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# Use of visual representations and drawings in writing for arabic high school english language learners

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**USE OF VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND DRAWINGS IN WRITING FOR  
ARABIC HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

by

**IMAN ISMAIL**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

2012

**MAJOR: READING, LANGUAGE, AND  
LITERATURE**

Approved by:

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Advisor

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

To my daughter,  
Sara the passionate and to my husband  
Mohamad, the patient, and to all my family members, the supporters



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures.....	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	3
Writing and Power of English.....	3
Arabic High School English Language Learners' Population.....	5
Federal Laws and Regulations.....	9
Challenges in Teaching Writing to Arabic High School English Language Learners.....	12
Visual Images, Communication, and Writing.....	14
Problem Statement.....	19
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	22
Significance of the Study.....	23
Overview of the Study.....	25
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	28
Introduction.....	28
Personally Relevant Writing.....	31
Competing Discourses.....	34
Cultural Rituals and Exchanges.....	36
Cultural Rituals.....	36
Social Exchanges.....	38
Literacy as a Socio-Cultural Practice.....	42
Funds of Knowledge.....	44
Role of Teacher as a Mediator.....	45
Transactional Model.....	47

Semiotics.....	51
Multimodality and Multiliteracies.....	57
Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol.....	62
Summary.....	66
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>68</b>
Introduction.....	68
Research Design.....	69
The Role of Teacher Researcher.....	69
Case Study Research Protocol.....	70
Site Selection and Description of Participants.....	71
Setting.....	71
English Language Proficiency Testing (ELPA).....	72
Michigan’s ELPA Performance Levels.....	73
Description of Participants.....	74
Ayat.....	75
Hadi.....	75
Hikmat.....	76
Maha.....	76
Rawaa.....	77
Sael.....	77
Data Collection Methods.....	78
Purpose and Description.....	78
Description and Rationale of the Pre-questionnaire.....	80
Description and Rationale of Participant Observations.....	81
Description and Rationale of Field-notes.....	81
Condensed Field-notes.....	82
Expanded Field-notes.....	82
Description and Rationale of the Post-Questionnaire.....	83

Description and Rationale of Semi-Structured Interviews.....	83
Description and Rationale of Reflective Journal.....	85
Description and Rationale of Audio-taping .....	85
Description and Rationale of Physical Artifacts.....	85
Data Collection Procedures.....	86
Consent Approval.....	86
Rationale for the Selection of Materials.....	86
Instruction.....	87
Data Analysis.....	93
Initial Analysis.....	93
Intensive Analysis.....	93
Mini-Case Analysis.....	97
Cross-Case Analysis.....	97
Trustworthiness of the Case Study.....	97
Credibility.....	98
Triangulation .....	98
Persistent Observations.....	99
Member Checks.....	99
Peer Debriefing.....	100
Transferability .....	100
Dependability.....	100
Audit Trail.....	101
Confirmability.....	101
Meeting Ethical Behaviors.....	101
Summary.....	102
<b>CHAPTER 4:FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>103</b>
Introduction.....	103
Theme 1: Theme 1: Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals .....	104

Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Hadi’s Development from Drawing to Writing.....	107
Emotional State in Hadi’s Drawings.....	107
Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning.....	114
Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Hikmat’s Development from Drawing to Writing:	
Entree to the New Discourse in Drawing.....	120
Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning.....	120
Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Maha’s Development from Drawing to Writing.....	131
Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning.....	139
Theme 2: Perpetuation of Female Subordination.....	145
The Woman’s Position: “Long Haired Subservience”—A Detailed Account of Hadi’s	
and Sael’s Visual Discovery Discussion.....	147
The Woman’s Place: “Entertainment Storytelling Subservience”—A Detailed Account of	
Rawaa’s Development from Drawing to Writing.....	153
The Importance of Expressing Cultural Beliefs to Start Writing.....	153
Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning.....	167
Summary of Results.....	170
Theme 1: Theme 1: Cultural Identity Ties with Religious Rituals.....	170
Theme 2: Perpetuation of Female Subordination.....	171
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>173</b>
Overview.....	173
A Discussion of Results Pertaining to Research Questions.....	174
Question1: How did the Arabic high school (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct	
meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?.....	174
Question 2: In what ways did the Arabic high school (ELLs) use their cultural identity to	
spring board into writing?.....	177
Conclusions to the Discussion.....	179
Contributions and Expansion on Existing Literature Review.....	182
Contribution 1: Expanding the notion of accessing funds of knowledge to multimodal access	

of funds of knowledge.....	182
Contribution 2: Adapting district-mandated materials in ways to be more culturally responsive.....	184
<b>IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>185</b>
Introduction.....	185
Teachers Embracing Multimodality.....	186
Offering Professional Developments for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents.....	188
Offering Professional Developments for Administrators and Curriculum Specialists.....	189
Professional Development for Teachers.....	189
Offering Parent Workshops.....	190
Teacher Educators: Becoming Qualified in Meeting ELLs’ Needs.....	190
Internships.....	191
Strategies.....	191
Coursework with Theoretical and Practical Expectations in Multimodality.....	192
Teacher-research.....	192
Limitations.....	193
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>194</b>
Collaboration in Teacher Research.....	194
Assessing Professional Developments within School Districts.....	194
Reforming Educational Programs for Student Teachers.....	195
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>195</b>
Appendix A: Consent Letter.....	197
Appendix B: Assent Letter.....	201
Appendix C: Pre- Questionnaire on Use of Visual Images And Writing For Arabic High School.....	204
Appendix D: Post-Questionnaire.....	208
Appendix E: Interview Questions.....	210
Appendix F: Procedure of Using Picture Sorts.....	212
Appendix G: 4-Square Word Personalized.....	213

Appendix H: Visual Discovery.....214

Appendix I: Storyboard Template.....215

Appendix J: Storyboard In the Form of A Short Story Flow Chart.....216

References.....217

Abstract.....230

Autobiographical Statement.....232



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-Five ELPA Performance Levels.....	73
Table 2-Overview of the Eligibility of Students.....	74
Table 3-Sources of Data Collection and their Strengths and Weaknesses.....	79
Table 4-Procedures of Data Collection.....	88
Table 5- Intensive Analysis Chart.....	96

