behind, and the lengthy period it took to complete English as additional language (EAL) levels, led to isolation, and age concerns for some of the participants. These sentiments are documented in the Ontario policy document (2007) for supporting ELL's.

Data generated through interviews, observation and mapping activities on literacy learning opportunities at the school highlighted the following key topics. First, how the participants understand the notion of literacy. Second, the distinct literacy practices at school and out-of-school sites and the potential for knowledge co-construction through a fusion of out-of-school and school literacy practices. Third, opportunities for literacy learning in terms of instructional strategies, material resources and technology, and socio-emotional support were important to the immigrant youth's learning and identity options.

The participants had aspirations and dreams to do well in English and overall learning. They placed high demands on themselves to do well against the various competing forces that shaped their learning experiences at school. What the African youth understood by the term literacy was important because it provided insights into what they valued in their language and literacy learning.

6.1 Participants' Perceptions of Literacy and Literacy Learning in English

During a whole class activity, students provided verbal and written responses about what literacy meant to them and mapped their literacy practices at various sites. A similar activity was carried out with Nyota and Mwezi who were in a mainstream classroom to capture their perceptions of literacy. Literacy was generally understood as a big test, communication, opinion, reading and writing, and similar to education. Mwangaza extended his view of literacy beyond print to include different modes and technologically mediated (NLG 1996) practices. His understanding of literacy was:

Literacy like grade 10, it's a big test, opinion test, communication. Also like when I am texting, I am writing like a paragraph and I am learning something and I am giving my opinion. I am writing what I think. When I draw, I am thinking and communicating (Mwangaza).

Literacy is not only a domain of the school. According to Nyota, literacy may also be:

kind of things you do, not only at school but everywhere. ... kind of like education. Maybe not the same; At school we read, write and do stuff. I think education is the foundation of life. Like if you are well educated, you have ability and skills to do stuff (Nyota).

Data suggests that knowledge of the students' perception of literacy helped to understand how they engaged with important modes that is, reading, writing, and communicating knowledge. The students expressed their experience of literacy and language learning as 'problematic' through adjectives such as *very difficult, hard, and not easy*. They had limited exposure to speaking, listening, reading and writing in English which might explain the struggle with reading and writing in a new language. Mwangaza, Hongera,

Mwezi, and Nyota were readers and writers in their home languages. Shujaa did not read in any language, and Salama was literate in L1. Five youth indicated that they did not like to read and write, a practice EQAO (2012) and teachers reported was common among the youth. The participants, however, enjoyed to read materials that were interesting to them like fashion and sports magazines, historical materials, text messages and emails, or materials that directly related to what they did on a daily basis like reading the bus schedule, and school timetable, among others. Mwangaza's response to the interview questions, "do you like to read?" and "do you like to write?" is representative of the participants' situated nature of the relationship to reading and writing as represented below:

[Do you like reading?]: *Yah, kind of, somehow. It depends on what I am reading. I have problems with reading. I enjoyed most what I read in Sudan than here because I understood every single word I read. Here I don't understand the language and it takes a long time to read, I have to stop and look at the dictionary, it takes a lot of time, so I don't read as much* [What do you like to read?]: *I like to read stories, something historical about war and soldiers, and comic books.* [Do you read on the internet?]: *No, I don't read anything online, I only read books* [he did not have access to a computer at home]: [Writing]: *I have difficulties like with writing, spelling and grammar; I just write about my life, letters to my friends; Like in my language Arabic and Amharic, I wrote a lot of poems and I wrote songs, church songs. In Canada I don't write a lot. I only write my school work. I don't have the language to write a lot of things* (Mwangaza).

Data suggest that African youth interpreted school literacy and the meanings attached to it as challenging based on their experiences and relationships in the figured world of classrooms. Mwangaza reported a shift in his relationship to reading and writing. He attributed reading and writing difficulties at his current school to the nature of the print based EAL program that did not account for his daily practices, knowledge, needs, and limited English skills. He had been a reader in Arabic and Amharic but experienced struggles related to learning to read and write in English as a new language. He expressed frustration at the time it took him to read because he frequently checked the dictionary for meaning of words. In his ESL D classroom, he seemed to enjoy reading Dorothy Perkins' *Last Days in Africville*. Ms. Alexis asked the students to pick one character and read aloud about him/her. Mwangaza chose Ms. Neill and read with some difficulty. Ms.

Alexis helped with the difficult words. She then asked the students to come up with an adjective to describe a character. The classroom walls were covered with adjectives, nouns, verbs, and vocabulary from the novel for reference. The following conversation ensued in a question-answer format where the teacher asked students to read or provide an answer, and students raised their hands to read or to provide responses. Occasionally the teacher called out students to participate:

Ms. Alexis: *Pick a character from the novel and come up with an adjective to describe him/her*

Mwangaza: raised his hand [he contributed 4 responses during this lesson].

Ms. Alexis: *Mwangaza*

Mwangaza: *Mr. Brigg is a racist*

Ms. Alexis: *Mr. Brigg is indeed a racist*

Mwangaza: volunteered again: *Rosalind, she is kind*

Ms. Alexis: *Yes, Rosalind has a kind character trait*

Mwangaza: *Uncle Eli loves fun; Hanna is caring*

Mwangaza could relate to the story of forced displacement of the African-Canadian community. He also demonstrated comprehension of the novel and an understanding of parts of speech. The youth shared a dominant understanding of literacy and at the same time expressed their challenges in acquiring L2 literacy. Their perspectives on reading and writing had shifted with changes in language ecology and use. For example, Hongera and Mwangaza, who were once readers in Amharic and Arabic, were limited to reading in English. They participated in reading depending on content and purpose. The youth read a wider variety of materials out of interest at home and community than they did at school, which was limited to what the teachers prescribed. The following section presents information about the differing nature of school and out-of-school literacies in which these learners engaged.

6.2 School and Out-of-school Literacies: Prescriptions Versus Choices

The participants distinguished between school and out-of-school practices by the affordances of each domain to their lives. Out-of-school literacy practices offered them

choices reported as, *whatever I like*, while school literacy was viewed as characterised by demands and reported as, *whatever my teacher want*. The two domains of literacy relate to Street's (1984) two contrasting views of literacy. The autonomous model is tied to a view of literacy as skills acquired through a developmental process. The ideological model is based on the social conceptions and uses of literacy as a resource. Stein (2008) posits "a set of literacy practices which are domain specific, varied and multiple, tied to specific uses and functions within social institutions of power and access which shape it in diverse ways" (p. 30).

Out-of-school practices of the African youth demonstrated choice in reading materials and use of technology such as social media, for research and homework, to connect with friends and family, entertainment, and scheduling, among others. The nature of reading, writing, and language use in school contexts was a response to demands from the teacher and curriculum. School literacy practices at the target school were teacher directed and tied to the Ontario secondary school curriculum expectations. The youth had to meet certain expectations in order to advance to the next level and enrol in credit courses. The choice of reading materials, style of writing, and content was largely determined by the school. Excerpts from data demonstrate students' involvement with specific literacy domains. For example, Nyota's responses indicate a difference in the choice of what to read and write at home and school:

At home I choose to read something interesting like a story book. I like to read about people and history. If it's a school poem it's different from what I do at home. For home it's whatever I want to write, I write what I like to write. I like to write poems about my life; I don't choose novels at school, I read what they give us at school: For school I do what my teacher wants. My teacher wants us to write paragraphs, but sometimes I ask the teacher if to write a poem because I don't like paragraph; new experiences, English language, read, writing, play, thinking, listening, respect and obey; courses, working together with other students (Nyota).

Mwangaza concurs:

At school I have to take classes to graduate like grade 9 science class, grade 10 history class, 1 art class, 4 English classes, and 4 math. I have to prepare for the literacy test. At school I write whatever my teacher wants. I read school books,

novels at school, or story book; At home I write whatever I want, what comes to mind like poems, writing to my friend. I read my bible and comic books at home. Like in youth groups, in church we write down about problems, what we want to do, where to volunteer. We write letters to youth leaders, we make movies (Mwangaza).

African youth engaged in literacy activities beyond print. During indoor and outdoor play, the male participants cited opportunity to meet new friends and learn English. The use of technology, reading, writing, and texting were common to both domains of school and out-of-school. What differed was the intensity and purpose of the activities as the excerpt from data below suggests:

I do face painting, write some words on the ground outside, on cement, [...] At home, I do a lot of texting, I read, I listen to music, hip hop, watching TV, send messages; I check bus schedule on my iphone; At home, reading maps and rules with my friends when playing video, and computer games (Shujaa).

African youth recognized that school literacy practices were relevant to their literacy learning and preparation for social futures. They envisioned that bringing together out-of and school literacy practices could provide opportunities to learn from and about each other, foster respect especially of ELLs by English-speakers and build community across diversity. These out-of school practices did not inform instruction at the target school and may have limited opportunities for knowledge co construction among students.

6.2.1 Out-of-school literacies as funds of knowledge

Out-of-school practices as funds of knowledge are important resources to support instruction for diverse students because of their capacity for the interaction necessary in learning and negotiation of identities in the classroom. Also, educators who draw on social constructivist instructional strategies to scaffold meaning, create enabling environments for students to participate in learning, and activate prior knowledge (Cummins & Early, 2011). Immigrant students' global-local literacies are embedded in their stories for example, of literacy practices in their countries of origin that are carried across to new contexts and settings. Literacy as social practices recognizes students' cultural identities and the role of media and internet in learning and identity construction

in new classrooms. In this light, participants' transnational and local experiences and "meaning can be gathered and held in the form of ways of speaking and telling stories ... [that are] taken across Diasporas (Pahl & Rowsell 2005, p.73). Throughout the study, African youth demonstrated a deep connection to their homes and families. They acknowledged that an opportunity to share about who they were and what they valued was important. For example, talking and writing about their experiences and literacy practices from their cultural background had potential to create some level of understanding among students. The practice would foster language and literacy learning, enable space to communicate with a wider audience, and to learn English from English speakers. The following excerpts from mapping activities and interviews support the claim:

Talking about music to my friends; writing a paragraph about hip hop (Shujaa): Sharing, working together, knowing others and helping others to know me, who I am. It [sharing about my culture] helps you [one] to make good friends and help you or you can help them when they have problems because of what experience you had in your life (Mwezi): Dressing in my country clothes show a specific literacy about the culture of my country (Nyota): I learn from both [out-of and school] how to comincat [communicate] with other people and study hard (Mwangaza).

Data suggest that if these literacy practices enter the school domain, they could foster friendship, participation, and understanding across differences of language, race, and levels of ability. The Ontario document *Many Roots Many Voices* for supporting ELLs (Ministry of Education, 2005) recognizes that although ELLs with limited prior schooling may lack academic experiences, they bring with them cultural experiences and knowledge acquired through their L1, which may be a resource for educators to draw on and facilitate ELL literacy and learning. The policy also advocates for teaching ELLs with prior interruption in their schooling through strategies that value and incorporate the learner's prior knowledge rooted in their home language and experiences. The study findings, however, suggest that such strategies were not readily incorporated in the learner's classrooms due to time constraints tied to curriculum expectations, which guided the teacher's practices about using cultural resources to teach diverse students. Teacher participant Ms. Alexis expressed a need to utilize the students' out-of-school

practices and artefacts to the extent that these would support diverse students' literacy learning:

I often do it unconsciously. To be honest I do not plan for it.....this is something I should be doing more often. Much of this happens through dialogue at the beginning of class when I ask students about their weekend or holiday or any special occasion and they share what they did; Also this is evident in journals when they do a writing of their choice; Through our multicultural club when we highlight religious and cultural practices, re: Diwali over lunch. Also through identity maps where students write about the coming of age in their countries and use pictures, photographs, and do presentations in class (Ms. Alexis)

Mr. Green concurs:

Very little work aside from maintaining open communication with parents/family; Students have a good deal resources that exist for extra literacy help (Mr. Green)

Classroom observation and interviews with EAL/ESL teachers suggested that teachers did not explicitly draw on students' cultural resources but used instruction and texts as recommended by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), Grade 9-12 curriculum on supporting ELL/ELD. Traces of practice were cited by Ms. Alexis and Ms. Rob who recommended the use of more of these resources. Mr. Green may not have conceptualized the important role of student's prior experiences and out-of-school practices in the light of sufficient resources at the school to support ELLs' literacy.

6.3 School support: Social, Resources, and Technology

Many Roots Many Voices (2005) mentions that ESL programs assume that English language learners (ELL) registered in ESL programs were literate in their home language(s). Strategies for teaching ELLs at Green Valley School were closely guided by the Ontario Secondary EAL and ELD curriculum expectations designed to support ELLs to develop knowledge, skills, and proficiency in academic English for successful integration into the mainstream school program.

Conversations with the school's administrator enriched observational and interview data about literacy learning for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Information gathered from Green Valley School suggested that the school is committed to support ELD/EAL learners' transition to the mainstream, and assessment for EAL students played a co-learner function where teachers learn from the students and use that knowledge to support their learning. Additionally, the school assumed that parents of ELLs often set high academic expectations for their youth, yet they did not always understand the learning demands of secondary school. To keep the ELLs motivated, the school recognized their effort and encouraged these students to meet and exceed expectations of a 50% pass mark. EQAO assessment ignored the experiences of learners from the margins and was far removed from the experiences of immigrant students, especially those who were new to the English language. New immigrant students often lack the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) required to pass the test.

African immigrant youth perceived that the school could do more to support their learning. They shared sentiments of feeling left behind, the lengthy period it took to complete EAL levels, and the age of the learner. These sentiments are documented in the Ontario policy document for supporting ELLs. They however point to a deeper issue regarding literacy learning, age, and identity concerns for ELL youth who join secondary school in the late teenage years. Hongera was already 20 years old and at level C of EAL. To complete OSSD, Hongera and Salama may be required to join adult education programs whose curriculum targets adults, not youth with gaps in education and limited English skills. The youth hoped their school could place them in credit courses and offer them support. They perceived EAL program not to be relevant to their needs as illustrated by interview data:

[...] Wasting time, like in ESL classes. We take classes and then go back and take other courses. Like just put me in a higher course and I work harder. Like I started grade 12 and it's ESL. It's not like normal grade 12, after I finish ESL, I have to take grade level courses (Hongera)

Salama concurred:

ESL takes too much time; it takes you a long time to be in ESL because my English is still low. I would like to do more classes [classes in mainstream] because I am working hard. I have to complete ESL and then enroll to mainstream courses like Canadians (Salama).

Comments by Hongera and Salama seem to suggest that the high aspirations of ELLs to do well in school was not matched by the ELL programming that created fragile identities for the youth who could not participate in mainstream classrooms owing to limited English skills. Also, the youth indicated that there were not enough opportunities to accelerate their mobility to mainstream classes. They were also in their late teens, which had implications for their learning and identity options.

6.3.1 Material resources and technology.

This study's findings suggest that the school had various structures such as material and technological resources, instructional and learning opportunities, fitness facilities, and guidance and social support for all students. Using interviews, observations and mapping activities, the youth talked and wrote about physical spaces that were important to them at the school. Technology was ranked at the top of the supports received, especially computers which the youth reported had made learning and life generally easier for them in Canada. Technology enabled them to stay connected, search, plan, read, and text all things that were purposeful to them. Technology also formed a basis for their comparison between the schools in Canada and Africa, where they had no technology. The school was equipped with computer labs where students conducted research and typed their projects. The following excerpts from data highlight supports at the school and the role of technology (at school and out-of-school) in the lives of the youth:

There are many books at school; I learn a lot from friends and teachers, and sometimes by myself; I like the classroom because the teacher is nice, I understand her; Computer makes work easier; I do email ...Sometimes I Google stuff for school, sometimes I read things about cross cultural, or watch my country's movies or something. Here we have computer which makes work easier. We did not have computers in my old school; the cell phone, yes, it's how I get in touch. My friends call me, sometimes I call my mom. I don't do a lot of texting I don't have internet so I don't do email on it (Hongera).

Both Salama and Mwezi agreed with Hongera. They found technology helpful in EAL learning:

Learning here is much better than back home, we have technology ..., I Google, sometimes I go face book; Sometimes Utube. And I visit my favorite website [by] Khan Academy]. It has information about school like English, math, sometimes science; I write email, texting my friends (Salama).

Although the African students struggled to read and write in English, they used computers and smart phones to meet their social and academic needs. For example, the students did research on the internet where they could also get images that helped them to understand the meaning of words. They also visited EAL/ESL websites to practice English language skills and learn new words. Shujaa used various functions of digital media to learn, communicate and entertain himself. This was all new for him and had made learning fun and easier for him.

6.3.2 The role of teachers

Study findings highlighted the important role played by teachers in guiding and pointing students to learning resources. The youth cited receiving support by their teachers not only in learning but also in their emotional and social needs. Mwangaza appreciated that his teachers were empathetic towards him, but noted that his teachers in Sudan were more involved in his learning than in Canada:

Teachers are helpful, they help me if I have questions; when I took a Canadian class and I said something everyone started laughing at me; ... The teacher knows what I am feeling and asked me to speak and not to worry; We learn to write sentences, ask each other questions, learn new words and use the dictionary, and ask the teacher for help; there were really nice teachers back in Sudan, they helped me a lot, push me to get better and better, gave me direction, corrected me all the time to show me how to do it. They spent more time to help than here [Canada], (Mwangaza).

Mwangaza may have lost confidence in speaking among English-speakers for fear of shaming from speaking with an accent and making mistakes, and may have required

more focused attention in his language and adaptation needs. The school also needed to find sustainable strategies to address othering by peers because of its implications on the CLD students' identity and learning.

Instructional strategies

Interviews with two teachers on their perspectives about reading among the ELL youth suggested that interest in 'reading' among secondary school youth has dwindled since the last decade which they attributed to the youth's preference for technology. In the 21st century literacy is more than just print literacy, a view that may not be fully ingrained in the school literacy curriculum. According to Ms. Alexis:

Technology has a huge impact on their literacy learning. Sometimes it is hard to hook them on a book, a class set. Most seem not to like to read books. Like it was years back when one would take a book, be calm, and read through for enjoyment. Today, they don't like to read books because they are hooked in a fast life.

Like all other youth, the participants used technology at various levels with the exception of the few who could not afford smart phones and personal computers. They all reported spending more time using technology to learn, communicate and for entertainment rather than reading books unless they were fun. The youth read a variety of materials such as sport magazines, fashion, cook books, flyers. Learning to read in a new language and at the same time meet curriculum expectations was challenging for the youth in this study. Classroom reading was mainly practiced through read-aloud of the class novel, worksheets, or individual responses to questions posed by the teacher. When a student struggled to read, the teachers jumped in and helped with the difficult words and gave meanings when needed. The youth did not read much outside of school because they did not enjoy reading in English, citing challenges to read and write in a new language. The choice of what to read and write for school was limited to the choices made by the school to match the student's level. Hongera was literate in Arabic but she struggled to read in English, which discouraged her from reading books. Non-engagement with reading has implications for her language proficiency required to pass the literacy test and pursue post secondary education.

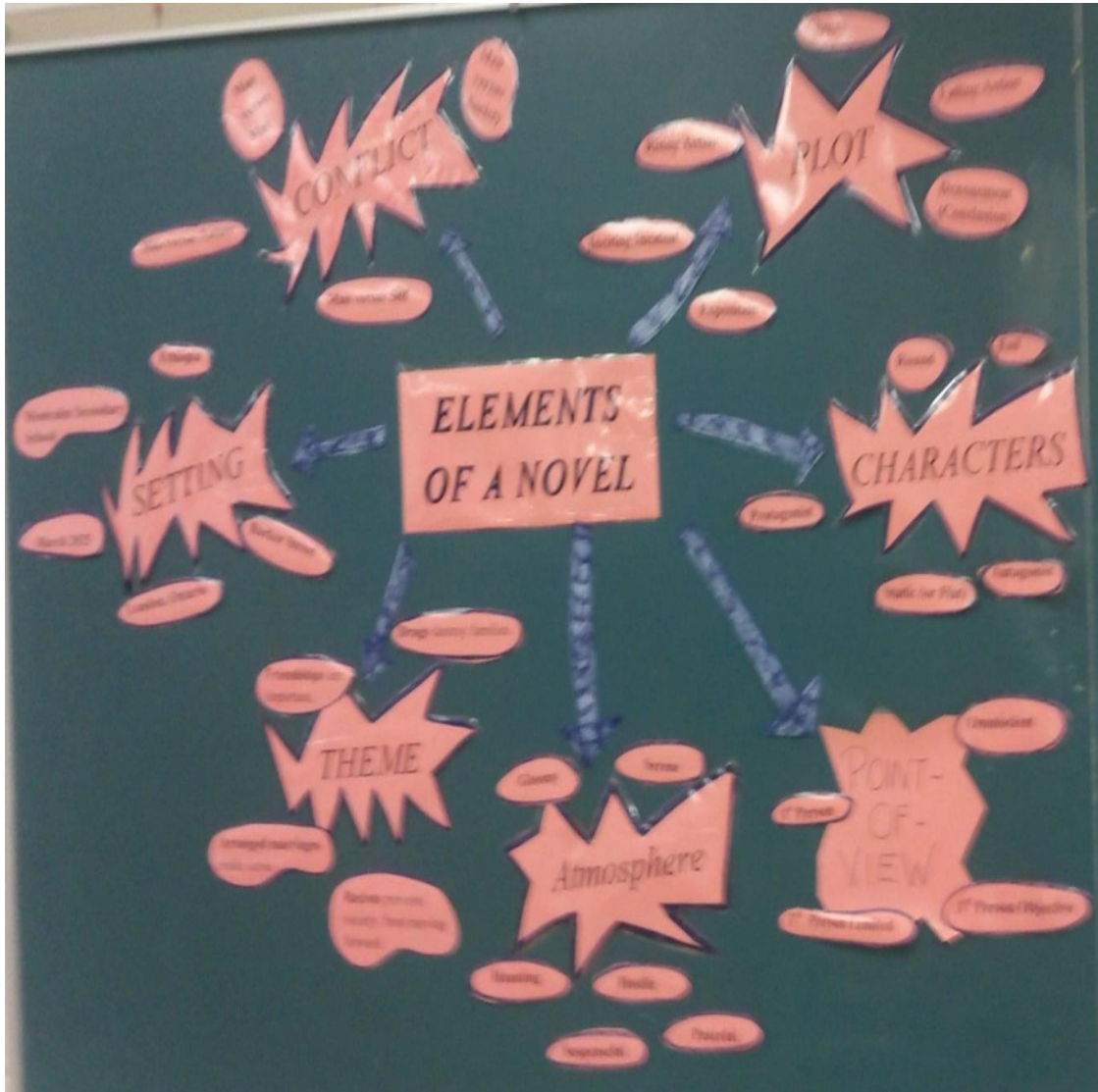
Observational data and interviews with teachers provided another perspective about the support available for the immigrant youth. In one of the rooms where EAL C and D instruction took place, the classroom was equipped with a chalk board, a smart board and a computer, book cases with reference books and novels to support literacy development for ELLs. Ms. Alexis, the EAL C-E teacher had 15 years experience teaching EAL at different schools and the youth, including those already in mainstream, returned to her classroom for guidance. Ms. Alexis displayed her students' projects on the walls of her classroom as well as words they had read in class novels, which helped students to get familiar with the words, look up meanings, and describe novel characters, among other benefits.

The following figures 28 and 29 below illustrate some examples of print literacy found in one EAL classroom. Students in this classroom often used the word wall to learn new words and to practice spelling during writing activities and when preparing for English assessments.



Figure 28: Characteristics of characters in a novel on Ms. Alexis' classroom wall

Figure 29: Elements of a novel on Ms. Alexis' classroom wall



Literacy teaching and learning strategies utilized by the EAL teachers indicated the various levels of interaction and learning possible in the EAL classrooms under the two teachers. Ms. Alexis's response about her English language and literacy teaching strategies was the following:

I use grammar texts, workbooks, media, visuals, wall displays for instruction. [To teach reading]; I always begin with diagnostic testing with each new student to

figure out what they know, prior reading skills, level of English language skills. This helps in choosing what are appropriate reading materials for the level. For example I choose novels/texts according to the Ministry of Education guide, and also independent reading of choice; [To teach writing]; I begin with diagnostic testing. Strategy used for writing depends on level. At the beginning of class with new students, I label all the objects in the classroom and write words on walls for students to get familiar. We use those words on a day to day basis. Once students have mastered those then we move to more complex ones. We hold their hands and walk them through it, always there to offer support (Ms. Alexis).

Mr. Green's ESL B Math and English classrooms were culturally and linguistically diverse with speakers of 6 or more home languages, most with gaps in formal education experiences, and some had lived in refugee camps. The classroom also had a majority of L1 speakers of one language who isolated other students outside the L1 group during classroom interactions and outside the classroom. To support ELLs with gaps in formal education requires teachers to make connections to their world to activate knowledge and language use (Brandsford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). The students seemed to participate more in learning when Mr. Green related instruction to their immediate environment. One example was during a math lesson on measurement when Mr. Green asked the students to measure the classroom walls, doors and boards. On another occasion, Mr. Green made connections between the students' everyday experiences and math literacy such as an Easter egg hunt following Easter for those who participated in the hunt, distance travelled during March break, what the students did over the break that involved mathematics, and measuring the school soccer field using a trundle wheel. Mr. Green asked students to say up to 3 things they did during the Easter holiday that were math related. Although a number of students appeared unsure of what the task involved, Shujaa understood the question and provided the following response:

On Friday we had a party at my house and my mom bought 2 apple pies, 3 pizzas and 12 pop. On Saturday I went to the gym and lifted weights of 100 pounds. On Sunday I went to an Easter egg hunt and ate 3 chocolate eggs. On Monday, I went to Wendy's and ate a combo meal for \$8.00 (Shujaa).

Though Shujaa had not acquired academic English, he could articulate an understanding of math present in everyday and special occasions. Other activities that kept the students

engaged were games such as Bingo and jeopardy Math that offered rewards such as providing the correct response and sometimes getting candy for a reward or acknowledgement by the whole class.

Mr. Green and his students did not share a language and this may have complicated the instruction and participation necessary for learning. Traces of lack of engagement were manifested through interruption by certain students who threw objects in the air, acted bored, were playful, or talked to each other during the teaching-learning process. The trouble makers were often sent out of the classroom to allow for calm and learning. To support meaningful interaction in such a diverse classroom, Mr. Green could have provided more hands-on activities and displayed rich visual aids and students' work on the classroom walls. Word wall with English and L1 of the students would have diversified the English monolingual instruction, a context which may not have optimized learning for students, most of who had not acquired basic conversational skills in English. Transmission pedagogy, coupled with collaborative learning, did not seem to be effective due to a lack of a common language and provision for L1 learning. Mr. Green's strategies for teaching literacy were:

Explicit systematic instruction in vocabulary, feedback, and encouragement, rich language input, predictability, encouragement, practice. [To teach writing I use] practice, scaffolding, phonological awareness, many literacy skills, i.e., rhymes, songs, word games, can transfer across languages to teach writing (Mr. Green).

African immigrant youths' experiences of English language and literacy learning at Green Valley School demonstrated the nature of learning and experiences of a difficult literacy curriculum. The youth engaged in more literacy activities especially of their choice out-of-school than they did at school where the choice of reading materials and writing content was decided by the teacher. They also enjoyed learning when they had an opportunity to bring their experiences into the classroom. In the following section, I will present findings related to the concept of identity/ties that was an important construct to explore because of its relevance to understanding literacy learning of African youth, and ways in which school supported them to construct identities as learners. Data on literacy

learning opportunities suggested that most reading and writing at school was teacher directed and often not as enjoyable for the majority of the youth, who continued to struggle with reading and writing, and for some, speaking.

The availability of technology at the school and smart phones owned by some of the youth helped them to build confidence in learning. They researched ideas, looked up words, and navigated through the internet in ways they had not gained mastery to do with text books. They also communicated with friends in ways they had not been able to do at the school owing to limited English skills. Shujaa and Salama had an interest in Mathematics, English, and other subjects. Shujaa often and openly expressed frustration and boredom at the learning strategies and the composition of his EAL classroom, where most students spoke the same L1. The information from interviews and observations confirmed this claim:

We did more Math with the other teacher, we got homework but with you we don't do any math; we don't do enough Math in this class, all we do is talk. You talk too much [to the teacher]. Everyone in my family is good at math except for me. It is because I don't learn enough Maths at school (Shujaa).

Similarly, Salama expressed her views about math literacy as:

I used to do well in math, but in this course we don't do anything. I don't know, but we don't do many things in Math (Salama).

Mr. Green provided an explanation to the class about the challenges of teaching and learning Mathematics at ESL B level, “*you are all at different levels of Math literacy in both your L1 and English*”. The school did not offer an opportunity for diversity or variation where students could demonstrate talents outside of meeting school literacy demands:

Here [this school] we don't do things that are different and that you get recognized for. Competition about talent like singing, drama is my favorite thing that I don't see here in Canada [Nyota].

The participants' literacy learning needs were not always met by the support afforded by the school. Sometimes the youth were viewed as too optimistic for setting goals that

appeared unrealistic. There were no special programs, for example, for students with low English skills and gaps in education. Hongera and Salama who were 20 and 18 years respectively hoped to join mainstream classes and receive support to do well within a short time and within the 19 years funding period for public education Ontario. Nyota had observed that the school did not offer enough opportunities for CLD students to demonstrate their talents. In addition, teaching strategies in math, for example, were based on what the teacher had assumed about his students' capacity to learn. The participants however, aspired to do more and varied kinds of math than what was offered in their classroom and expressed boredom. For example, Shujaa often verbalised that he was good at math and wanted to learn "real math". He expressed boredom by pretending to be asleep when he was not interested in a lesson, some students threw objects in the air and others interrupted teaching by talking among themselves in L1. On occasions when Mr. Green engaged the students in Math games, they were alert and participated in learning.

6.4 Identity Options and Literacy Learning

Data from interviews with the teacher participants and informal conversations with the school administrator indicated that Green Valley School recognized artefacts and students' prior knowledge were important to support ELLs' literacy learning and identity construction. However, with the key goal of the current education system to meet accountability standards in education, these resources were not used in the school. Absence of minoritized students' funds of knowledge from schools is a common phenomenon in host countries despite the claims to limited knowledge about immigrant students and the lack of cultural resources for teaching students whose images are absent from the school curriculum (Fu, 2008). Cummins et al. (2005) emphasized the important role teachers may play in creating enabling classrooms where CLD students have options to demonstrate positive identities as learners. The following section will look at African youth identities in their figured world of school and classrooms, specifically examining how identities shifted from fragile ones as they acquired new skills and improved in their learning. Positional identities of immigrant, L1 and ELL, and gender demonstrate the

fluid and complex nature of immigrant youth as literacy learners in an additional language.

6.4.1 African youth identities in ‘figured worlds’

The youth’s constructed identity/ties encompassed experiences as immigrant students, English language learners (ELLs), the shifts in the use of L1, and becoming better learners in the classroom. The youth also found that valuable objects or artefacts in their lives helped them to stay connected with their home cultures and maintained the memories of the care and good will of family members. Artefacts (everyday objects from one’s culture) also provide hope for the students in their new home away from home. To understand identity and its role in literacy learning among the African youth, I needed to “explore the story of identity- the narrative of identity -the way we tell ourselves and others who we are, where we came from, and where we are going” (Munoz, Victoria, 1995, p. 46). African youth who were adjusting to Canada and their school and learning English, required enabling learning environments to invest their identities as capable literacy learners. Classrooms are “figured worlds” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 7) in which identities are constructed through participation of its members. In this sense, classrooms are sites of possibility where learners come to figure out or understand themselves through participation and interaction with their peers and teachers.