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1a: Hadi's Illustrations about Eid—The Garden and Cousin's House.....	109
Figure 1b: Hadi's Writing—The Garden and Cousin's House.....	109
Figure 2a: Hadi's Illustration—At the Shop.....	111
Figure 2b: Hadi's Writing—At the Shop.....	111
Figure 3a: Hadi's Illustration—Cleaning the House.....	112
Figure 3b: Hadi's Writing—Cleaning the House.....	112
Figure 4a: Hadi's Illustration—Uncle and the Gifts and At the Mosque.....	113
Figure 4b: Hadi's Writing—Uncle and the Gifts and At the Mosque.....	113
Figure 5a: Hadi's Illustration—Happy with Gift.....	114
Figure 5b: Hadi's Writing—Happy with Gift.....	114
Figure 6: Hadi's Written Piece on Eid.....	115
Figure 7a: Hikmat's Illustrations about Eid: Receiving a Gift and Giving a Flower.....	121
Figure 7b: Hikmat's Writing: Receiving a Gift and Giving a Flower .....	121
Figure 8 a: Hikmat's Illustration on Eid- Family Dinner.....	123
Figure 8 b: Hikmat's Writing on Eid- Family Dinner.....	123
Figure 9a: Hikmat's Illustrations on Eid- Praying in the Mosque.....	124
Figure 9b: Hikmat's Writing on Eid- Praying in the Mosque.....	124
Figure 10 a: Hikmat's Illustrations on Eid- Playing with Friends.....	125
Figure 10 b: Hikmat's Writing on Eid- Playing with Friends.....	125
Figure 11a: Hikmat's Illustrations on Eid- saying Goodbye.....	126
Figure 11b: Hikmat's Writing on Eid- saying Goodbye.....	126
Figure 12: Hikmat's Written Piece on EidEl Atha (AlAdha).....	127
Figure 13 a: Maha's Illustrations on Eid- Visiting Her Sister.....	132
Figure 13 b: Maha's Writing on Eid- Visiting Her Sister.....	132
Figure 14a: Maha's Illustrations on Eid-Preparing for Eid Feast.....	133
Figure 14 b: Maha's Writing on Eid-Preparing for Eid Feast.....	133

Figure 15 a: Maha’s Illustrations on Eid-Praying.....	134
Figure 15b: Maha’s Writing on Eid-Praying.....	134
Figure 16 a: Maha’s Illustrations on Eid- Colorful Children’s Fair.....	135
Figure 16 b: Maha’s Writing on Eid- Colorful Children’s Fair.....	135
Figure 17 a: Maha’s Illustrations on Eid- Money as a Gift.....	136
Figure 17 b: Maha’s Writing on Eid- Money as a Gift.....	136
Figure 18: Maha’s Written Piece on “My Best Holiday Celebration”.....	138
Figure 19: Ayat’s Written Piece on “The Perfect Day in My Life”.....	143
Figure 20: Rawaa’s Short Story Flow Chart on “A Thousand and One Nights”- Castle Scenery.....	155
Figure 21: Rawaa’s Short Story Flow Chart on “A Thousand and One Nights” – Theatre Scenery.....	156
Figure 22: Rawaa’s Short Story Flow Chart on “A Thousand and One Nights”-Storytelling Scenery.....	157
Figure 23: Rawaa’s Short Story Flow Chart on “A Thousand and One Nights”- Happiness Scenery.....	158
Figure 24: Rawaa’s Writing in the Short Story Flow Chart on “A Thousand and One Nights”.....	160
Figure 25: Rawaa’s Collage on “A Thousand and One Nights”.....	162
Figure 26: Rawaa’s Written Piece on “A Thousand and One Nights”.....	165

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Written language can be viewed as the language of power within any system because it helps individuals express their voices and proclaim their ideas. However, the struggle between social influences and academic demands makes writing for Arabic English Language Learners an intricate task. Academic writing is a challenging and complex process especially for Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs). For Arabic students who have newly immigrated to the United States, academic writing can be a daunting task. These English Language Learners who have experienced a past filled with ravages of war, interruptions in schooling, and a move to a new country face academic and social unrest that can impact their achievement in today's schools. In particular, the expectation that all students will engage in English in the classroom can be intimidating. Representing ideas pictorially can help Arabic high school ELLs overcome their language barriers and support their academic writing. Furthermore, expanding the use of available forms of expression may affirm these students' unique cultural mind-sets and individuality.

Writing has always been considered an avenue of social interaction in conveying ideas and a means of personal expression in articulating one's thoughts. Yet, writing is a complicated and challenging task that requires knowledge of semantics (vocabulary) and syntax (grammatical patterns) of a language. Teaching writing is a comprehensive process that does not occur by imposing one size fits all curricular mandates (Tooley, 2009). Experiencing progress in writing skills takes time and necessitates adopting pedagogical approaches that consider different needs of diverse student body population, where each student brings unique personal, linguistic, and cultural referents to the learning environment. Despite its demanding requirements, writing is a

valuable experience since it incorporates development of indispensable skills needed for academic success and social recognition within a socio-cultural context. As Arabic high school English language learners (ELLs) gain knowledge to write and write to become skilled, writing experiences may vary depending on educational, personal, and cultural background experiences that are represented in their writing. These learners encounter obstacles in writing in English as a result of learning English in educational contexts that differ from their native Arabic speaking cultures (Dehart, 2008).

This qualitative case study examined how Arabic high school ELLs revealed their cultural identity and constructed meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employed them to spring board into writing. The research is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory; Moll's, Amanti's, Neff's, & Gonzalez's (1992) notion of funds of knowledge; Rosenblatt's (1938, 1976) transactional theory; and Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The semiotics approach in addition to multiliteracies and multimodality methodologies are also reflected on. Through direct observations, field notes, audio taping, reflective journals, questionnaires, interviews, and students' artifacts, I examined and analyzed patterns and cultural themes and provided thick and rich description to develop the findings. The concluding report explores the results of this case study and discusses the impact of using visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creations in revealing cultural identity and constructing meaning when used as catalysts to writing making clear links between the research findings and their connection to literature.