Classrooms influence the construction and reconstruction of personal and social identities through interaction. Labels used to describe immigrant students for example, ELL, immigrant or struggling shapes how teachers support literacy and identity options for marginalised students (Moje, 2008). In the figured world of classrooms, certain activities and outcomes are privileged over others (for example, the choice of the kinds of knowledge and resources for instruction such as school curriculum over cultural knowledge and experiences of minoritized students). In classrooms, learning contexts are situated, organized, and reproduced. Through participation in classroom practices, students learn to relate to each other in different ways, and to develop a sense of self worth (Holland et al, 1998). For example, Mwangaza’s experience with ‘shaming’ by

English speakers had a negative effect on his self image as a learner. To preserve his personhood from hurt, Mwangaza withdrew from responding to questions in his history class as presented in the following passage from data:

When I took a Canadian history class and I said something everyone started laughing at me. They were real Canadians and they laughed because of my accent. Since that time even when I know the answer I am scared to put my hand up and speak because I don't want to make a mistake ...the other students will laugh at me. The teacher knows what I am feeling and asked me to speak and not to worry, but I was ashamed, I did not want to be laughed at again (Mwangaza).

Since identities are fluid, learners do not remain as ELLs or struggling but shift as they improve their language skills, and learn subject content. Learners also reject their positioning as subjects by disconnecting with learning, or investing their time and talents to overcome learning challenges and achieve imagined identities. The role of schools and educators in creating opportunities that optimize literacy learning by enabling identity options for students' cannot be underscored. African youth understood the term identity to generally mean differences in ability, personal attributes, race, nationality, and language expressed through the identities of immigrant, ELL, and L1. A learner's actual and imagined identity influence learning (Pavlenko & Norton, 2008). For example, Mwezi expressed his actual identity as 'who I am' and his imagined identity as one who had goals and was working hard to get good grades and join post secondary education. Mwangaza perceived that limited English skills placed him in a position of ridicule and impacted his sense of self. He aspired to learn English, find a job and do well in school so as to feel good about himself. Experiences and definitions of identity by African youth shed light on to ways in which they engaged with learning and constructed knowledge about everyday experiences (Dei & Rummens, 2012).

Identity was an important issue that recurred throughout the youths' responses to questions about themselves as new students and ELLs in a new school. The responses elucidated the students' understanding of their identity/ties through their own eyes, those of their teachers, and the literacy curriculum. The youth were aware of their current identities as learners and the possibilities for brighter social futures and personal

fulfilment. Mapping activities, writing and drawing samples, and artefacts clarified the students' responses to interview questions about the concept of identity. The African students also viewed differences as a resource with potential to create understanding, learn from and work together with other students and in so doing co-construct knowledge and support one another. Other ideas about identity highlighted notions of reducing differences. For example, the urge to improve one's circumstances, be like the *Other*, and speak without an accent. Nyota expressed that new immigrant students lacked agency to change their situation such as their experience of discrimination. Some of the students resisted being positioned as weak or struggling in their courses by "figuring" ways to cope in new situations. Immigrant youth's constructions of social identity/ties were expressed through their language and literacy practices, which were not static but shifted within complex interactions. They experienced an in-between space of knowledge and language/s of their home countries and the acquired new understandings, English skills, reading, writing, and representation, among others.

6.4.2 Shifting identities

The youth's identities were shifting with new learning and acculturation as they assumed new responsibilities. They expressed feeling different in Canada than they did in their home countries in a number of ways. They constantly used the term *back home* to mark the shift between experiences in Africa and in Canada. The youth had moved from familiar environments whose functions they understood very well, where they could communicate in a familiar language/s, and some could read and write in their home and school languages. The youth also demonstrated that identity did not remain static but shifted as they encountered and responded to new challenges, which sometimes interfered with their functioning in Canadian society. Nyota acknowledged the differences in the two settings, language(s) use and the improvements she was making in literacy learning. She envisioned a time when she would speak like *Canadians* to escape the positioning as the *Other* from speaking English with an accent. She aspired to acquire adequate vocabulary in English to express herself in more complex words as opposed to simple

words or what she termed *baby English*. The students were always in the process of getting better at learning to read, write, and speak.

Identity was a new word for Shujaa. His initial response on what he understood by the term identity was, *I have heard about identical twins not identity*. After explaining to Shujaa about my understanding of the concept of identity, his next response suggested differences in ability, skill, language, and race as follows:

Identity to me means different things in our mind and what we can do, different language, skin colour; we can be different, we can all do different stuff, or different mind, from different country; we don't speak the same language, different skin colour. In the classroom I am different, I don't speak their language but we are all ESL learning English. We communicate. I am different from other students. I just came to school to learn new stuff like English; [Shifting identity]: I don't feel I am the same [Shujaa] who was in Uganda. In Uganda I was more different. I could speak. In Canada I did not know how to speak English, I just say hello and bye; I am doing better now at school (Shujaa).

Mwangaza, Mwezi, and Nyota's notion of identity related to language use, country of origin, and personality expressed as *who I am*. Nyota explained her understanding of identity as the ability to,

read and write, communicating in my language and my image, who I am. More over telling people the place I come from and my personality make people know me. It's like who you are; kind of how you look, what kind of person you are, where you come from; I know what I want to say but it's hard in English. The thing is, like, I want to use one word in English but I don't want to use baby English, and I can't put the words together even when I know the idea in my home language; [shifting & imagined identity]: I think, like things are different from my country and here. Life has changed; when I came here, I did not know how to speak English...it was kind of hard and writing was in a new language. I used to write in Swahili and in English. But now I am writing more in English... I don't want to use simple words... For now it's hard to forget my accent; I want to learn to speak English without ascent so I am at the same level as other people (Nyota).

Before migration, the youths' parents and relatives had been responsible for them in terms of understanding and handling important matters, communication with teachers, and members of their community. Upon migration, the families experienced challenges communicating in English, and sometimes needed support from the youth who learned

English faster, as their language brokers. The youth read and explained guidelines, for example, regarding social services and tax return information. When they did not understand the information, the youth would seek help from the settlement office (Communication with SWIS). The youth also supported their parents in learning English by helping with EAL homework, reading to them English books and speaking to them in English. In addition, they helped parents with the use technology. Excerpts from data support this claim:

Sometimes I read to my parents about sports and stories in English (Shujaa); I help my mom and then I do homework. Like sometimes she asks me to help her with emails, so I write emails for her (Salama); I spend a lot of time with my mom... we talk a lot. Sometimes I look over her homework with her. I look at the textbook when she has ESL homework (Hongera).

Besides perceived improvements in language and literacy learning, it was important to understand how African youth thought of themselves as immigrant students and if this position offered opportunities or constrained their learning.

6.4.3 Immigrant identity

Immigrant identity was relevant to understanding how the youth engaged in literacy and learning of EAL/ESL and their interactions across and within the sites of home and Canadian cultures, which demonstrated the transition from one context, culture, and language to another (Ahmed, 1999). Immigrant youth confronted new cultures and spaces, and negotiated new identities for opportunities to realize their selfhood (Bhabha, 1994). The youth perceived being an immigrant to Canada to have offered them perspectives to reflect on their migratory circumstances and to remain focused at school. In spite of the challenges they encountered, these youth had figured out that doing well in school depended on individual effort invested in learning. Being African enabled them to take challenges and look at the positive side of learning, to set goals, focus on them and work hard. According to Hongera:

Being immigrant helps me to understand and see the things in a positive way; help the people to know me better (Hongera).

As immigrant students they believed that they needed to work harder than Canadian-born students who had the privilege of language and exposure to Canadian culture. Below are some examples from the interview data:

African immigrant identity helps me be ... I think more about where I came from and why I came [Pause], to have a good education and this inspires me to do well at school; I have to work extra harder than students here because they were born here and they know the language so I need to work extra hard (Mwezi).

Similarly, Salama and Nyota reported they had to work very hard to improve their English, pass the literacy test, and keep up with overall learning. Nyota compared her performance at school with that of other students who were born or had lived in Canada longer and concluded that being an immigrant student placed her at a disadvantage. On her part, she applied greater effort and asked for help from her teachers as the data indicate:

The first time when I came as an immigrant, you don't see yourself at same level as other students, like you are not as good. Like you are at different level with other students, you are left behind because you don't know what to do when you are new; But every day you learn the same things together then you feel like you are in the same position; I am friendly and nice to other people so they respect and are nice to me. Maybe they think I am an immigrant and from different country, and maybe I have good personality and good communication skills; [Advice to new students]: Some people will not like you, and ... it will hurt and is painful. But just be yourself and do your best. They [new immigrants] will face conflicts no matter what... They cannot do anything to change how other people think about them or what they say to them. They need to work hard in school (Nyota).

All the youth expressed pride at being black and African. Salama was happy when reference was made to her as black or African because *that is who I am*. Mwangaza was comfortable with being African, black, and Ethiopian. He carried a key holder with Ethiopian national colors hanging from his pockets and repeatedly twisted his hair to grow it. He was, however, uncomfortable among speakers of English, indicating a fragile identity and the different ways students learn to relate with one another in school settings.

To achieve his imagined identity, Mwangaza hoped to acquire literacy skills, and improve his sense of self as supported by the following quote from the data:

I love my country so much and I want to tell everyone I am Ethiopian. I am proud of who I am. I am happy to be black; I am not comfortable to speak in a class with English speakers because I don't want to make a mistake and the other students will laugh at me; I am scared to put my hand up and speak; All I want is to get a good education and feel good about myself; [Home language]: I am kind of forgetting it a little bit. I don't speak it much since I came to Canada; I speak English most of the time. I only use my language at home (Mwangaza).

The immigrant youth's home language/s was/were also an important lens for looking at African students' literacy in their L1 and the value they attached to their L1 as they acquired literacy in English.

6.4.4 L1 and ELL identity

Proficiency in one's home language (L1) is arguably a precursor for L2/L3 proficiency (Cummins, 2001, Harklau, 2012). In addition, mastery in oral language skills is viewed as a predictor of later reading and writing competence (Wang, 2011). Study data indicated that although the participants valued L1 for home use, they did not consider L1 as practical for learning or for enhancing a sense of community. Such a perspective may have been shaped by their experiences in EAL classrooms in which they were an L1 minority, and in which literacy in English was limited by lack of a favourable environment to practice English. The participants' experience with the use of L1 in their classrooms, especially when they were a minority in EAL classrooms with majority L1 speakers was isolating and did not support students to understand one another or to learn English.

The study participants viewed their home language(s) as important in their lives, particularly for communication with their families in Canada and in Africa. They worked with their families to preserve their home languages as part of their culture by speaking L1 at home. In addition, the youth reported their home language(s) were identifiers of their countries of origin. Responses to a question which asked if the participants

considered their home languages to be important in learning at school or not represented somewhat deficit attitudes towards L1, especially when compared to the dominant and functional role of English in the school and Canadian society. The responses may also indicate that most youth had come to recognize the situated nature of language use and the taken-for-granted monolingual instruction with bilingual students (Cummins, 2009).

African youth were also learning in English as an additional language, therefore, their perception about being ELLs was important to their identity. As such, linguistic identities are important in the study of language and literacy, and EAL pedagogy (McKinney & Norton, 2010). The African youth at Green Valley School were among a large number of new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in EAL. Positionings of ELLs at the school had implications for their learning and identity as it offered them frames of reference to interpret their experiences. Hence, ELL signaled an identity of a newcomer, immigrant, and one with low English skills. Levels within EAL implied a beginner or new learner. Following conversations and reflection on the role of L1, the youth responses shifted to the possible and often contradictory value of L1 to their learning in Canada as follows:

[Do you think your L1 is important for learning at school?]: *Not in my learning, doing my homework, no, I don't think so [...]* (Hongera); *I don't need to learn anything in Somali. It does not help me with anything, just to speak to my family* (Salama); **[Possible uses of L1 after conversations with researcher about L1]** *But I use Arabic to speak with other immigrants who speak Arabic. Sometimes yah, I use Arabic to think. I use it with English, and is helpful to learn English* (Hongera); *Somali is important to me like my parent speak it. New students only want to learn. To know all the English in this country because I know all about my country* (Salama).

Nyota, who had deep aspirations to learn English for actual and imagined future benefits, maintained that L1 was important to her learning. However, ELL an identity positioned language learners as certain kinds of persons (Gee, 1996) who were less knowledgeable and could not participate in the school's dominant discourse of the mainstream classroom. The following excerpt from data supports the claim:

Uum, it's important mostly coz now I am learning a new language and if I don't know how to express it, I think in my language before I put it in English. I think about my experience in my first language [Mashi] and translate in English; [ELL]: Learning English; it means ... like the different levels. Like when I see ESL A it shows you don't know nothing, it's like starting, like grade1. You may speak in English but cannot write; that tell me some people from different countries who don't know English and are learning English (Nyota).

Mwangaza concurs with Nyota. However, his experiences as an ELL allowed him to interpret the use of L1 as isolating those in the classroom who did not share the meanings of language in communication:

My identity helps me in class sometimes by using my own language. In class room we are not allowed to use our own languages, and we have to work together with other students... comenicat [communicate] better with the students, learn English faster. If I speak to my teacher in my language she will not understand what I am saying (Mwangaza).

The African attitudes towards L1 may be explained through the competing demands to become proficient in English for the many benefits attached to it. Salama explained that Somali was only good for home and English was the language she aspired to learn. Learning a new language did not mean losing L1 (Filmore, 1991). However, the youth did not have that kind of knowledge and the hegemony of English had infiltrated every aspect of their lives and non proficiency placed them in subject positions. This made their ELL identity an important component in their literacy learning. At Green Valley School, the EAL classrooms were organized by levels A-E (A is the lowest level usually with ELD students and E was the highest level achieved before an ELL joined mainstream classes). ELL students positioned at each level learned together but progressed to the next level individually based on successful mastery of a skill level. The youth understood the ascribed identity of ELL as an identifier of new immigrants, new to English and the different levels assigned to learners on the on EAL landscape. For example, Mwezi understood EAL/ELL to mean:

First thing that comes to mind is that they are immigrant. They are the ones learning English. The people born here already know it (Mwezi).

Contradictory views were also expressed by the youth regarding the composition of the EAL/ESL classrooms as being both supportive and isolating. With a large composition of L1 speakers, the African youth felt the composition did not enhance their learning not only of the English language but also of other subjects. The L1 majority preferred to speak to one another in their home language which made non speakers of that language uncomfortable and frustrated because of the reduced opportunity to participate and practice speaking English. Both Shujaa and Salama shared the same EAL community and their perspectives shed light onto their experiences as English language learners who are a minority in a class with a majority L1 community within a public school dominated by speakers of English. When I asked Shujaa what he thought about his experiences in his classroom, his response pointed to the isolating nature of such an arrangement. I met with Shujaa three times for individual interviews and in each session he brought up his concerns about the composition of the EAL classroom, L1 use, and the implications for learning in his EALB Mathematics classroom as follows:

ESL people from same country only speak their own language. Classrooms should be mixed, ESL and mainstream. I do not know why they do it this way here [in this school]. It is good to speak with students from mainstream and will help us to learn English, ... If in a mainstream classroom, it would be better because they will talk to me in English and it is easy to understand them, and learn; But in my class they speak same language and sometimes it's like they may be speaking about me and I don't understand what they say. They [the school] should mix us with mainstream students so we interact and learn English from them. They don't do that and I don't know why they don't want to. The English speakers will help ESL learn English faster; most students in my class don't speak even one word of English, they just speak their own language and it is not good for us who do not speak their language. Nobody in my class speak my language; Mmm it's just too hard, you know like a teacher is teaching like math class and the students speak their own language. Mr. [Green] is a good teacher but students speak their own language (Shujaa).

Nyota and Mwangaza shared some aspects of Shujaa's sentiments:

I felt alone because nobody spoke my language and they spoke their home language (Nyota).

Despite the language challenges that left some of the participants isolated, they agreed that the school's ethno cultural composition allowed for community, which offered them a sense of belonging as these excerpt from the data indicated:

What I like about this school is there are many immigrants in the school (Shujaa); I was not comfortable to speak in a class with English speakers (Mwangaza); I really don't connect with other students in the school, only the ESL students [Advice to new students]: they have to speak to other people from other country because if you only speak in your language, you are not going to learn (Hongera).