## **Background of the Study**

### **Writing and the Power of English**

English is an internationally privileged language in comparison with other languages since it has become the language of negotiation, business, communication, and technology (Al-Saidat, 2010). Globally, English writing seems to have been vastly widespread in the last two decades (Leki, 2001). Pennycook (1999) reflects on “the worldliness of English,” (p. 36) and argues about the cultural and political ramifications of the expansion of English across the world. Publishing globally in English mirrors power and hidden political agendas embedded to sustain the status-quo of those in dominant culture. Reflecting on Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of cultural capital, Pennycook (1999) argues what is internationally published in English represents those that already have the privilege of power. It is through discourse of a certain culture that power may function in the social lives of those whose English is not native language; this results in perpetuating the vicious cycle of social inequality and differences. Teaching English to speakers of other languages, as in the case of Arabic high school ELLs, should involve critical pedagogies that consider social and political interrelationships. Teaching language extends the use of linguistics to incorporate questioning power, inequality, and struggle to become socially recognized.

Learning English offers individuals the opportunity to take a role in today’s high-tech world and provides better avenues for future careers. Pennycook (1994) also suggests the “deconstruction of the whole notion of ‘English’ (p. 36). Teaching English should be viewed as transcending the mere acquisition of linguistic skills to involve knowledge of cultural practices that shape “a whole system of power/knowledge relationships which produce very particular understandings of English and English language teaching” (p. 36). He argues against political

agendas embedded within the notion of “the worldliness of English” (p. 36) aiming at teaching of English as the language of power. Pennycook further suggests understanding the function English language culturally, socially, and politically plays across the globe. For Arabic high school ELLs, teaching English should transcend the traditional ways of teaching mere mechanical skills of language. Rather, reflecting on the role English literacy acquisition could have in becoming socially recognized and accepted becomes indispensable.

Culturally engaging and relevant practices should create opportunities for learning skills of English, as well as open up avenues for exploring the positions of Arabic high school ELLs as they engage with critical literacy practices. The link between learning English as a skill and the positioning of power connects to the theoretical work of Freire (1970) who suggested that shifting social positions involve critically examining an individual’s everyday practices, such as learning of English. Pennycook (1999) emphasizes adopting school curricula that aim in their teaching practices to boost critical awareness. Critical awareness implies questioning issues of power and social inequalities like socio-economic status, race, class, gender. Critical literacy thus involves helping individuals develop the ability to read and critique texts in order to better understand whose knowledge is being privileged. Overall, critical pedagogy implies helping learners, such as Arabic high school ELLs, develop understanding of how language plays a role in their positioning in the society.

Pennycook (1999) argues pedagogical teaching happens when learners understand the reality of social context in which they are interacting in while learning English. Encouraging Arabic high school ELLs, for instance, to reflect on their own cultural and historical background experiences through writing becomes crucial; it enables them to see how they are positioned as

non-native speakers and how they may start playing roles in making certain that their culture is acknowledged.

While Fairclough (1992) promoted the idea of critical language awareness, Freire (1970) developed the concept of “conscientization” to allow individuals to develop critical awareness of reality around them, of use of language within a cultural context, and the ways they are positioned. Gee (1994) believes “English teachers stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time” (p. 190). This perspective is grounded in recognizing the function of literacy teaching in the U.S. (Pennycook, 1999). Living in the context of the global power of English language necessitates understanding how teaching English to ELLs is being accomplished.

With the increase in globalization and the variety of discourses in which teaching English becomes intricately associated with, a succession of challenges arise particularly when teaching writing. Some of the challenges include: cultural clashes between discourses, mandates of standardized testing, and the discount of ELLs’ funds of knowledge. In particular, the expectation that all students will engage in English in the classroom can be particularly daunting. Because of these types of Discourses, as an ELL teacher, I wondered about the educational, cultural, and political aspects related to teaching academic writing in English.

### **Arabic High School English Language Learners’ Population**

The United States school system includes Arab students from more than 20 different countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa (Wendy, 1999). Burt, Peyton, & Adams (2003) believe there are multiple influences that impact these learners’ acquisition of English literacy and the growth they show in English writing. These involve the level of literacy in the first and second language, formal schooling experiences, and the structure and writing system of



the native language. Arabic ELLs come from different cultural backgrounds and have a wide disparity in experiences with literacy in their first language (Burt et al., 2003). Some of the more devastating influences in the English Language Learners' primary culture which result in a limited level of literacy in the native language include hard socioeconomic conditions, war, or genocide. Similar to non-literate learners, they may have stopped attending school at a certain age because of economic circumstances or war and political and religious oppressions, as is the case with some Lebanese immigrants in the last two decades.

In addition to the cultural factors which affect ELLs, Huntley (1992) states the level or status of literacy acquisition in the first language also referred to as *L1* impacts English literacy development and should be addressed when teaching ELLs: pre-literate, non-literate, semiliterate, non-Roman alphabet literate and Roman alphabet literate. On one hand, there is a group of pre-literate Arabic high school ELLs. They are learners who arrive from cultures where exposure to literacy is scarce in daily life since language is not written or is still in the process of being developed. Preliterate ELLs will not have had experienced any encounter with written language. They need sufficient time and support to learn English (Strucker, 2002).

There is another group of Arabic high school ELLs who are non-literate. Some of the ELLs who fall in this group include refugees who were hidden for fear of war or genocide and those from Middle Eastern countries such as Yemen and Iraq. Other learners arrive from cultures where there has been literacy, but they have little or no access to literacy instruction because of certain cultural restraints due to their gender or socioeconomic class (Burt et al., 2003). In rural areas for example, Yemeni conservative families believe that females should not go to schools or that they should quit attending school once they reach puberty age. According to the IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis Service of the UN Office For the Coordination

(2007), it is culturally preferred that young girls stay at home and help their mothers raise their little siblings or help in household chores.