The ELL classroom as a community of learners was revealed to be important yet paradoxical. It provided the ELLs with a sense of belonging yet at the same time isolated them from both the mainstream students and also among themselves. EAL B classroom was composed of students from about 6 language groups who were at the BICS level in English. Majority L1 speakers isolated other ELLs. Social interaction is important in building community and in learning and may have been constricted in this situation as illustrated from interview and observation data:

What I like about school is there are many immigrants; teachers like me and are nice to me. They [the school] should mix us with mainstream students so we interact and learn English from them... The English speakers will help ESL learn English faster. Most students in my class don't speak even one word of English. They just speak their own language and it is not good for us who do not speak their language (Shujaa)

Nyota was in agreement:

When with ESL students I felt comfortable because we were in the same situation. I was surprised that we were all from different countries. I did not expect this in Canada. I felt alone because nobody spoke my language and they spoke their home language (Nyota).

The ELL category was viewed as isolating by some of the participants for two reasons: first, the use of L1 by majority L1 students; and, second, being separated from mainstream students meant the opportunity to learn English through interactions with speakers of English was lost.

Ms. Alexis agreed that student diversity at Green Valley School gave CLD students a sense of community:

One thing I would say is our school ...is DIVERSE. It is the most diverse in the city and the immigrant students feel at home here. There is a sense of community, and the students support one another. They are not a minority here (Ms. Alexis).

Related to the concepts of L1 and ELL identity is the idea that the students had aspirations to do well and to improve on their learning. Those in EAL/ESL were *trying harder* to go up the levels and join mainstream classes where they would participate in *harder/academic courses*.

6.4.5 Figured identities

African immigrant youth understood their positioning as certain kinds of learners, such as ELL and struggling readers and writers. Salama, Hongera, Shujaa, and Mwangaza realized that in order to become better and improve their performance in school, and especially to move up the levels and join mainstream classes, they had to work harder. For Mwezi and Nyota, good grammar and other English language skills were important to pass the OSSLT and this meant they had to work hard to improve their literacy skills. For example, Mwezi expressed his identity of a focused student as,

I am a hard worker, I don't give up easily, I have goals like I want to go to University graduate and be an engineer, I want to get a scholarship for university. I am trying to improve my English and do well in school (Mwezi).

Imagined identity in Mwezi's case was to join University, which empowered him to improve his learning. The African youth resisted positioned identities such as lengthy membership in EAL levels to gain skills and improve. They held high expectations about achieving the standards of the school literacy curriculum, which were often unmatched with the program demands. Youth with gaps in prior educational experiences, limited English language, and the age of student, among other factors were important considerations. Literacy achievement for African youth required an audit of their actual, shifting and imagined identities and their prior experiences against the expectations of the

school curriculum to plan for relevant support programs. Salama, who was 18 years old and at EAL B level self assessed as making minimal improvement yet was impatient with the lengthy program and required skills to complete high school. She expressed her predicament as,

It takes a long time to be in ESL because my English is still low. I would like to do more hard classes [academic] because I am working hard. I have to complete ESL and then enroll to mainstream courses like Canadians. I think like my friends are better than me. I see their paragraphs, they have few or no mistakes and I have many mistakes (Salama).

In an attempt to understand and to be understood by teachers and peers, the youth figured out strategies such as explained below:

Yah, I speak with an accent. Like sometimes people understand what I say sometimes they don't. Like when I speak soo... fast they don't understand. So I speak slow, calm down. Like I can't say some big words but the small ones it's ok. I speak short ones; sometimes I just put my hand up and tell to the teacher; I speak very nice and they understand what I mean. Sometimes I explain with my hand [gesture] if I don't have words to explain. Sometimes I show them a picture on the internet if I don't know how to say it in English; Like having people who have been here for 10 years or were born here and speak English help me speak English all the time (Shujaa).

Classroom participation involves among other things, providing responses to and asking questions. African youth were careful about being positioned as not knowledgeable for *always asking questions*. Nyota had overcome the fear to some extent as she gained more confidence in the English language and asked questions because she needed help as she explains below:

I usually ask questions, and sometimes people look at you and laugh if you are the one who always ask questions, but I learned not to care about it and just ask if I need help (Nyota).

Similarly, Hongera was initially shy of asking questions especially in Canada where she was still learning the ropes of a new setting, new people, and a new language. Her response contrasts her participation in Canada and Sudan as:

In Sudan you know the people more and you can ask questions if you find difficult things. But in Canada, it is different. Yes, you can ask but I cannot ask all the time; for English I need to learn a lot; there are few words I don't know. I wonder how I should say, uumm, what does it mean? I ask the teacher like with [pause] what is the next word, how I say it.... Sometimes I ask the teacher how I can do a sound (Hongera).

Although the study did not focus on gender roles and identities in learning, information from mapping activities and interviews indicate that the male students often engaged in different activities than the female students, which might be rooted in wider societal structures before immigration.

6.4.6 Gendered identities

Gender is an important social construct that shapes learner decisions and opportunities for language (Menard-Warwick, 2004) and literacy learning in that it influences agency, investment, and resistance in learning (Pavlenko & Norton, 2008). Gender positioning, though not part of the interview questions, emerged as an important lens to understand how African youth imagined their roles as learners and members of societies where roles and privileges were allocated or assumed based on gender. Gender roles might have influenced the kinds of literacy activities in which the African youth engaged.

The male participants, for example, spent a lot of time outdoors interacting, playing, and learning English. The female students tended to stay indoors helping their parent/s with housework and EAL homework. The male youth spent more time outside the home, either at parks, at the YMCA or hanging out in the neighbourhood with their friends. They engaged in activities such as soccer, basketball, running, and swimming in school teams and out-of-school. During play, the boys had an opportunity to meet new friends and to practice speaking English. Besides involvement in outdoor games and hanging out with friends, Shujaa and Mwezi also played indoor games such as video and computer games, which helped with reading, sharing ideas and learning. The male students had ample time to play in teams and interact with others both at school and out-of-school,

which presented opportunities to learn English and Canadian culture during social activities away from the classroom environment.

The female students lived with, and supported their mothers to learn and understand their new environment. As a young mother, Hongera was overwhelmed with the challenges of supporting her son and coping with demands at school. She sometimes arrived late for school because she needed to send her child to the daycare centre or missed classes when her son was unwell. Despite these challenges, Hongera was actively engaged in her learning. The female gender was implicated in the cultural and religious practices of Hongera and Nyota. Through her creative writing Hongera described ways in which gender inequalities played out during mourning in Sudan. Salama linked the gaps in her schooled literacy to cultural and religious attitudes, and the related limited support for the education of females. The female child had the burden of completing domestic chores when the boys had time to play, rest, and read. Salama had left school early at age 14 as a result of being too tired from domestic chores to cope with school. As part of their identity, the students also wrote, drew, and talked about items that were of value to them. Artefacts presented an opportunity for participants to talk about themselves and share their experiences.

6.5 Artefacts as Identity Texts: Valuable, Memorable, Always With Us

Artefacts and students' creative work are important resources to mediate learning (e.g., Holland et al, 1998). That means, affirming students' identities empowers them to invest themselves in literacy learning (Cummins, 2007). To explore the opportunities that African youth had for expressing their identities as learners, I analyzed data from interviews, artefacts and samples of art such as creative writing and drawing that they engaged in. The students talked about, drew and wrote about their artefact/s of choice that mattered to them most. These included necklaces (Mwezi and Shujaa), photographs (Salama and Mwangaza - these will not be displayed for confidentiality reasons), and a coffee maker (Hongera). Students' writing samples included letters, poems, and opinion paragraphs (Nyota, Hongera, Shujaa, and Mwangaza), and artwork (Salama and Shujaa)

also formed part of ‘artefactual’ data as they provided information about the students’ experiences of language and literacy through writing and drawing.

I asked participants to write about, draw, bring the actual object or a picture of it and write what the artefact is and why it was of value to them. Shujaa drew a picture of the necklace and wrote what it meant to him. He later brought a picture of it that he took with his smart phone. Shujaa was a refugee in Uganda and his grandmother took good care of him. Talking about his necklace allowed him an opportunity to connect with his past experiences that shaped his identity before migration. The necklace reminded him about his family and support for him. His drawing and photograph are in the portraits chapter 4. Similarly, Mwezi had received a necklace as gift from his grandfather. The necklace was given as a reminder of his identity as an Ethiopian and a Coptic Orthodox Christian. In the same vein, Hongera’s family special coffee maker was a carrier of Ethiopian culture. All the artefacts are in the portrait chapter four.

Gregory, Long and Volk (2004), Moll et al, (1992), and Gonzalez et al (2005), among others, have utilized marginalized learners’ cultural/community resources to support literacy and language learning in school. Other studies found that non recognition of students’ out-of-school literacies could alienate their school literacy achievement (Gregory, 2004 et al, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Lam, 2000 & 2006). Also, teachers may lack relevant information about their students’ out-of-school literate practices (Schultz, 2002) which may be helpful to understand the youth in their classrooms. The African youth expressed a deep connection to their cultural knowledge which would have provided educators with resources to support academic literacy. Observations and interview data from the teachers indicated that cultural objects and embedded knowledge did not inform classroom instruction. The responses from the teachers regarding allowing immigrant youth’s out-of-school and cultural knowledge from artefacts in their teaching were:

Very little work aside from maintaining open communication with parents/family. Students have a good deal resources that exist for extra literacy help; we don’t use cultural resources/artifacts at this school (Mr. Green); It is relevant not as

prevalent in secondary school. We see most of this in elementary school where children do a 'show and tell' (Ms. Alexis); Not enough references made to things in student's lives, but could do this more effectively; this should be incorporated more, especially in classes with immigrant students to provide context (Ms. Rob).

The youth's work samples also relate to the concept of identity in that they represent participants' authorship about themselves through writing and drawing. Writing and drawing samples demonstrated not only their writing and drawing abilities but also the meaning making process they engaged in, and the expression of personal perspectives on certain issues covered in class or about their personal experiences. These works were collected with permission from the participants. The samples express aspirations and dreams the African immigrant youth have about the future, their stories of joy, loss, and loneliness from separation, inequalities in societies in their countries of origin by religion and gender, the love for sport, and the historical struggles in their countries of origin. The samples also demonstrate the differing abilities in writing and speaking. Nearly all participants expressed themselves with more confidence through speaking than in writing. Hongera's writing samples are presented in the portrait chapter four. The artwork told a number of stories. For example Salama's tear drop with just two words, "Miss you", tells her story of separation from her uncle's family that had supported her for 16 years. Salama struggled with reading, writing, and speaking in English, however she represented meaning creatively using multiple modes. She presented a photograph of her uncle, which is not provided for confidentiality reasons, and art done during her Art class. The following excerpt from mapping activities is Salama's writing about her most valuable item:

Picture of my uncle. I live with my uncle when my mother leave me to go to another country. He care for me and do many good things for me. I look at this picture sometimes when I feeling alone and on special days like Eid (Salama).

Salama drew a tear drop from her eye with the words **Miss You** below it (See figure 11). She expressed discontinuity in her daily activities and supportive family as she negotiated with her positioning as a new language learner and her aspirations to acquire language and literacy skills.

Shujaa was well spoken and reflective about his environment. Although he had limited exposure to English and reading before moving to Canada, he expressed himself clearly. His artefact of his ideal room is presented in the portraits chapter 4 with the accompanying write up which demonstrated his identity as one who engaged in technology for various reasons, and his love for electronics, exercise, and entertainment. Nyota, an immigrant student in the mainstream classroom showed enthusiasm in her work. She was working at improving her English language skills while at the same time taking credit courses both at her school and at a night school to catch up with other students at her age/grade level. Her poem (see figure 6) represents school support in her social and academic life and also her emerging writing skills in English.

6.6 Summary

The study explored school experiences, literacy learning and identity re/construction among African immigrant youth who were learning in English as an additional language (EAL). The goal was to understand from the experiences of the youth how the school supported their learning and what opportunities they provided for them to construct positive identity as learners. Data indicates that the youth faced challenges related to adapting to a new country and school, learning a new language and encounter with difference, which they cited as main barriers to their learning. However, the students aspired to do well at school by addressing some of the challenges. The youth had many experiences both global and local, as well as cultural resources that would inform language and literacy learning, and through which they could be recognized as capable of improving their learning with the relevant support. In addition, the youth valued and had access to new technology that supported them in learning, building social networks and navigating their environment even as they acquired English language skills. The youth had goals and worked hard to break away from the ascribed identity of new, immigrant, and English language learners at various levels. They aspired to join mainstream classes and take credit courses that shaped their learning towards careers and personal fulfilment. The experiences of students from continental Africa offer knowledge and opportunities

for teachers to design strategies that address literacy-learning needs of minoritized students. The following chapter seven presents a discussion of study conclusions and implications for education.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Implications

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss key conclusions from the study, link each to the literature, suggest its educational implications, and make related suggestions for educational practice. The study conclusions relate to the overarching goal of the study which is to gain insights into the experiences of African immigrant students who are learning to become literate in an additional language in Canadian classrooms. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the opportunities at school for minoritized students' construction of identity and to map and document African students' funds of knowledge, experiences, and interests. Key conclusions from the study are that: students negotiated global and local spaces for a place to belong; students constructed new identities in the process of language and literacy learning; accountability in public education constricted the literacy learning opportunities of the students; and identity texts can be potent pedagogical tools for literacy learning.

7.1 *Negotiating Global and Local Spaces for a Place to Belong*

The study found that participants encountered difficulties related to the need to learn a new language, adjust to a new school, and to acquire a sense of acceptance and belonging to their new society. Somers (2010) contends that transitioning from one country to another that differ in sociopolitical and cultural contexts often minoritize the newcomers and expose them to discrimination by gender, race, and language among other identifiers. The study found that inequalities in the lives of the participants may be linked to post colonial notions of location, identity, and voice (Ashcroft et al, 2007) in that migration to new locations often require learning a new language and culture to fit into a new society and to express oneself in the ways that society sees fit (Fanon, 1984/2004). This finding links the participants' pre and post migratory conditions as shaping experiences that supported or undermined their literacy learning and identity construction. In the transit countries and Canada, the participants negotiated expectations to learn new languages, acquire new literacies, and construct new identities as refugees. These processes may

have afforded them subordinate identities, thereby limiting their identity options. Inequalities, argued Cummins (2001), are rooted in unequal power relations in society, which are maintained through oppression under dominant-subordinate relationships that educators must address if they are to support the achievement of minoritized students.

Supporting students such as those in this study might call for consideration of Anderson et al's (2004) model for supporting refugee students across the pre-, trans-, and post-migratory ecologies. The model highlights important knowledge for planning support for successful adaptation and the role of schools in new students' learning that required education policies, schools, educators, and community to facilitate the learning process and ease the challenges of adaptation (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Kirova, 2009; Stewart, 2011). While not all of the students in my study were refugees, the findings suggest that the Anderson's (2004) three main factors for successful adaptation for refugee students in schools could be relevant for the study participants.

First, individual students' characteristics enabled or complicated successful transition and learning at school. The participants' migratory factors varied by individual and familial circumstances, prior schooling and L1 literacy, as well as conditions and support programs in the school. They responded to adaptation and learning in new settings in unique ways. In addition, the students had also to negotiate with occupying an ambiguous hybrid space of the pre-migration self and the new self with expectations to settle and learn in a new school and society. This conclusion also corroborates findings by researchers such as Hamilton and Moore (2004) that relevant support programs for immigrant and refugee students may not assume homogeneity but consider individual circumstances.

Second, a strong support network of the immediate family and its literacy practices provided the students with confidence to explore, interact, and learn. Participants received emotional support and encouragement from their parents and siblings. This finding also supports studies such as Oroczo (2010) on the critical role of family support

to literacy engagement and learning, and positive identity of immigrant students. The students also helped their parents to learn English and navigate the new culture.

Third, to facilitate adaptation and learning for the students, the characteristics of the school were important, that is, support services for students and their families, and the level to which policies, programs, instructions and teachers' role were relevant to the learning needs of the students. The nature of peer and teacher interactions in host schools seemed to shape the students' classroom participation and identity construction. This conclusion implies the significant responsibility on schools in the orientation, assessment and placement, and support for the students' literacy learning and identity constructions in Canada. Anderson (2004) underscored the importance for educators to map and understand students' migratory factors, individual circumstances, challenges, aspirations, and the strategies and supports in schools to provide relevant programs for refugee students.

The target school offered EAL program to support ELLs' proficiency. A collaborative effort between the school board and settlement services provided settlement and initial orientation for the students that presented opportunity for them to learn the ropes about the new school. For example, the settlement worker mapped the needs of new students, liaised between school and home, guided students on employment, and linked them with important community resources. The school also organized sessions and invited interpreters to educate parents about the school curriculum and graduation expectations and the school rules. There was also collaboration between the school, local colleges, universities, and community agencies that created a homework club to support new students. The study noted that not all the new students participated in the club owing to personal commitments after school. For example, as a young mother, Hongera cared for her child after school, while Mwangaza and Shujaa joined their team members for practice after school. In an effort to catch up with her age and grade peers, Nyota attended evening adult education classes. The study suggests that consultation with

immigrant students about optional times and supports for homework may address coordination and increase participation in this important activity.

The study also noticed that although the participants were learning in a safe environment and received orientation support, they at the same time experienced difficulties such as disruption and loss of familiar places, isolation, fear and discrimination in Canada that seemed to promote fragile identities for them. The school's programs and instruction did not always provide adequate opportunities for minoritized students because they were oriented to support the general student population and not specific for ELLs with limited English language and literacy skills, and gaps in schooling. In addition, limited support towards proficiency in English language and literacy skills was found to constrict learning and transitioning in to Canadian schools and society. This conclusion will be taken up in the section on teaching at the age of diversity and accountability. These encounters emerged in the study as shaping the participants' language and literacy learning and identities.

The study found that new students aspired for education to transform their lives and looked up to schools for social mobility. Kanu (2008) found that programs for new immigrant students lacked input from the students themselves and failed to address social isolation, contributing to some students dropping out-of-school before graduation. On the contrary, none of the study participants expressed consideration to drop out-of-school although they were exposed to similar conditions. Rather, they remained hopeful that their learning would improve and meet expectations for graduation even when age, gaps in schooling and limited English language and literacy skills presented uncertainties for some. In a similar vein, Stewart (2011) found that teachers expressed frustration at limited resources and knowledge about the new students and by the aspirations of new students to join mainstream classes before they had acquired academic English proficiency. At the same time, staff working with refugee students reported that teachers were not always willing to adjust instruction to fit the experiences, interests, and proficiency levels of the students.

On the contrary, teachers in the study considered the school to have enough resources to support literacy learning for new students although these resources uniformly supported all students. Teachers were, however, willing to learn how to utilize diverse resources such as artefacts from the students' cultures in order to support them better. Supports for the students literacy learning were therefore uneven and complex, a finding that corroborates Rutter (1998 & 2006) that pre migratory experiences are not solely to blame for struggles experienced by segments of immigrant students in host schools, and a consideration of factors within the school is needed.

The study data point to the relevance for educators to mobilize prior knowledge of new students for the purposes of planning responsive instruction for them. The study also notes that accessing prior knowledge was not always guaranteed as not all students disclosed their pre migratory and educational experiences during reception or after joining school. Salama for instance, had not disclosed important information such as gaps in her formal education which may have required specialized supports to bridge the gap, and at the same time guide her teachers during instruction. This may help explain why Salama often expressed concerns over her limited English skills, her age, and the length of time it might take her to complete EAL program requirements and those of the core school curriculum and graduation. This study proposes the use of reflexivity when assessing supports provided to minoritized students for relevance to their learning and identity construction, and for schools to provide adequate guidance, support, and resources for teachers of minoritized students.

Given that the students required targeted support to negotiate their in-between space as learners in new locations, educators might do well to map the journeys of minoritized students beyond experiences of challenges to include their funds of knowledge. Mapping of pre-migration literacy activities in the study, for instance, afforded participants the opportunity to highlight important strengths that were not otherwise easy to capture. This study emphasises the need for schools to revise initial assessment practices so that they

capture more detailed information about more than just basic skills and promote the building of rapport with new students so that they will share stories pertinent for creating literacy learning opportunities.

Prior education experience and L1 literacy

Pre-migratory education experiences and literacy in L1 were found to be important constituents of the participants' L2 literacy learning in Canada. The findings suggest that the participants faced challenges related to the nature of school curriculum and learning to be literacy in a new language. Migrating to Canada also presented opportunities for learning in safe and stable environments. The African students were at different stages in L1 and school literacies. Nyota, Shujaa, and Salama, for example, needed to learn new languages, however, the schools in transition countries received limited funding for learning materials in the students' L1 and lacked support for additional language learning. Shujaa's journey to literacy was delayed by lack of resources. He began to read when he joined secondary school in Canada. This finding evokes studies such as Block (2005) that found that schools with limited resources for language and overall learning disadvantaged children's early and future education. Also, the conclusion supports Alidou's (2006) notion that colonial inspired education and use of foreign languages in education limit opportunities for children to acquire L1 literacy. Participants such as Mwezi and Mwangaza, for instance, who had continuity in their learning and an opportunity to learn in L1 for most of their elementary education had positive school experiences before migration, and appeared confident in their learning except for the challenges of learning through a new language and being in a new school environment.

The study acknowledges that limited formal schooling and academic literacy in students' L1 may have created challenges for L2/3 literacy but argues that the students were resourceful and communicated literacy practices, which revealed strong connections with nature, language(s), cultural education and practices, and various levels of print and oral literacy. The students also expressed great aspirations to transform their lives through education in Canada. Such aspirations point to the critical role of schools to understand

the students and bring out the good in them (e.g. Freire, 1970). This finding refutes studies such as Anisef et al. (2008) and Kanu (2008) that focus on challenges immigrant students experience in their learning but do not explore their funds of knowledge and how these may be utilized to support their learning and identity.

In terms of the relationship between gender and the participants' language and literacy learning experiences, while Wilkinson (2002) did not find gender to be an important consideration, the study found gender to be of particular importance to the experiences of the female participants. For instance, though the young women had better access to education in Canada than in their previous countries, their gender identities were not much ameliorated. In the case of Salama, cultural and religious factors contributed to her early push-out-of-school, which may have influenced her later learning, owing to inadequate content knowledge to draw from. As a young mother, Hongera had additional responsibilities that took time away from her learning. All the male participants spent time outside the home playing sports and interacting with other students while the female students stayed at home helping their mothers with EAL homework and other chores, which may have limited important language and literacy-enhancing interaction and learning.

7.2 Identity Reconstruction, Language and Literacy Learning

Identity was an important construct in understanding literacy learning opportunities among the participants. The degree to which school environments and educators were welcoming to participants' interests and knowledge seemed to play a role in the participants' identity construction and influenced the participants' decisions to invest themselves or resist literacy learning opportunities.

7.2.1 Understanding of identity and identity construction

The participants understood the term *identity* to generally mean differences in personal attributes, race, nationality, and language expressed through being African, immigrant, ELL, and speakers of multiple languages. Identity was also expressed in terms of ability,

for example, in sports and well liked subjects. The participants' "I" and "I am" statements indicated their strengths, aspirations, challenges, and shifting identities. For example;

I am a runner; I am a hard worker; I am good at math, and I have goals. I struggle; I am no longer the person I was in Uganda; I used to speak; if born here; I want to forget my accent; I don't want to use simple words like baby English; I cannot ask questions all the time.

Also, combined statements from participants that indicated *Othering*, fragility, agency or absence of it were,

new immigrants cannot do anything to change what others think about them or say to them, learning a new language is not easy, you are not treated the same, and you are at a lower level than Canadians, among others.

These statements suggest the relevance of identity in shaping literacy learning among the African students. The role schools and educators play in identity construction among minoritized students may be understood through various perspectives.

Post-structural approaches to literacy studies with minoritized students have deconstructed views about literacy and identity (McCarthy, 2005) that stem from *deficit models*. These models locate identity as fixed and CLD students' L1 and culture as deficits. They also assume race, class, and gender to be markers of difference, and equate diversity and disadvantage to inferiority (Bishop et al, 2005; Cummins, 2010; Hall, 1996; Ladson-Billing, 1999). An alternative to the deficit model in educating minoritized students is what Heydon and Iannacci (2008) envision as an *asset model* that views students and their families as capable and *at promise*. Asset models challenge deficit ones by highlighting minoritized families, children, and communities as endowed with funds of knowledge (e.g. Moll, 1992).

All the students were indigenes of continental Africa where they constituted a majority population only to become minority, different, and black in Canada. All the students were proud of being African and black, however, the study could not conclude adequately if the students were taking up new cultural practices to reflect this new identity. For

example, Ibrahim's (1998, 2007) studies with Francophone ELL students from Africa in Toronto found that becoming black was a powerful social construction in which the students began to adopt and adapt practices like Hip Hop to fit the status quo of their new identities. Individual national and linguistic identities by county of birth, home language and culture, gender, and religion were important to the African students.

The findings suggest that transition and hybrid identities and literacies were demonstrated through identities of connection with one's homeland embedded in the participants' literacy practices. Through mapping activities, all the participants created identity texts that revealed their interests, hopes, and aspirations. The students did not identify with transition countries and represented their out-of-school practices with maps of home countries even when these activities took place in transition countries. Homeland represented a place for support, belonging, where one was not different, and a place with opportunity to learn in familiar settings and language. The claim to stable identities such as nationality provided the participants with continuity and belonging in what Hall (2000) describe as "shared cultural codes which tend to give a stable and rigid reference of meaning beneath shifts of ...actual history" (p.2). With new experiences of relocation, meeting of cultures, and joining school, the students negotiated identities as ELLs and desired to do well in school and make friends. Understanding construction of identities among students may provide educators with important information about student's travels, transition literacies and the role of place as curriculum, and apply this knowledge to bridge the learning of immigrant students.

The participants' in between identities that were instantiated in their identity texts were not acknowledged in school, which positioned them as struggling. The participants struggled for ownership to enact literacy practices and created texts where they would live their interests, hopes, and desires. The findings here echo Pahl's (2004) study of literacy and identity with young immigrant children in England in that the students' literacy practices were sedimented in the texts they produced. The participants' maps represented literacy practices in their home and transition countries and in Canada, and

across sites of home and school that were influenced by forces of migration and also the social and historical contexts before and after migration. The findings illuminate the multifaceted and fluid nature of identity among immigrant students as they strived to become literate in a new language.

The study suggests that positional identities, that is, positions offered to the participants in their new schools and society, and how they came to understand their positions within these structures were important to the students' literacy learning opportunities and identity constructions (e.g., Holland et al., 1998). Being recognized as immigrants and speakers of other languages provided the students a lens to construct fragile identities they described through words such as, challenges, newness, low ability, difference, alone and hurt, among others. The participants were aware of potential conflicts as they negotiated identities among peers who at times isolated them. For example, from their experience, Mwezi and Nyota cautioned new immigrants from Africa of possible isolation and ill treatment and consequences if they got involved in fights. Though there was an instance of physical violence reported by one of the students, most participants resisted positional identities of violence and figured ways to negotiate with the new circumstances for realization of their learning and personal goals.

Fragile identities (related to minoritization and ensuing limiting of voice, fading identities through assimilation, and being in an ambiguous state) were expressed through self identification as struggling with learning and challenges of being new and learning the basics all over again, becoming different, and also of things they had no capacity to change, for example, not being accepted by the host community and also the literacy demands at school that limited their choices over what to read and write. As new students, the participants constructed identities of fragility or difficulty and ambiguity, which they expressed as challenges to adaptation and learning a new language and experiences of being the *Other* (i.e., being positioned as a minoritized group by the norms of a dominant group). Participants who communicated well in an L1 could still only gesture and converse in simple English words. The participants also felt ignored or

misunderstood by some peers and teachers, which limited interaction and impacted on their learning.

The participants perceived these behaviours to be rooted in their differences from the Canadian-born peers and accented speech. Identities of in-between countries, cultures, languages and literacies provided the students with space to negotiate new identities as learners of new language and to engage in literacy practices of in-betweenness (e.g., Bhabha, 2004). The students embraced immigrant experience as a resource and inspiration to work harder towards their imagined identities. The study suggests that educators should strive to understand minoritized students' fragile identities, and develop strategies to create understanding among all students, reduce suspicion, and build respect. The African students aspired for opportunities to educate peers and teachers about themselves in order to foster this understanding.

Imagined identities and aspirations

The study found that participants did not remain in positional and fragile spaces but participated in imagined communities (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). The participants had hope in the capacity in literacy and education, generally conceived, to change their circumstances and positioning as the *Other* in the wider society. Hybrid identities and constructions of difference evolved as a result of intercultural interaction and borrowing (e.g. Bhabha, 2004) with some students aspiring to be like their peers who were privileged by possession of the linguistic and cultural capital of society and school. Mwezi figured out, for instance, that being an immigrant inspired him work harder to meet expectations because he did not have the linguistic and cultural capital like his Canadian-born peers.

Imagined identities were important for engagement with the students' language and literacy learning and daily experiences because they informed about who and what the students wanted to become and what not to become. Examples of imagined identities were mastery of English skills for improved school outcomes, moving out of certain

positional identities (e.g., being identified as ELLs), joining post secondary education, finding jobs, and for positive self identity. These aspirations relate to what the NLG's (1996) and Gee (2000) refer to as 21st century literate identities shaped by forces of globalization and implemented through public education. This conclusion confirms studies (e.g., Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) that a learner's actual and imagined identities influence language learning.

A seemingly important aspect of the participants' social identity was their perceived membership or aspiration to participate in the imagined host society that was symbolized by gaining acceptance of peers and becoming proficient in English. Nyota, for example, desired to speak English without an accent to escape differentiation, acquire English proficiency, and to move away from speaking what she termed baby English for simple English, to more complex English, and to attain the same academic level with Canadian-born students. Though these aspirations supported Nyota in her English learning, she may not have been reflexive that acquiring conversational English from her peers was not to be confused with academic English proficiency. She needed opportunities at the school to build confidence in herself as a learner. In addition, Nyota considered her newly acquired Canadian citizenship card and passport her most valuable artefacts, symbolic of her becoming Canadian as they allowed her participation in voting, and made travelling easier for her. On the same vein, Hongera, Salama, and Shujaa equated mainstream classes to spaces of power and privilege that belonged to "real Canadians" and to which minoritized students were recruited (Bartlett, 2007; Holland et al., 1998) upon meeting program requirements.

Membership to the mainstream classes signalled proficiency in English, capacity to handle "hard" (academic) courses, and participation in the main school curriculum. To achieve these goals, the students invested time, effort, and ambition in learning, findings reported by Norton (2000) and substantiated and illustrated here. Language and literacy learning are situated practices that involve participation during which students interpret what they are engaged in (e.g., Holland et al, 1998). Though acquiring a set of skills and

knowledge is important, such as in EAL and school curriculum, learning forms part of shifting patterns of participation in classroom communities with shared literacy practices. This notion points to the need for schools to engage the multiple identities of immigrant students and to offer them opportunities to invest their imagined, shifting, and hybrid identities in language and literacy learning for academic achievement, economic mobility, and social integration in the wider society.

Sociocultural factors shape language and literacy learning in both positive and negative ways (e.g., Collier, 1995). The study found conflicting views about the role of community in learning and identity construction of new students. Green Valley School had a diverse student population that was understood by immigrant students and their teachers to offer the CLD students a community in which to belong. On the contrary, the school did not take the advantage of diversity as a resource to address the attitudes of privileged students towards the *Other*. To find a place to belong, minoritized students formed groupings and interacted among themselves in a bid to achieve a sense of community. This idea corroborates studies such as Tieda & Mitchell (2006) which found that immigrant students bond with others who share their language and culture. The participants, however, hoped to learn English and participate in the wider school community, and also that the school could facilitate inclusion. Cultural and linguistic enclaves in schools though supportive to students in some ways, may also be problematic in learning especially for new ELLs who need interaction with English-speaking students. Tensions regarding diversity and community manifested themselves in the isolation of African ELLs, who were a double-minority (Madibbo, 2006), (African and L1 minority) among other minoritized CLD students who shared a common language and culture. It is worth noting that the participants had walked into a school environment that isolated them. The participants who aspired for mainstream classrooms were also experiencing isolation from English-speakers.