Interrupted schooling because of culturally embedded conservative beliefs, war, or poverty may be the factors of limiting educational opportunities for these ELLs. Although those non-literate learners may have experienced use of written language and may have developed sense of awareness about the importance of having literacy, they may be reluctant to reveal their inadequate literacy background in class (Burt et al., 2003). Teaching them may require slow progression of teaching basic literacy skills. These learners may need more time to process information and acquire skills needed for using literacy.

There are also some Arabic high schools ELLs who are referred to as non-Roman alphabet literate learners. They are learners who read in Arabic, a language that uses a non-Roman alphabet, but that is still phonetically based (Burt et al., 2003). Although these learners would have had privilege of being exposed to reading with the Arabic alphabet, they encounter difficulties in finding words in the dictionary and want sufficient time to internalize written texts given in class because the writing system in their primary language varies from that of English. Another difficulty is the directionality of Arabic language versus the English language. The Arabic alphabet is read right to left and in the preliminary stages; this often creates challenge for Arabic students who are learning to read and write in English.

Building on reading and writing skills in Arabic as a primary language may enable Arabic high school non-Roman alphabet learners to transfer these literacy skills when acquiring English as a second language (Burt et al., 2003). It is only through providing support, explicit instruction, and mediation that learning can occur (Vygotsky, 1978). Non-Roman alphabet learners already have awareness that writing is a symbolic portrayal of speech (Strucker, 2002).

Offering gradual instruction in the sound-to-symbol association of written English may help these learners start experiencing emergent writing development. They need to understand that there is not a one-to-one relationship between letters and sound (Burt et al., 2003). For instance, the pronunciation of some letters varies based on the letters and sounds that follow (e.g., *c* in cereal and carousel). At other instances, silent letters in English such as /g/ and /h/ as in /light/must be learned too. Learning the various pronunciations of vowels also becomes a challenge for Arabic high school non- Roman alphabet learners.

There are some Arabic high school ELLs who are completely educated in a language written in a Roman alphabetic writing such as French and Spanish (Burt et al., 2003). These Roman alphabet literate learners would have previously experienced reading literacy in their first language (L1). They are able to read and write from left to right and would have been already familiar with letters. However, Arabic high school ELLs Roman alphabet learners still need instruction in letter-to-sound association even though they have some experience with the language (Burt et al., 2003). Roman alphabet learners need to develop an awareness of the irregularities in English sound-letter correspondence, recognizing that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between sound and letter in English (Hilferty, 1996; Strucker, 2002).

Preliterate, non-literate, semiliterate, non-Roman alphabet and Roman alphabet high school English Language Learners may experience frustration and anxiety while they are acquiring English literacy; however with assistance, the task can be accomplished (Burt et al., 2003). The main factors affecting English literacy acquisition are instructional and cultural support, previous exposure to literacy, and literacy in the primary language. For Arabic high school ELLs, acquiring English remains a difficult task; yet, “learning to write and writing to

learning English becomes quite indispensable in the new socio-contextual setting” (Tooley, 2009, p. 4).

### ***Federal Laws and Regulations***

Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, also referred to as the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, was established to meet the needs of educationally underprivileged non-English speaking students (Faltis & Areas, 1993). Subsequently, federal law has started mandating laws to protect the population of English learners from bias. On one hand, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 has affirmed that any educational institute is prohibited from depriving English learners from attaining equal opportunity in overcoming their language barriers. NCLB (2002) has stated that all students are required to meet proficiency level in reading and math at grade level by 2014 (Harr, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Teaching Arabic high school English language learners, or those identified with limited English proficiency has become a debated topic that is thoroughly explored in educational agendas.

Under the mandates of NCLB of 2002, teaching Arabic high school ELLs, at the secondary level, has become a challenge. Many educators have opposed the out of reach demands that this program imposed upon Arabic high school ELLs. Proponents of NCLB (2002) have claimed that the new reform movement aims at enhancing educational performance of ELLs (Harr, 2008; Wright, 2006); however, this reform agenda fails to take into account the social or cultural ramifications of academic expectations. Teachers have argued that “test-preparation-based curriculum” has become a priority over meeting the learners’ linguistic and educational needs (Wright, 2006, p. 26). Placing emphasis on standardized testing in educational settings has created new educational difficulties for teachers (Carr, 2002). Wright (2006) has

argued that NCLB "defies logic, it's self- contradictory, and it sets expectations that are impossible to attain" (p. 22).

One of the federal mandates of NCLB (2002) has required schools to show annual growth on students' academic performance, which is known as adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Shenkman, 2008). AYP is the measure used to assess the academic achievement of schools under NCLB. However, meeting AYP mandates testing the entire population of students including subgroups, mainly students provided with special services and students identified with limited English proficiency or known as English Language Learners. Success of each school in meeting AYP is determined by the performance of each of the subgroups. Meeting accountability in terms of performance for ELLs has compelled school districts to adopt new programs. Administrators, principals, and teachers have realized that ELLs need to score proficient on standardized testing.