Engaging identities of difference

Acts of *Othering* expressed through shaming and isolation of African students were factors that constricted possibilities for communication and classroom participation necessary for literacy learning. *Othering* manifests itself when the dominant culture, group, and/or individuals exert power on subordinate groups (Jones & Jones, 2000) at various levels and forms. For example, the representation of ELLs and other CLD students in the school language and literacy curriculum and by educators' instructional practices constituted forms of domination that required critical literacy lens on curriculum reforms and agency to address social injustices in education (Cherland, et al., 2007). Schools' non recognition of participants' experiences and literacies and low expectations of immigrant students by some peers and teacher led to isolation, non-participation, and constrained identity affirmation. Negative experiences at the school were damaging and complicated literacy learning opportunities and shaped how the participants expressed their identities (e.g. Dei & Simmons, 2012). For example, Mwangaza resisted participation in his history classroom for fear of shaming by his peers who he called "real Canadians" to distinguish them from other English-speaking peers of CLD backgrounds. Shaming led to conflicts that escalated into fights and suspension of Mwangaza from school which he blamed on himself for "*dealing with it myself*".

This finding strengthens those of other studies (e.g., Dei, 2006; Fu & Graft, 2008; Gunderson, 2010; Steinback, 2010, Suarez-Orozco, 2010) that isolation creates a negative sense of self-worth, non-belonging, sense of loss and disorientation, disengagement with literacy learning, and may lead to poor performance, perpetuate inequalities, and feed the deficit assumptions about the identity of minoritized students. To support positive identities among minoritized students, schools may scaffold intercultural understanding among students and teachers to ensure that learning conditions that support all students stem from asset models. Not only does discrimination inhibit learning and identity reconstruction, it also complicates successful adaptation (Hout, 2012) of new students to Canada.

7.2.2 Conditions for English as additional language and literacy learning

I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize (bell hooks, 1994, p.168).

English language proficiency remains a key influence in literacy learning in an English-only classroom. In this light, L2 literacy learning among minoritized students points to the provision of adequate opportunities at the school to address challenges encountered by the students in their learning of English. The study found that participants' learning may have been shaped by factors such as learning through a new language that presented a language barrier to the students' communication and learning within the circumstances they were located in Canada. Prior schooling and L1 literacy are also important considerations. Additionally, factors within the school such as the nature of the EAL program, composition of EAL classrooms, limited interaction among ELLs, and with English-speakers, non-recognition of students' prior knowledge and L1, and also acts of *Othering* influenced L2 literacy learning. Learning opportunities may be facilitated where students are supported to use language and literacy to solve everyday needs including learning at school. This suggests that for the participants to acquire L2 literacy, they needed support to acquire academic skills, concept formation, subject knowledge and strategies that would allow them to transfer knowledge from L1 to L2, not just decoding skills and surface level learning (Cummins, 2010; Edwards, 2008).

Other factors for literacy learning include environments enabling them to invest themselves and their time in extensive reading and writing in order to acquire language proficiency and literacy skills (Guthrie, 2004). Teachers working with ELLs may create language awareness and proficiency by scaffolding language (e.g., through demonstration, feedback, affirming identities, and drawing on the students' prior knowledge and L1) (Cummins, 2012). Scaffolding instruction assumes that educators are aware of L1 literacy abilities of the learners. For instance, Hongera, Mwangaza, and Mwezi were biliterate and working towards literacy in English, Nyota was literate in L1

and Shujaa and Salama were somewhat literate in L1 to guide their pathways to literacy in an additional language.

A general understanding of the concept of literacy among the participants included reading, writing, speaking, understanding, communication, and a big test about what one knows; in short, according to the participants, being literate implied academic literacy in English. Until they acquired proficiency in English, the new ELLs were tongue-tied (Santa Ana, 2004), minoritized and positioned as the unknowing *Other* (Moje, 2004), and limited in their learning opportunities. This study's findings indicate that English was a gatekeeper to overall learning, passing of OSSLT required to graduate, and also for employment.

In addition, the current study suggests a mismatch between knowledge and intellectual level at which the students were forced by the school curriculum to operate based on their English language levels. Also students who were in their late teens were nearing the end of school age with implications that they would leave school before they had acquired language and literacy level to navigate the world of work. The participants were unhappy with the lengthy period it took to complete requirements for the EAL program, which left them feeling socially and academically isolated. For example, both Salama and Hongera considered their EAL program a waste of time, considering their age and the time it took to acquire academic English and join mainstream classes. Salama was 18 years old and in EAL-B while Hongera was 20 years and at level C. Both students aspired for placement in what they termed "hard courses like Canadians". That is, they longed to participate with appropriate supports, in content rich courses that challenged them intellectually, rather than completing EAL levels before they could begin grade level content courses.

Elsewhere, Stewart (2011) found that teachers were not comfortable with ELLs joining mainstream classes before they acquired academic English proficiency as they would continue to struggle with learning. This finding echoes report by the Ontario Ministry of Education guide (2005) *Many Roots Many Voices* on supporting ESL/ELD, which states

that ELLs are often dissatisfied with the length of the special program. Part of the solution may be for the EAL program to facilitate students' connection with content and allow them more time in school to complete secondary school diploma requirements. This conclusion supports studies (Cohen, 2012) that though immigrant students found EAL classrooms socially supportive learning environments, they found instruction not to be intellectually challenging and did not point them to employability. Consequently, the students were eager to join mainstream classrooms.

Another tension lay in the opportunities for interaction between ELLs and their English-speaking counterparts, which is considered important for language and overall learning. Such opportunities were limited by the nature of relationships between ELLs and mainstream students at the target school. The study also found that EAL classrooms may have isolated the immigrant students from essential interaction with more proficient English-speakers. For example, Shujaa, who enjoyed playing with, and learning English from proficient English-speaking peers out-of-school, was concerned that similar interaction was not facilitated at school. The composition of Shujaa's EAL-B classroom limited interaction among students with low English language skills. In addition, instructional strategies and supports for students at that level did not seem to provide them with ample opportunities for interaction and learning. Though some participants such as Shujaa expected that membership in a mainstream classroom would offer them opportunity to learn English faster through interaction with English-speaking peers, others like Hongera and Mwangaza shied away for fear of intimidation. This conclusion supports studies by Gunderson (2004) that immigrant ELLs are aware of the benefits of interacting with speakers of English but the unwelcoming nature of the latter kept them away. During the period of study, I did not learn about strategies in place to scaffold interaction among the mainstream and ELL students to mitigate against isolation and build confidence among ELLs.

Sentiments among study participants regarding the EAL program point to the need for schools to create conditions suitable for effective additional language acquisition and

overall learning by considering social factors. This finding supports studies such as (Harklau, 2012, Pavlenco, 2006; Norton, 2007; Cummins, 2009) which suggest that streaming of ELLs in EAL programs or offering them non vigorous subject content lessons in mainstream classrooms, or placing them in applied courses reduced their chances for post-secondary education (People for Education, 2011). In addition, the negative perceptions held by English-speaking peers about ELLs promoted social isolation that denied these students interactions necessary for L2 acquisition (such as in Gunderson, 2000; Steinback, 2010) and perpetuated academic and social inequalities.

On promoting academic language achievement, Cummins (2009) recommends that educators maximize interaction in the classroom through critical literacy, active learning, deep understanding, and the importance of building on student's prior knowledge articulated in many approaches to critical pedagogy. The multiliteracies framework (NLG, 1996) posits that knowledge and meaning are historically and socially located and produced artefacts. As such, the experiences, interests, and communicational resources of students may support them to develop the capacity to speak up, negotiate, and engage critically in their daily lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008; Gee, 2001; Jewitt, 2008). In this light, literacy learning opportunities for minoritized students may be "optimized when classroom interactions maximize both cognitive engagement and identity investment" (Cummins, 2009, p. 264) by valuing student's funds of knowledge. Privileged knowledge in the target school did not always accommodate students' funds of knowledge and interests in their learning as discussed below.

7.2.3 Funds of knowledge: L1, Literacy practices, and artefacts

At home I speak Somali and at school I speak English. Somali is important to me like my parent speak it. I don't need to learn anything in Somali, it does not help me with anything, just to speak to my family. New students only want to learn, to know all the English in this country because I know all about my country, now I have to know this [Canada] (Salama); [Home language]...it's important mostly coz now I am learning a new language and if I don't know how to express it, I think in my language before I put it in English. I think about my experience in my first language [Mashi] and translate in English (Nyota); my identity helps me in class sometimes by using my own languages. In class room we are not allowed

[allowed] to use our on [own] languages and we have to work together with other students; comenicat [communicate] better with the students, learn English faster (Mwangaza).

Scholars who take a sociocultural stance towards language and literacy acquisition underscore the relevance of L1 to the acquisition of new or additional language/s because of the knowledge foundation tied to it (Cummins, 2009). The absence of participants' L1 at the school may have nurtured negative attitudes towards L1 by the students and may have influenced literacy learning in a new language. Negative attitudes towards L1 have been suggested in the literature as stemming from English imperialism as enacted in the current globalised status of English as a "world language" (NLG, 1996; Phillipson, 2000), language of work, and also the school's English-only instruction. Studies (e.g., Filmore, 1991) contend that ELLs do not have to lose their L1 to learn English. Conversely, competing forces to meet EAL and secondary curriculum demands lead to an interpretation of limited English language skills among participants as a disadvantage in learning.

This study did not seek to compare students who were L1 literate and those who were not, and therefore, cannot explicitly claim a direct relationship between L1 literacy and L2 acquisition. The study, nonetheless, found that students who migrated from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan had not experienced much disruption in schooling and their L1 were also languages of education. These students had also more years of formal education experience than their peers who migrated to Kenya and Uganda, where their L1(s) were not used in school, yet they did not receive support to learn a new language, and had interruptions in their schooling. In addition to L1 literacy, other influencing factors were at play. For example, Shujaa and Salama had gaps in education that required more time and opportunities to acquire both language and content to bridge and extend L2 literacy. Nyota had not received language support in her transition country hence, her mobility from level B to E of EAL within two years may be explained by factors such as early learning in Congo in her L1 and L2, some exposure to English as L3 in the transition country, and her determination to learn English in order to become like Canadian-born

students. She was able to ‘hang-out’ with English-speaking peers, attended homework support sessions, and had responsibilities such as handling official information related to social support and health for her family.

Contrary to the Ontario guide for EAL/ELD teachers, *Many roots many Voices* (2005) that educators create opportunities for ELLs to develop L1 and become bilingual and bicultural, and also to validate ELLs linguistic and cultural backgrounds, no reference was made to L1 at the target school. The current study found that teachers neither planned for students’ L1, out-of-school literacy practices and artefacts, nor did they engage students’ cultural knowledge explicitly to bridge and extend their language and content learning. This conclusion supports previous studies that show that minoritized children’s funds of knowledge, L1 and non-standard forms of English have been largely ignored in schools in providing access to language minority students, promoting learner-oriented approaches, and improving language and literacy learning (Gregory, 2008; Nieto, 2008).

Conclusions from mapping participants’ funds of knowledge suggest they were embedded in the local and global literacies they carried with them across time, settings, and contexts (Rowse & Pahl, 2011), and which provided context to the construction of syncretic literacies and identities. These were the cultural knowledge, L1, experiences, interests, and out-of-school literacies (with literacy broadly defined) and artefacts to their new school in Canada. The students demonstrated a deep connection to their homes, families, and culture, which were all important resources to foster friendship, participation, and understanding across differences of language, race, and levels of ability.

Poor academic achievement of minoritized students has been blamed on the monocultural imaginary (Appadurai, 1996) and the monolingual-English only instruction in schools (Cummins, 2009) that tend to assume stability of culture and identity to privilege some and essentialize others. In this study, for example, Salama claimed not to understand classroom illustrations which were in English and reported experiencing difficulties with

learning. In addition, the current demands for accountability in the education system did not leave room for alternative expression (Campano, 2007) and was echoed by the educators at the school.

This study suggests that whether teachers acknowledge student's prior knowledge or ignore it, students continue to bring their new and shifting experiences to the classroom and in the school. Rather than ignore these resources, teachers might require support to identify and connect them to the language content and literacy curriculum. Secondary school teachers may re-examine the curriculum and begin to draw on studies such as Cummins et al. (2005), Marshall and Toohey (2010), and Pahl and Rowsell (2005) and reorient them to their instruction. There is limited research with secondary school students that utilize literacy as social practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000), or funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005), especially the use of L1 during instruction. Also, students' shifting identities and changing L1 attitudes have not been considered in the context of educating minoritized students in an era of growing demands for accountability. In this view, more studies are needed.

7.3 Teaching for Accountability in the Age of Diversity

We are all well aware of the challenges to the education systems posed by our rapidly changing world: globalization of the economy, openness with regard to other cultures, pressing needs for skilled labour, technological advances that are having an impact on our daily lives as well as the job market. These changes require constant adjustments to our educational practices to ensure high quality, accessibility, mobility and accountability
(Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), 1993, p.1).

Accountability in public education viewed by Apple (2001) as government intervention in education through external supervision, regulation, standardization and high stakes testing is argued to constrict opportunities for learning and identity options of students minoritized for lacking the linguistic and cultural capital of dominant society and school. Findings from the study indicated that participants' interests and knowledge did not constitute school knowledge, were not the focus of evaluation (or even included in evaluation), and were not valued in education. A school focus on education efficiency

was manifest in an outcomes-based curricular model, time allocated to prepare students for EQAO, and the regulation of teachers' work (Apple, 2006; 2008).

The participants encountered challenges with the OSSLT related to the content, language, and orientation of the test, which did not appear to reflect student diversity or capture learner knowledge and seemed to be culturally biased. The major achievement of the test was its ability to position minoritized students as failing students. The finding supports studies such as, Majhanovich (2006) and Pinar (2008) that argue that most high stakes tests are in English and administered even before ELLs have become fully proficient. The test was thus an exercise in failure. Drawing on the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF, 2001) research, Majhanovich (2006) summarized the shortcomings of high-stakes testing in Ontario as:

- Standardized tests are not good indicators of students' achievement...test scores are not good predictors of future success
- Standardized tests do not cover all learning, but mainly focus on language and math skills
- Standardized tests take time away from other learning. Sixty –seven percent of teachers report “teaching to the test” at the expense of regular curriculum...leads to erosion of music, art, physical education, and support programs
- Standardized tests hurt poor, minority and identified students. ... In some communities, minority students, English–as-a-Second Language students and those with learning problems have failure rates of up to 80%
- Dropout and failure rates increase (...)
- More testing does not improve education. Making students do more standardized tests does not improve students' achievement (p.128).

The summary suggests that high stakes testing for accountability fails minoritized students. Rather than provide opportunities for literacy learning, creativity, and personal growth, standardized high-stakes testing perpetuates inequalities in society. Furthermore, expectations and conditions of public education tend to ignore already minoritized groups

such as refugees, immigrants, and those living in poverty (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) through adherence to standards which belie the funds of knowledge of these students.

When schools privilege an autonomous, skill and outcomes based literacy, they operate against pedagogy of multiliteracies. In turn, they jeopardize students' literacy practices, interests, and experiences and limit literacy learning opportunities. Studies such as this one support a need to understand and reflect on ways schools can negotiate with the goals of education to support minoritized children's participation in learning and also to realize their aspirations.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

Study data suggests that participants aspired to pass OSSLT which was critical for graduation, participation in higher education, employment, and the transformation of their circumstances and social location in Canada. According to Cummins (2009), ELLs are likely to require over five years to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the form of proficiency necessary to pass the OSSLT. At the same time, secondary school education in Ontario lasts four to five years. The timelines for students to acquire CALP and pass the OSSLT to receive an OSSD is very tight, if not impossible, for some. The participants who had joined secondary school with limited English skills, gaps in literacy, and or were in their late teens were disadvantaged by these requirements. Mwezi, Nyota and Mwangaza, who attempted the test, reported difficulties with the test's content, context, structure, language, and its foreign nature that was not representative of their experiences. This finding from the study is consistent with studies that show that minoritized students especially ELLs are highly represented in the number of students who fail and retake the test (Anisef, et. al., 2008; EQAO, 2012; Roessingh, 2010).

The outcomes-based format of the curriculum also reinforced the failure of students. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), *Ontario Curriculum (Grades 9-12)* guidelines

establish standards for common outcomes across the province by “offering a narrow, controlling vision of teachers and learners and of ecology and diversity” (Wien & Dudley-Marling, 1998, p.405) that sidelines the knowledge and experiences teachers and students bring to the teaching-learning interaction. The study’s findings point to similar shortcomings of an outcome-based curriculum for minoritized students. For instance, the participants were afforded few official opportunities in the school to share their diverse experiences and literacy practices. Teacher participants were involved in ongoing professional learning on how to teach ELLs, but cited a lack of knowledge on the use of cultural resources in teaching. Multiliteracies pedagogy posits that instruction that optimize literacy learning and identity options for all students needs to go beyond accountability in education to address the growing needs of a CLD society, and to address unequal power relations in education (Cummins, 2009).

7.4 Identity texts: Extending Learning Beyond Curriculum Texts

This section provides conclusions on the implications of literacy learning opportunities on the creation or constriction of opportunities for communication and identity options for minoritized students. The study found that literacy learning opportunities at the study school afforded particular identity options for students and at the same time constrained others. Examples of opportunities for the creation of identity texts in the school included grade 9 art lessons in which the students created works of art that portrayed them as knowledgeable, expressive, and creative in a manner that they were not able to do with their limited English skills alone. Mapping daily practices and interests as methodology allowed the students to connect their cultural knowledge and everyday experiences with school knowledge. The students documented activities that were important to them and began to understand that different kinds of practices that involved communication, for example emails, text messages, gaming, community events, and internet sources among others, were forms of literacy.

During the period of my study, I utilized mapping methodology with all the participants, which offered them the opportunity to map and demonstrate their funds of knowledge

beyond regular classroom literacy practices and materials. The study's mapping activities and artefact collection were methods for data collection, but they also seemed to provide opportunities for the participants to creatively showcase their knowledge, capability, and their potential for positive identity constructions. Students mapped what they knew, expressed their interest, indicated memberships to groups and clubs, and wrote stories of family, movement, and materials from their culture. In the process, the students extended their writing, speaking, reading, and representational skills, and showcased their identities as knowledgeable, capable, and resourceful. These methods may have potential as pedagogical strategies to help teachers uncover students' funds of knowledge in a bid to help provide them with optimum literacy learning opportunities and identity options.

Identity texts differ from curriculum texts in that the later are sanctioned from outside the school and the learner experiences, and largely represent the goals of politicians, interests groups, and the workforce (Apple, 2001; 2008). Cummins and Early (2002) argue that the underlying assumptions of identity texts are built on Multiliteracies' notion of alternative pedagogy with its aim to promote academic engagement of minoritized students, and "affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning" (p. 3). Within the sociocultural framework, studies (e.g., Bartlett, 2007; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) assume that reflexive educators understand classrooms as "figured worlds in which particular actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al., 1998, 52). The students required support and resources from school to shape certain identities and to resist negative social positioning. The students' agency in their learning was highlighted by their choice of specific artefacts to communicate knowledge (Stein, 2008). The students resisted negative social positioning by aspiring for the same goals as all students and figured that they needed to invest themselves in learning to meet these goals.

Sociocultural perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978) underscore the important role of cultural tools such as L1 and artefacts, and the role of identity to mediate language and literacy learning. Drawing on artefacts, the students had an opportunity to make meaning using

multimodal resources. They practiced speaking, writing and reading. They also represented and communicated knowledge beyond the limits of school literacy. Though the study was not an intervention (e.g., Cummins et al., 2005; Stein, 2008) it allowed minoritized students the opportunity to showcase their knowledge and identities in multiple ways.

The study found that the African students demonstrated positive feelings over mastery of out-of-school literacy activities which were driven by choices, interests, and purpose. They also frequently participated in other literacy activities than were allowed by school literacy practices, which were limited to English only instruction, curriculum knowledge, instructional practices, and outcomes (Street, 2005; Holland et al., 1998). This finding confirms Skilton-Sylvester's (2002) work with Cambodian students who engaged more in writing large amounts of quality work in home settings than at school. The study participants exhibited deep connection with artefacts from their cultures on one hand. On the other hand, these resources were not recognized in educational settings. Ignoring minoritized students' funds of knowledge means that their identities were not adequately affirmed in school and also that teachers lacked important information to understand their students (Campano, 2007). Moreover, the study suggests that out-of-school literacy activities driven by choice, and in friendly, test free environments, allowed the participants to use language freely compared to school practices that were perceived as demands from the teachers and involved working within specific rules and guidelines.

The findings highlighted diverse reasons given by the educators for limited or no reference to minoritized students' funds of knowledge during instruction. These included limited time to meet curricular expectations; inadequate resources or examples on how to draw on minoritized students' cultural knowledge; beliefs that cultural knowledge and artefacts belonged to instruction with younger children and not for the secondary school level. In addition, the perception of one teacher that the school had enough resources to support literacy learning for ELLs, as reason for not utilizing artefacts may explain the normalised views about school knowledge and instructional strategies. Nevertheless,

traces of the students' funds of knowledge were visible in certain classroom projects such as Mwangaza's rights' project. In some occasions, students thought about concepts in their L1 and translated in to English. Since these efforts were unplanned, they did not support long term engagement in literacy.

Data from the study suggests that technology mediated learning where ELLs used computers and cell phones to search information on-line and to communicate with a wide audience through emails, texting, and face book. ELLs were willing to take risk in the use of technology, for example in both EAL classrooms, students offered to work with their teachers to navigate the Smart board when needed. When Shujaa could not think of English words to express his ideas, he represented meaning using gestures or showed pictures on the internet using his smart phone. The study confirms studies within Multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Pahl, 2004) on the need for schools to consider literacy learning as multiple and involving diversity in learners' skills, backgrounds and perspectives. An expanded view of literacy accommodates diverse languages and non-standard Englishes, and creates opportunities to use multiple modes, create art, and supports learning and communication, and identity of all students.

7.5 Recommendations and Future Directions

The study identified and illustrated salient aspects of the participants' journeys to language, literacy learning and identity in new settings and the role of the school in the realization of their aspirations. Recommendations from the study point to ways in which schools may respond to the growing diversity of students by negotiating and between curricular expectations and the funds of knowledge, aspirations, identities, and experiences of minoritized students.

The study findings highlight how factors such as country of origin, gender, language, prior schooling, and age at migration shaped the identity options and literacy learning opportunities of immigrant students in Canada. Similarly, availability of relevant

orientation supports eased the process of adaptation for immigrant students and was instrumental in shaping the social, cultural, and academic future of immigrant students. Education has been singled out as one of the key factors shaping integration to host societies (Anisef & Kilbridge, 2003). This study recommends that schools and settlement agencies understand these factors when planning relevant orientation, adaptation, and learning supports for immigrant students (Stewart, 2011, Kanu, 2008, Anderson et al., 2004). The study indicates that though immigrant students from Africa may share certain experiences, they are not a homogenous group. Therefore, supports may not be standardized due to the unique circumstances of each student.

The study found that the availability of social and language programs and supports did not seem to fully address the difficulties experienced by participants in their learning. Also, adolescents were found to not openly welcome conversations around school failure and push-out. The study recommends monitoring of progress and trust building during which the students may communicate about negative experiences. Also, mapping of pre-migration experiences may extend the knowledge-base about the students and reveal gaps and strengths which are important in planning programs and instruction for a diverse student population. More collaboration among the school orientation team, s, educators, students and their families may lead to sharing of important backgrounds and explore alternative pathways to support adaptation, literacy learning, and the construction of positive identities.

Like studies by Stevens (1999) and Wilkinson (2002), this study found that age at migration was a salient factor in literacy learning and construction of identities by students in their late teens, who faced linguistic and academic challenges yet it had not been addressed in the school system. This study recommends that educators and policy makers interrogate the following issues; *what does it mean for new students in their late teens, who are also ELLs, to meet OSSD and graduation requirements within the time frame provided, and how well are school programs preparing these students to meet their aspirations? Would an alternative program to fast track these students' orientation,*

language learning, and delaying OSSLT or replacing it with another form of assessment support the academic and career achievements of minoritized students in Canada? Such questions need to be addressed in the context of the current school curricula and the diversity of students that it serves.

One outstanding finding was the tension created by the mismatch between the participants' aspirations and what they expressed they could do with their English language and literacy proficiency and some of their teachers' understandings of this proficiency. Specifically, the teachers' expressed that the participants had set unrealistic goals for themselves, given their assessed language and literacy levels and gaps in education for some. The study recommends that educators understand students' goals, aspirations, and perceptions of their abilities and explore strategies to support students towards the realization of their dreams and at the same time guide them to set realistic goals. Furthermore, not all students need take an academic route. Alternative classrooms that offer school to work programs for students may help to prevent or readdress failure, unemployment, and related inequalities in society. Krahn and Taylor (2005) found similar aspirations among immigrant youth who faced multiple challenges in adaptation and learning. One may then ask, *how can students' aspirations be realised considering the expectations of the Ontario education system and the linguistic and academic difficulties immigrant youth may find themselves in, in their new society?* Addressing this question may help educators to become reflexive of what it means to facilitate learning and achievement of diverse learners.

Findings from the interview data highlighted diminishing usage and shifting attitudes towards L1 by the participants as they strived to acquire English language and literacy and to belong to their new space. Cummins (2010) has argued that school practices often erase minoritized students' L1 and cultural knowledge, thereby promoting deficit assumptions of these learners as incapable, their languages as problematic, and a barrier to literacy and overall learning. I would agree with Cummins on the need for educators to reflect on how school curriculum may relate to the learning expectations of students

impacted by post-colonial and post migration educational structures, and support them to value their L1 and identities linked to it. Also, schools with minoritized students may hold focus groups meetings for English-speaking and ELLs students to share and exchange knowledge. The study found that the possibility for positive identity formation was contingent on the availability or absence of opportunities at school and society for the students to create identity texts drawing on their L1, cultural knowledge and everyday practices (Cummins, 2004).

Validating minoritized students' funds of knowledge and experiences, and creating enabling environments for them to transform knowledge, relate to the objectives and findings of this study. The study did not in any way aim to project participants as victims in their learning environments though their responses highlighted challenges they faced, possibly due to the demands to acquire a new language and literacies, adapt to new environments, and learn to become different and negotiate with school expectations. The participants had walked into existing conditions that minoritized them by limiting their participation. In the same vein, the educators, settlement worker, and school facility were committed to supporting minoritized students' learning within the parameters of the school curriculum and demands for accountability. Often times, they went beyond accountability and offered their time to support student's learning.

Difficulties in becoming literate through a new language, dislike for reading especially school sanctioned texts, and also for writing paragraphs were common among the participants. Burroughs and Smargorinsky (2009) points to the nature of English literacy education and related literary texts, and the five paragraph essays as rigid and constrict opportunities for self-expression and inclusion of knowledge from the students' every day experiences. In this vein, they recommend a re-imagining of the secondary English curriculum and adolescent literacy so that they bear relevance to the learning and lives of students. That means rethinking multiliteracies, and considering the kinds of literate activities students engage in such as new media, hip hop, and different ways of using language(s), among others, and the best strategies to engage them in knowledge and

identity construction. Also, reflective schools and educators must engage in strategies that bring out the good in students (Freire, 2007). Such strategies are what Ladson-Billing (1999) posits are culturally responsive teaching strategies that nurture and support competence in home and school cultures, making what is taught at school more relevant to the lives of students by facilitating the transfer of what students learn in school to everyday situations.

The study found that experiences of discrimination by race, language, and social location (Dei & Rummens, 2012; Lewis, 2003) constricted learning and construction of positive identities among minoritized populations. Safe learning environments, intercultural education (Steinberg, 2010) for all students, and opportunities for minoritized students' classroom participation are recommended. In addition, School boards may encourage conversations and texts that address the roots of discrimination in schools and society, beyond the safe schools' act that deal with surface level dispute resolution and disciplining on issues related to bullying. Also, educators may need to interrogate their own positions on racism so as to scaffold understanding and respect for diversity to all students (Troyna & Hatcher in Pinar, 2008).

Supporting literacy engagement of immigrant students such as the African students require empowering classrooms, which Cummins (2009) contend depends on educator's creativity to provide opportunities for minoritized students to participate and attain schooled literacy. Cummins and Early (2011) recommended literacy expertise and literacy engagement frameworks to mitigate achievement of language learners. Literacy expertise depends on the interaction during instruction and support for language learning that emphasize meaning, language, and use. Meaning involves both mastery of content and critical literacy (e.g. Freire's reading the word and the world). The language focus aims at: (1) "promoting explicit knowledge of how the linguistic system operates, (2) developing a metalanguage (a language to understand other languages) to talk about it and (3) enabling students to become critically aware of how knowledge operates within

society” (p.32). [Teachers’ assumptions about students will either promote or limit], “opportunities for identity investment and cognitive engagement” (p.33). Teachers support literacy engagement (Cummins & Early, 2011) when:

- Students’ ability to understand and use academic language is supported through specific instructional strategies
- Their prior experience and current knowledge are activated,
- Their identities are affirmed, and
- Their knowledge of, and control over, language is extended across the curriculum (p.35).

When working with immigrant students, schools may foster interaction through encouragement of students to bring in their vast transnational and local experiences as prior knowledge and support them to acquire new knowledge. Also, they need to create opportunities for minoritized students to educate about themselves, their values and beliefs, and to demystify deficit conceptions about them by mainstream students. In addition, schools can, build understanding across diversity, increase student interaction and language use, and support learning and positive identity construction.

Obtaining a passing grade in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) was a major milestone for African students because it determined their progress and graduation from high school. This study recommends that educators, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders (e.g, parents and students themselves) question the OSSLT, asking, for example: *Who benefits from the test? What does the test mean for minoritized students? What could go wrong in literacy education if there was no OSSLT? What could go right?* These questions may offer a starting point towards ending inequalities in the education of minoritized students. As part of a transformative pedagogy, educators need to challenge OSSLT and support students to critical analyze the test. Until high stakes standardized assessment in Ontario is replaced with an evaluation system that does not disadvantage minoritized students, the OSSLT should, at the very least be revised to accommodate

diversity in learner experiences. Moreover, the test should not be administered to students who have not acquired academic language proficiency or readiness for such testing.

In light of accountability in the education system, educators can strive to balance curriculum demands with funds of knowledge of a diverse student population and look keenly at the following areas: Instructional and language support; address inequalities, isolation and discrimination; recognize learners shifting identities; rethink different pathways to the achievement of OSSD, and support minoritized students' aspirations, everyday literacy practices and artefacts as important in communication, academic engagement and building positive identities of students.

Contrasting views emerged about streaming of ELLs for purposes of instruction. While streaming offered ELLs a safe and supportive community, segregation of ELLs from their mainstream peers erased the opportunity to interact, listen, and learn from them, and to use language in different social settings outside EAL classrooms. Although the school provided many programs and activities to support all students, additional targeted support to students with gaps in schooling is recommended. Observations in one classroom revealed that some students required life skills support, which made teachers' work difficult. Also, it appeared challenging to establish the underlying issues in the lives of immigrant students. Krahn and Taylor (2005) and Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) found a myriad of issues such as poverty, racism, conflicting cultural values, isolation, language needs, gaps in education, poor health, and trauma, among others to complicate adaptation and learning. This study recommends that schools alone may not address multiple issues facing minoritized students and may broaden the existing collaboration with community agencies to address the unmet needs of immigrant youth.

The study's conclusions point to the importance of schools and educators to understand the influence on literacy learning and identity options for minoritized students by processes such as local and global inequalities, adaptation, and language challenges. In addition, instructional strategies, negotiating with the demands of a new curriculum, and

discrimination by language, race, and gender, among other forces, shape learning for CLD students. This knowledge may inform planning and instruction for minoritized students. The study highlighted challenges with literacy learning that may be rooted in forces external to the student such as effects of displacement, the political nature of EAL program and school literacy curriculum that traded learners' experiences with demands for accountability (Majhanovich, 2006).