Although state mandated tests have always measured students' actual performance, they have not succeeded in measuring daily performance or in assessing the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Mandated standardized tests have failed to recognize knowledge Arabic high school ELLs may have based on their own cultural and linguistic background experiences. Yet, policy makers persist on placing emphasis on standardized testing where data are effortlessly composed and presented to the public in frequently deceptive ways (Eisner, 2002). Federal and state mandates limit opportunities for Arabic high school ELLs to represent their meaning making process through a variety of written and visual techniques. Instead of using a variety of means for representing knowledge, school districts often turn to scripted writing program or limited curricula where Arabic high school ELLs do not have opportunities to express their experiences and make connections between their writing and real world

experiences. Scripted writing curricula in school districts have always disregarded looking at integrating visual images as new developmental stances toward teaching (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Meeting the diverse needs of Arabic high school ELLs has become a challenge for educators. Hard socio-economic circumstances and political oppression have been the primary causes behind the recent flow of refugee non-English speaking immigrants into the United States (Constantino & Lavadenz, 1993; Faltis & Arias, 1993). Adolescents with limited English proficiency form a big portion of the new refugee population (De La Rosa & Maw, 1990). They are the “newcomers” who enter the American schooling system with both limited English proficiency and lack of sufficient literacy experiences in their native language (Freidlander, 1991, p.5; Minicucci & Olsen, 1992). Adolescent ELLs are from rural, poor, or war distressed areas of the world (Minicucci & Olsen, 1992). Often despite little formal schooling in their native country, ELL newcomers are required to take standardized tests in their second year of attending the American school system. Regardless of mandates subjecting students to testing after their second year in an American school, Cummins (1981a) believes two years is not a sufficient amount of time for students to acquire proficiency in the language. ELLs need mainly 5-7 school years, to acquire language skills and develop strategies required to attain academic proficiency in their second language. Meeting proficiency in acquiring academic language skills can extend from one to five years. Cummins (1981a) argues that ELLs need from seven to 10 years to achieve proficiency in acquiring English as a second language. Testing ELL newcomers in their second year of enrollment in the American school system has created challenges for school districts in helping these learners make 10% progress each year on standardized testing and meet AYP. Considering new pedagogical practices that aim at helping ELLs experience

academic success becomes crucial. Adopting effective strategies that enable these learners to articulate their thoughts, express their cultural variations, and develop ideas without facing language barriers may be beneficial. Through the infusion of visual representations and drawings as springboard to writing, ELLs may find an outlet to voice out their expressions.

### ***Challenges in Writing for Arabic High School English Language Learners***

As individuals write, they have to represent their understanding through symbolic representations. Alphabetical systems vary across languages. Arabic English language learners are immersed in academic settings where their home language and the language used in an academic setting clash. Communication and understanding the “discourse” of the classroom environment become a challenge (Gee, 1999, p. 21). Gee (1999) explains that “discourse”(p. 21) is a means of incorporating language or “discourse” (p.26), actions, social beliefs, ways of thinking, and using different ways of signs and tools to get socially recognized. Gee (1999) believes that a social capital is gained when one is able to adapt to various discourses. He further explains that social capital involves learning to use particular language and behaviors of a particular social setting. Although individuals have various ways of presenting one’s self, there are ways of being in a classroom environment that are more recognized and rewarded than others. Tienda (1988) argues that “culturally supportive programs” (p. 41) can help minority students, mainly ELLs capitalize on their own personal and cultural differences.

Diaz-Rico (2004) argues for acknowledging the discourses and the unique voices that ELLs bring to the academic setting. Providing Arabic high school ELLs with the opportunity to participate, even incidentally in the early stages of acquiring English, in meaningful classroom discourse practices is helpful. Gaining access to different types of conversations that involve use of mainstream language in learning communities offer Arabic high school ELLs entrée to the

discourse of others and the cultural norms needed to become socially accepted and involved in community life. A classroom practice may focus more on opportunities that aid in creating active language users than the mere development of individuals' knowledge and motivation.

The academic "discourse" in today's classroom often focuses on mastering mechanical learning of reading and writing skills (Gee, 1999, p.21). For many students who are learning English as an additional language, academic mandates, such as No Child Left Behind [NCLB], (2002), place attention on representing proficiency through tests. Proficiency on standardized testing often occurs at the expense of other assessment techniques. These tests often privilege particular perspectives of learning and fail to address the wide knowledge students may have from social and cultural experiences. Dewey (1938) argues that education should be grounded in authentic experiences that encourage creativity. It becomes crucial to acknowledge students' prior experiences, which are often shaped by cultural and personal circumstances, and build upon them to make learning a genuine experience. Creativity and collaboration become valued, even if they are not directly assessed on a test (Dewey, 1938).

Just as students' experiences are often discounted in classroom environments, visual interactions in a cultural environment are also discounted. Although standardized tests frequently focus on interactions through print, students' interactions in the world often represent visual data. Through television, video games, and the Internet, individuals are not only exposed to cultural references, but they are also provided with the opportunity to see different forms of literacy (Tooley, 2009). Multiple sign systems, which are often used simultaneously, demonstrate to students that print language is only one component of their complex meaning making processes (Berghoff, 1998; Berghoff, Parr, & Borgman, 2003; Eisner, 2002; Siegel, 2006; Whitin, 2005). Within a highly visual society, teachers must integrate new literacy



opportunities in the classroom (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2000; New London Group, 1996). Although educators are often assessed using standardized test scores from their students, these tests must be only one aspect of evaluating and reflecting on students' knowledge. Diverse ways of using and interacting with language can support English language learners in accessing the academic curriculum as well as gain cultural and social knowledge and experience to interact in an environment outside of the classroom.

### **Visual Images, Communication, and Writing**

The use of visual images (drawing, pictures, storyboards, artistic artifacts) positively impacts student achievement, mainly in writing (Andrzejczak, Tranin, & Poldberg, 2005; Berghoff et al., 2003; Cowan & Albers, 2006; Dyson, 1993; Eisner, 2002; Graves, 1994; Olshansky, 2003; Siegel, 1995 & 2006; Smagorinsky, 2001; Zoss, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell, 2007; Whitin, 2002 & 2005). Berghoff et al. (2003) and Eisner (2002) believe all students can benefit from arts-infused curriculum. Berghoff et al. (2003) argue that accountability and standardized testing in addition to seeking the correct answer in the form of multiple-choice tests have eliminated possibilities for generating individual interpretations of expressing ideas. Through use of art (drawing and visual representations), students can experience quality of "thirdness" (Berghoff et al., 2003, p. 355): a kind of meaning-making that allows learners to come up with possible interpretations based on both personally constructed meanings and other socially shared cultural experiences via use of visual representations (Berghoff et al., 2003). Using drawing and symbolic illustrations to demonstrate writing reflects on the possible experience of using art as a communication system (Berghoff et al., 2003). Students need to create aesthetic artifacts via sketching and pictorial representations that reflect on significant cultural and personal issues (Berghoff, 2003).