7.6 Contributions from the Study

One of the key contributions of this study is to provide information and analyses of the experiences of students in Canada who have come from Africa. As demonstrated in the literature review, for example, the literacy learning opportunities, funds of knowledge, and literacy practices of these students is not well-known. This new knowledge can assist educators of African immigrant students as well as educators of other minoritized students. Thus perhaps the study's major contribution lies in its orientation that mapped minoritized students' funds of knowledge, interests, and aspirations as resources educators may draw upon. This perspective is a shift from previous studies that mainly highlighted challenges facing these students, and the limited cultural resources in schools to support a diverse student population. The study concluded that though the challenges were contextual and outside the students' control, the school's accountability model interpreted challenges as deficit on the part of the students who did not meet expectations within a given timeframe. The study also reveals unresolved tensions among students' aspirations and expectations of the school, a mismatch between students' knowledge, English skills and the grade level, and the educators beliefs about what minoritized students can achieve in the school system. Future collaborative studies with schools and community agencies may map funds of knowledge of minoritized students and implement these in planning responsive adaptation and instruction. A collaborative study with EAL teachers and ELLs to expand on mapping and implementing of the students funds of knowledge within the regular curriculum might shed light on the identity texts creation in a secondary school classroom with minoritized students.

To close the dissertation, I now include a poem I constructed from the words of Hongera, Mwangaza, Mwezi, Nyota, Salama and Shujaa, and I offer my thanks to these participants who have taught me so much.

I am proud of who I am
 Where I come from and why I came
 Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda
 I speak Amharic, Arabic, Luganda, Mashi, Somali, Swahili, Tigrinya
 My language says who I am and where I am from.
 Back in Africa we worked together, we supported each other
 [Family] photograph[s], gifts [of] necklace[s], special coffee maker
 Always with us, from country to country, mean everything

In Canada, it's different
 Only one language, all English
 I used to write poems, letters to my friends, songs
 In my language Arabic and Amharic
 In Canada, I don't write a lot
 I don't have the language to write a lot of things
 I used to speak, but now I don't speak
 I don't have words to explain
 I use my hand or show a picture on the internet

I have goals
 I don't give up easily
 I want to have a good education
 If well educated, you [I] have skills to do stuff
 I want to learn to speak English
 If I speak English well,
 I will find a job
 And do well in school

Literacy
 A big test, opinion test, communication
 When I am texting, I am writing a paragraph
 I am learning something, giving my opinion, writing what I think.
 When I draw, I am thinking and communicating
 At home I read interesting books, listen to music, hip hop, I watch TV
 At school I read and write whatever my teacher wants
 I started grade 12 and it's ESL. It's not like normal grade 12
 Just put me in a higher course and I work harder
 For now, I have to complete ESL
 To do mainstream courses, like Canadians

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS- ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 1111-2

Principal Investigator: Rachel Heydon

Student Name: Jane Wambui Gichuru

Title: *Literacy Learning and Identity Construction among African Immigrant Secondary School Students*

Expiry Date: September 2011 – August 31, 2013

Type: Ph.D. Thesis

Ethics Approval Date: December 8, 2011 Revision #:

Documents Reviewed & Approved: UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

2011-2012 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Alan Edmunds	Faculty of Education (Chair)
Dr. John Barnett	Faculty of Education
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	Faculty of Education
Dr. Wayne Martino	Faculty of Education
Dr. George Gadanidis	Faculty of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	Faculty of Education
Dr. Immaculate Namukasa	Faculty of Education
Dr. Kari Veblen	Faculty of Music
Dr. Ruth Wright	Faculty of Music
Dr. Kevin Watson	Faculty of Music
Dr. Jason Brown	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Research (<i>ex officio</i>)
Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Graduate Programs (<i>ex officio</i>)
Dr. Susan Rodger	Faculty of Education, UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (<i>ex officio</i>)

The Faculty of Education Karen Kueneman, Research Officer
Copy: Office of Research Ethics

Appendix 2: Letter of Information for Students

My name is Jane Gichuru and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research in “*literacy learning and identity construction among African immigrant secondary school students in south western Ontario*”, and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of literacy learning among African immigrant youth in Canadian classrooms in order to understand diverse students’ literacy learning needs, options available to them for meaning-making, and supports at the school for literacy learning.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in mapping activities to document your literacy activities at school and out-of-school, in Canada and in country of origin, and the importance of language used during these activities. Mapping activities will take about 30-60 minutes on the first day in your classroom or in a separate room in the school at a time mutually agreed upon with you and the researcher. Mapping will continue through the data collection period. The researcher will provide the themes of the map and meet with you once a week for about an hour at your school at a time suitable for you.

You will be asked to represent with aid of diagrams/photographs [*“what you did or do outside of school and at school, before and after immigration, language/s used, what you like about each site, and to link these activities on the map/diagram”*]. You will be asked to document your experiences as a learner in a new school, and ways schools and teachers support you.

In addition, you will be observed during your English language classes for about an hour, once a week for 2 months. You will also be asked to participate in two interviews (one at the beginning and the second at the end of the study) lasting

about 30 to 60 minutes each on your school experiences of literacy learning in a new country. The interviews will take place at your school or at a location and time mutually agreed upon between you and the researcher. Your interview will be audio taped and transcribed into written format. You will be provided with a copy of your own transcript to revise and you may delete or correct any part relating to your interview.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Your name will be coded for confidentiality and all collected information will be locked up in the researcher's filing cabinet. Electronic data will be saved in a password locked computer. After the study is completed and findings disseminated, data will be kept for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at XXX. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jane Gichuru at XXX or supervisor: Professor Rachel Heydon @ XXX.

[Signature]

Appendix 3: Letter of Information for Teachers

My name is Jane Gichuru and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research in “*literacy learning and identity construction among African immigrant secondary school students in south western Ontario*”, and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of literacy learning among African immigrant youth in Canadian classrooms in order to understand diverse students’ literacy learning needs, options available to them for meaning-making, and supports at the school for literacy learning.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in two interviews (one by email at the beginning includes a questionnaire and some research questions and may take about 1-2 hours of your time. The second interview will be in person at the end of the study lasting for 30 to 60 minutes) on your perception and experience with immigrant students’ literacy learning and identity construction in your classroom, and supports available/not available at your school to support diverse learners. Your interview will be audio taped and transcribed into written format. Interviews will take place in your school or at a mutually agreed upon location and time.

I will also observe your classroom for one to two hours, once a week, for two months. The focus will be on African immigrant students’ literacy learning. The researcher will take notes of interactions relevant to African immigrant students’ literacy learning for only those who have consented to participate in the study. You will be provided with a copy of your own transcript to revise and you may delete or correct any part relating to your interview.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Your name will be coded for confidentiality and all collected information will be locked up in the researcher's filing cabinet. Electronic data will be saved in a password locked computer. After the study is completed and findings disseminated, data will be kept for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your career. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at XXX. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jane Gichuru at XXX or supervisor: Professor Rachel Heydon @ XXX.

[Signature]

Appendix 4: Letter of Information for

My name is Jane Gichuru and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research in “*literacy learning and identity construction among African immigrant secondary school students in south western Ontario*”, and would like to invite you to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of literacy learning among African immigrant youth in Canadian classrooms in order to understand diverse students’ literacy learning needs, options available to them for meaning-making, and supports at the school for literacy learning.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to share your experiences on challenges, opportunities, learning needs, and ways immigrant youth’s social, emotional, and academic achievement are supported both at the school and community levels, and will be guided by the following are guiding questions:

“What have been your experiences working with immigrant and refugee students particularly those coming from Africa? What do you think are major challenges faced by immigrant students in their learning and what do you perceive would be alternatives to support them engage, participate, and utilize the learning opportunities available to them? In your role as liaison between home and school, and interaction with immigrant families, what strengths (including cultural resources and knowledge) do you think immigrant families have that may be of help to teachers who work with immigrant students, particularly those who are English language learners?”

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Your name will be coded for confidentiality and all collected information will be locked up in the researcher’s filing cabinet. Electronic data will be saved in a password protected computer. After the study is completed and findings disseminated, data will be kept for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at XXX. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jane Gichuru at XXX or supervisor: Professor Rachel Heydon @ XXX.

[Signature]

Appendix 5: Consent Form (student)

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I **consent** to my participation in this study

Name: (Please print)

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date:

Appendix 6: Consent Form (Parent/Guardian)

I have read the letter of information and had the nature of the study explained to me. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I **consent** to my daughter/son participation in this study.

Parent/guardian Name: (Please print)

Parent/guardian Signature

Date:

Name of student: (Please print)

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date:

Appendix 7: Consent Form (Teacher)

I have read the letter of information and had the nature of the study explained to me. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I **consent** to participate in this study.

Name: (Please print)

Signature:

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date:

Appendix 8: Consent Form (Settlement Worker)

I have read the letter of information and had the nature of the study explained to me. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I **consent** to participate in this study.

Name: (Please print)

Signature:

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date:

Appendix 9: Interview Guidelines with Student

Participants

I. Demographic information

1. Name of student:

2. Age:

3. Gender: (Please circle one) Male Female Other

4 (a) Year of immigration ----- Age at immigration: -----

--

- 4 (b) Immigration status: (Please check one) Permanent resident Refugee
Other
5. Country of origin: Other country/ies you have lived in:
6. Language/s spoken: -----, ----- . School language in home country-

7. Grade level in home country (Africa) before immigration: -----
9. Current grade level: (Please circle one) 9 10 11 12
10. How many years have you been at your current school?
11. How long have you/did you receive English as a second language (ESL)
support? ----
12. What level are you in ESL?

Semi-structured interviews: Interview guide questions/topics

II. Language & Literacy learning:

1. Tell me about what a typical day is like for you (from wake up to bed time)
2. Do you read and write in your home language/mother tongue?
3. Do you think your home language is important? If yes, how so. If no, why so?
4. What difficulties have you encountered if any, that relate to learning in a new language, or being in a new environment?
- 5 (a) what have been your experiences of speaking with an accent?
- 5(b) Do you think other students and teachers understand what you say?
(Circle one): Yes, No, Not sure
- 5(c) If no, what do you do to make other students and teachers understand what you say?
6. What are your experiences of literacy learning (reading, writing, speaking, viewing, representing, understanding your environment, etc.) as a new student from Africa?
7. Do you like to read? What kinds of things do you like to read?
8. What kinds of things do you like to write about?
9. Where do you get your ideas for writing?
10. Do you like to read and write different things at home than at school?
11. What kinds of reading/writing/drawing do you do with your family?
12. What kinds of reading/writing/drawing do you do with your friends?
13. Do you use the computer? What kinds of things do you do with the computer?
14. What kinds of things do you like to do/play?
15. Do you watch TV?
16. What are some of your favorite shows?

17. What are the literacy demands at school? (Activities involved in your learning at school to meet expectations, kinds of things you do at school on a day to day basis)

18. What support does your school offer for you to do well in your studies?

19(a) what are the literacy demands out-of-school? (Activities you do outside school, for example, at the park, library, community centers, after-school clubs, teams, home, etc. Examples of activities may include: learning a new game, sport, music, communicating with distant friends and family through email, face book,

texting, telephone, writing letters, etc.)

19(b) which language/s do you use during these activities?

20 (a) Do you find learning in Canada different from learning in your home country? Yes/No

20(b) If yes, how so? What is different? Let us think about:

- School subjects
- Teaching & learning materials (books, charts displayed on walls, use of familiar objects/artefacts, use of technology, e.g. computers, smart boards, etc)
- Teaching methods (style and methods teachers use to teach)
- Language/s used
- Classroom setup
- Teacher/s
- Home support
- Any other thoughts?

20(c) if similar, in what ways?

III. Identity

1. What comes to mind when you hear or read the word “identity”?

2. What are your experiences as an immigrant student in a Canadian school/classroom?

3. What are your experiences in an English language or mainstream classroom?

4. Have your experiences as an immigrant student influenced how you think about yourself?

(a) If yes, how so? (b) If no, why?

School –physical space

5(a) Think about one or two areas/spaces (physical spaces) for example, your classroom, the gymnasium, library, office, cafeteria, etc. at your school that are most important to you.

5(b) what makes those spaces important to you?

Artefacts and identity

6. What one item/thing in your home is the most valuable to you? One you would feel very sad if you lost it. The one you would save first if there was a fire. Examples of an artefact are:

Objects: such as a national dress, dictionary, bible, Quran, a piece of craft or artwork that carries meaning and memories for you. **Narratives:** stories of experience e.g., immigration, settlement, learning English as a second language (ESL). **Symbols:** e.g. the crucifix, national flag, etc. **Images:** e.g. family photographs, maps, etc.

Draw, write about, and/or bring a picture or photograph of your most valuable item to our next meeting

- (a) What is your valuable object?
- (b) Why is this object/item valuable to you?
- (c) What does it mean to you?
- (d) When did you get this item?
- (e) How often do you use or look at it?

IV: Additional information on identity and literacy learning

1. Is there anything else you would like to talk about your experiences as an immigrant student?
2. When you hear the word “literacy”, what does it mean to you?
3. What do you think about the word identity?
 - (a) What do you think of your identity as a learner of English or a student learning to be literate in English as an additional language?
 - (b) What comes to mind when you hear or see the acronym ESL/ELL?
 - (c) What do you think about your first language when you learn English?
 - (d) Do you sometimes use your home language for example when thinking about a project, or doing homework?

Activity 1: Mapping literacy practices/demands across sites

I asked participants to represent with aid of diagrams/photographs/maps [“what they did/do outside of school and at school, before/after immigration, language/s used, what they like about each site, and to link these activities on the map/diagram”. I asked the participants to draw places/sites (in home country and Canada) that are/were important to the, list their activities in those places, language/s, and technology used. They also identified what was similar or different.

Activity 2: Linking literacies across out-of-school literacy and school

I asked the African youth to think about occasions that were special or important to them at home/out-of-school and the literacy activities during such occasions. They also listed literacy activities at school. In the middle, they listed ideas about which home occasion they wrote about at school using school language.

Activity 3: Identity in the classroom community

To understand the concept of classroom as a community of learners and the extent to which the participants participated and belonged to this community, I talked to the students about the meaning of identity and community, and what this may mean in the classroom. I provided a diagram for participants to write about words that come to mind when they think of the words community and identity. Also, to write words which are common to both identity and community in the middle.

Appendix 10: Teacher Participant Guiding Interview Questions

The first part of the interview focuses on building rapport and answering questions that the teacher participant might have. It will be followed by questions to guide the interview:

Name: Gender:

How many years have you taught at this school?

How many total years have you spent as a secondary school teacher?

Grades you teach

What other grades have you taught?

Subjects you teach

Estimated number of total immigrant youth in your classes

Estimated number of immigrant youth in your classes who are ELL

What are some countries of origin of immigrant youth in your classes?

Instructional practices with ELLs

- What language and literacy instructional materials do you use in your classroom?
- How do you teach reading and writing skills and strategies to new immigrant students?
- To what extent do you incorporate immigrant students' out-of-school literacy practices? (Literate practices in the community, e.g., library, park, home, etc) in your teaching?
- What activities do you engage in to further your professional knowledge and skill in teaching immigrant students?
- What are your thoughts about youth and their literacy learning today?
- What are your thoughts around the use of cultural resources (artefacts/everyday objects) in schools today?
- What is your perception about "being literate" in the 21st century?
- Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your experience with immigrant students' literacy learning?

Appendix 11: Classroom Observations

Observation#: _____ Date: _____ Time/Period: _____ Classroom: _____ Teacher: _____ Lesson/Activity: _____ Student participant/s: _____ Number of students: _____ Number of adults in classroom: _____ Other background information: _____	
Description of activity and interactions & interactions	Comments on activities
Overall reflections:	

Curriculum Vitae

Name: **Wambui Gichuru**

- 2009-2013 The University of Western Ontario, London, ON
PhD Candidate, Educational Studies
- 2008 The University of Western Ontario, London, ON
Master of Education (M.Ed) Curriculum Studies
- 2003 Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Nairobi, Kenya
Post-graduate Diploma in Planning & Management of Development
Projects
- 1989 Bachelor of Education (B.Ed),
Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

Scholarships and awards:

- 2011-2012: Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)
2012-2013: Graduate Conference Travel Award

Publications

- Gichuru, J. (2012). The role of play in Early Literacy development. In J. Bainbridge & R. Heydon (Eds.), *Constructing meaning: Teaching the elementary language arts* (5th ed.) pp.195-198). Toronto: Thomson Nelson.
- Gadanidis, G., Gichuru, J., & Namukasa, I. (2011). "Oh no, Math!" Songs from an Online Math-for-Teachers Course. In T. Bastiaens & M. Ebner (Eds.), *Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2011* (pp. 943-950). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.