Providing Arabic high school ELLs opportunity to experience use of drawing and visual representations as communication systems may be beneficial. These learners encounter cultural clashes between their primary discourse and the academic discourse of the American school setting because of their linguistic and cultural variations. They are learners who need to be provided with “culturally supportive curriculum” that helps them capitalize on their own personal and cultural experiences (Tienda, 1988, p. 41). Using drawing and visual depictions as learning tools to writing may encourage Arabic high school ELLs express themselves freely regardless of their limited access to the academic “secondary” discourse of the mainstream culture (Gee, 1996, p. 143). These learners can build on their prior knowledge and refer to their cultural background experiences while creating their own visual representations. As Berghoff et al., (2003) state, "art transcends limitations of students whose language and cultural backgrounds are outside mainstream beliefs and expand boundaries of students whose learning styles do not fit with the classroom discourse" (p. 357).

Siegel (1995) also criticizes the American school system that mainly focuses on the "verbocentric" philosophy, which considers language as the mere means of communication (p. 457). Siegel (1995) argues that there is more to learning than words and that students should be provided with ample opportunities to learn through different modes of representations- visual arts, dance, music, and drama. By using visual representations, Siegel (1995) has shown how transmediation gets its generative potential. According to Siegel (1995), transmediation involves translating expression from one sign system (language) to another (pictorial representations). Through visual representations, learners have been able to invent new ideas and articulate them without experiencing language frustration. Yet, these pictorial creations are often constructed from "conventions" (Siegel, 1995, p. 463). The socially accepted set of norms is often drawn

from the learners' cultural background experiences, as depicted through use of recognizable images (hearts and arrows) in their drawing (Siegel, 1995).

Representing ideas pictorially may help Arabic high school ELLs overcome their language barriers when it comes to writing. These learners may use different kinds of cultural conventions to create a picture or a visual image that represents unique individual ideas. Visual representations and drawing become a "metaphor" (Siegel, 1995, p. 468) for expressing ELLs' thoughts and cultural mind-sets. Siegel (1995) revealed how learners who created their own metaphors were perceived as "at risk" by their teachers prior to the sketching activity (p. 468). This perception emerged as a result of the learners' low achievement on the cloze procedure activities that characterized classroom instruction. By creating their own metaphors, Arabic high school ELLs may transcend language difficulties and experience exploration and creativity in learning. Creativity in visual images may encourage these learners to launch into writing and elaborate on their own artistic representations.

Dyson (1993) reflects on the importance of creating a "permeable curriculum" (pp. 28-34). It is a curriculum that recognizes children's social world and cultural resources and allows them to connect writing to their lives. She (1993) shows the interrelationship between oral language, drawing, and writing. Through drawing, children were able to illuminate on their own social surroundings and cultural background experiences. Children were provided with the opportunity to discover and make use of the effectiveness of visual representations as tools of social intermediation (Dyson, 1993).

According to Zoss et al. (2007), use of visuals helps writers in experiencing the significant use of non-verbal symbolic ways in reflecting on their lives. Using a mask-making masterpiece, students responded via writing by expressing novel ideas about what they read.

Cowen and Albers (2006) also reflected on how the use of visual imagery (mask making) as a representational mode promotes students' written language and higher levels of thinking. By creating their masks, students were able to generate a representation of what they sensed in their readings, but could not articulate or understand in verbal responses (Cowen & Albers, 2006). Art helps learners to visualize things in their heads and this generates ideas for writing (Cowen & Albers, 2006). Mask making and the creation of artifacts may be used as engaging storyboards to teaching writing for Arabic high school ELLs. These learners may feel safe in expressing their feelings about their personal experiences, cultural clashes, and the academic struggles encountered in the American schooling system via the production of their own symbolic representations. Mask making may offer Arabic high school ELLs a space to voice out their concerns about sensitive significant issues, mainly race, gender, and ethnicity and reflect on the social practices of the new culture. Through production of artistic pieces, Arabic ELLs may start identifying their identities, voices, and beliefs in the new culture.

Through the Picturing Writing program, Olshansky (2003) encourages students to craft artistic pieces and use them as depictions to writing. Incorporating symbolic illustrations into the writing process via the use of collages made by students' painting to picture a story was effective. Use of hands-on through cutting and pasting collage images inspired students to explore their own stories. The artistic pieces had become representational tools of students' thoughts and means of verbal articulation (Olshansky, 1997). Similar to Olshansky (2003), Andrzejak's et al. study (2005) reveals the effectiveness of integrating art into writing. Reversing the order of art creation and having students produce an artistic piece prior to writing have resulted in students writing in a "...rich metaphoric language and sensory detail through the child's engagement with their images that exists both in paint and thought" (Andrzejak et al.,

2005, p.14). Providing Arabic high school ELLs the opportunity to be engaged in creating handcrafted colored images on paper textures of their own choice may be a powerful technique. Making their own images within the writing process may aid Arabic high school ELLs in expanding on their own cultural materials and personal experiences. Collage pieces, for instance, may be used as communication tools to help these learners develop their own stories prior to writing.

Vygotsky (1978) argues drawing is a graphic representation of speech that occurs in the preliminary phases in the natural development of written language. Writing is a skill that should be “relevant to life” (p. 118). He believes by using symbolism, mainly drawing, children can express themselves and experience development in writing. Paralleling Vygotsky (1978), Graves (1994) viewed drawing as an inherent part of writing development. He elaborates that drawing is a preparatory stage for writing to occur since it helps children develop ideas prior to writing. Arabic high school ELLs’ writing programs need to be founded on the students’ diverse cultural experiences; and this population of student body comes with a variety of cultural resources that need to be valued in the classroom. Recognizing Arabic high school ELLs’ cultural identities may boost their feeling of pride and ownership in the new learning setting. It provides them with the feeling that every learner has something to share and reflect on in the new culture regardless of language differences and cultural variations.

Whitin (2002) illuminates how using sketch-to-stretch encourages students to articulate their views on the sketches by writing briefly about them. At some times, both students and the teacher succeeded in having a written conversation about their interpretations of the story in their journals. Students have shown a variety of written responses that mirrored their sketches. When learners’ prior knowledge experiences and cultural referents were acknowledged within the

classroom setting, the variations in responses were generated (Whitin, 2002). Smagorinsky (2001) argues that learners' constructions of meaning are usually culturally mediated depending on the learners, the text, and the social context of the learning process itself. Engaging Arabic high school ELLs in learning experiences that integrate visual representations may intensify their potential to produce ideas for writing. When Arabic high school ELLs become interested in the learning process via use of learning experiences such as sketch-to-stretch, they may be able to communicate their ideas in non-verbal ways prior to writing. These ideas are often easily expressed since they are based on real personal and social background experiences.

Berghoff et al., (2003); Cowan & Albers (2006); Dyson (1993); Eisner (2002); Graves (1994); Olshansky (2003), Siegel (1995; 2006); Smagorinsky (2001); Zoss et al. (2007); and Whitin (2002, 2005) reflect on the effectiveness of integrating visual images into writing and how their infusion into writing process acknowledges learners' diverse personal and cultural referents. Siegel (2006) proposes literacy to be multimodal, consisting of stretching symbolic representations via drawing. Infusing symbolic representations may aid Arabic high school ELLs in experiencing how writing becomes relevant to their lives. This may help these learners to start viewing school experience as a "rewarding" and "hospitable" experience (Smagorinsky, 2001, p.139).

### **Problem Statement**

Expressing ideas visually and graphically may help Arabic high school ELLs conquer their language obstacles in addition to supporting academic writing. Concurrently, developing the use of accessible means of expression may acknowledge these students' different cultural dispositions and individuality. Siegel (1995) argues "verbocentrism", reliance on language as the only means of communication, has resulted in ignoring the presence of various ways of

knowing such as visual arts, dance, and music (p. 457). This “verbocentric” philosophy in classrooms fails to consider the complexities of thinking and learning that occur in an individual’s meaning making process (Siegel, 1995, p. 1457). With opportunities to express themselves only through rigorous and scripted writing programs, Arabic high school ELLs cannot adequately represent their knowledge of writing. In order to understand the population of Arabic high school ELLs and their progression in the school system, it is important to understand the mandates that have shaped their educational experiences. Under the mandates of NCLB (2002), teaching to write effectively has become a real challenge. Many high school teachers lack the knowledge or professional development required to help them incorporate effective teaching practices, such as integrating visual representations into writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The growth of the Arabic ELLs’ population is of particular relevance, mainly in the last two decades. According to Ovando, Combs, and Collier (2006), ELLs are not native to English; yet they are in the course of acquiring English as a second language. While teachers refer to students learning English as ELLs, policy makers and the federal government identify them as Limited English proficient students (LEPs) (Garcia, 2009). Viewing ELLs as students with limited proficiency necessitates reflecting on the verbal deficiency perspective.

Between the era of 1970s and 1980s, it was perceived that students lacking skills in using Standard English were considered verbally deficient (Otto, 2006). Bernstein (1971), Bereiter and Englemann (1966), and Labov (1979) conducted different researches to examine language variations between children of different social groups with various ethnicities and different socio-economic statuses. Bernstein (1971) and Bereiter and Englemann (1966) studies revealed disparities in linguistic codes used by children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds versus those from average social class income families in school and out-of-school social

surroundings. A verbal deficit perspective was adopted where teaching practices became grounded in the assumption that academic performance is closely associated with language use (Otto, 2006). It was believed that low socio-economic background is the main cause of a verbal deficiency needed for academic success. However, Labov's (1979) studies on investigating social dialects of economically disadvantaged African American children in-school and out-of-school defied the verbal-deficit theory. Labov's research ascertained the belief that Black English was a separate entity of language system and that verbal variations are not verbal deficits.

Acknowledging the influence of social surrounding and cultural background in acquiring a language was highlighted in the era of 1980s by ethnographic research studies (Otto, 2006). These studies are the basis of considering linguistic variety where the focus on participant observation within certain cultural milieu setting reveals the ways individuals interact. Although verbal deficit theory has been proven to be unacceptable, there is still a concern in referring to ELLs as students with limited proficiency. Academic failure of ELLs resulting from lack of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) has been mistakenly associated with low cognitive proficiency rather than unfortunate schooling experiences (Edelsky, 1990; Edelsky, Hudelson, Altwerger, Flores, Barkin, & Jilbert, 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986).

The percentage of ELLs attending the U.S. School system reached 84% whereas the overall K-12 student body increased by merely 10% during the same period of time (Walqui, 2006). Vast in linguistic diversity has encouraged researchers to investigate the matter of meeting the needs of ELLs in the classroom and further explore its implications in the educational field (Constantino & Lavadenz, 1993; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Faltis & Arias, 1993; Henze & Lucas, 1993; Krashen, 2000; Walqui, 2006; Wright, 2006). Under the



dictates of standardized testing and sanctions of reform policies in education, the struggle in reaching ELLs and acknowledging their linguistic and cultural variations prevails.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study examined how Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) would be able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them in disclosing their cultural identity to spring board writing. It was hypothesized that expressing ideas pictorially may support Arabic high school ELLs in encountering the challenge of English language barriers and encourage them to embark upon academic writing. Simultaneously, increasing the use of visual means of expression may ascertain these students' unique cultural variations and individual interpretations in making meaning.

Research involving use of visual representations, self-created drawing, and other artistic creations in regard to helping Arabic high school ELLs has not previously been conducted. Thus, it was significant to explore the efficacy of using visual representations and drawing for Arabic high school ELLs in their writing programs and discuss the implications the findings of the study can have on this particular population to address their cultural and academic needs. The current study thus bridges the chasm in the former literature where no research has been conducted to explore how the use of visual tools self-created drawings, and other artistic creations may aid Arabic high school ELLs reveal their cultural identity and employ them to launch into writing.

The questions that directed this study are:

1. How do the Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?
2. In what ways do the Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?

### **Significance of the Study**

Berghoff et al., (2003); Cowan & Albers (2006); Dyson (1993); Eisner (2002); Graves (1994); Olshansky (2003), Siegel (1995; 2006); Smagorinsky (2001); Zoss et al. (2007); and Whiting (2002, 2005) reveal the effectiveness of infusing visual images into writing. However, none of the selected studies has examined the possible efficacy of incorporating visual images as catalyst to reveal cultural identity and construct meaning in writing for Arabic high school ELLs. Through understanding the Arabic high school ELLs use of visual images and drawing, educators can begin to explore new ways to approach the education of ELLs (Tooley, 2009). For Arabic high schools ELLs, expressing ideas pictorially may support their English literacy development and encourage them to embark upon academic writing. Simultaneously, increasing the use of visual means of expression may ascertain these students' unique cultural variations and individual interpretations in making meaning.

Considering the cultural and language needs of Arabic high school ELLs and the vast widespread of visual media across the globe, ELLs teachers may find it beneficial to explore teaching pedagogies that go beyond the traditional teaching model (Dehart, 2008). ELLs teachers may look into the theoretical models supporting multimodal learning, mainly use of visual images, and see how it can contribute to creating an instructional model that meets diverse needs of their learners (Dehart, 2008).

Arabic high school ELLs are often categorized as at-risk learners who struggle to meet the state proficiency level in the academic areas, mainly writing. Yet, they are learners who may have areas of strengths and talents. Providing these learners with a curriculum that values part of their personal experiences and cultural resources may be quite crucial. Arts infused curriculum may be a possible way to create safe learning communities where cultural diversity is capitalized on (Berghoff et al., 2003)

The diverse cultures mean that students learn in different ways, ways that are often not acknowledged in the classroom. Arabic high school ELLs experience cultural clash when they enter the school system in the United States. They are learners who bring with them unique experiences and cultural backgrounds that may add fresh dimensions to the new learning setting. However, unique aspects of self and variations in experiences are often cast aside when Arabic high school ELLs step into the mainstream American classroom environment. They are confronted with the reality that what truly matters is their ability to assimilate into the Discourse of the mainstream culture.

The influx of educationally and economically disadvantaged high school ELLs into the American schooling system demands a supportive curriculum that addresses their diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultural needs (Ajay, 2009). ELLs bring with them a variety of languages, different cultural identities, and perceptions of the world around them. The immense variability in linguistic and cultural experiences makes it quite predictable that these learners will display a variety of learning styles (Ajay, 2009). Some may be visual learners whereas others may be kinesthetic learners who learn via hands-on-activities. Learning through drawing, creating music, and performing arts may be the learning styles that meet diverse learning styles of many ELLs (Ajay, 2009).

Within school settings, teachers are culturally indoctrinated to accept only a particular form of “Discourse” (Gee, 1990, p. 21). This often leads to “silencing of other discourses”, mainly for ELLs, within classroom setting (Worthman, 2008, p. 444). Worthman (2008) states “The supplanting and ultimate silencing of other discourses has, in part, pushed the field of adult education steadily toward a state of monolingualism, where one discourse is authoritative...” (p. 444).

Classroom instruction is often geared toward a traditional paradigm that emphasizes one-size fits all types of curriculum. Smagorinsky (2001) refers to teachers who reinforce interpretations and discourage idiosyncratic or unconventional use of language or discourse. They are teachers who only acknowledge the Discourse of the cultural capital (Smagorinsky, 2001). ELLs whose Discourse conflicts with the mainstream Discourse may not feel safe to communicate their ideas via writing. They lack access to Standard English and they lack prior knowledge of the mainstream culture to generate ideas for their writing. Teachers need to plan for literacy strategies that may engage Arabic high school ELLs in expressing themselves through the extended use of visual representations. Building on these learners’ prior knowledge and cultural referents may urge them to voice their ideas by creating artistic pieces (visual images, drawing) that may act as storyboards to their writing.

### **Overview of the Study**

This study is developed and presented in five chapters. An introduction to the study and a background on reform movements in the educational field are presented in Chapter 1. This chapter also introduces a statement of the problem, purpose, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of the study and highlights competing Discourses. This research is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory; Moll’s,

Amanti's, Neff's, & Gonzalez's (1992) notion of funds of knowledge; Rosenblatt's (1938, 1976) transactional theory; and Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). A literature review of the current research on visual literacy and effective pedagogies in integrating visual images and drawing into writing instruction are also discussed in Chapter 2. The current study closes the gap in the former literature where no research has been previously conducted to examine how Arabic high school ELLs may reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning in their visual representations, self-created drawing, and other artistic creations and employ them to launch into writing. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the study. This research employed a qualitative research methodology which examined how Arabic high school ELLs use their visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning and use them to spring board into writing. Through the use of multiple data collection sources, an examination of patterns and cultural themes related to the case were investigated. The data sources included the following: pre-questionnaire, field note observations, audio-taping, a post-questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and the students' artifacts. Chapter 4 presents the findings by offering rich and thick descriptions based on the analysis of pre-questionnaire, field note observations, audio-taping, a post-questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and the students' artifacts. Finally, Chapter 5 opens with a discussion of results relating to the research questions and capitalizes on the impact of integrating visuals and drawings as catalysts to writing, making clear links between the research findings and their connection to literature. Contributions and expansions on existing literature review are also presented followed by three main implications which address embracing multimodality, offering professional developments for administrators, teachers, and parents, and helping teacher educators in

becoming qualified in meeting ELLs' needs. The chapter concludes with the limitations of this current study and offers recommendations for future research with ELLs.

## CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) were able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them in disclosing their cultural identity to spring board writing. The visual representations were used to support these learners' understanding of literacy events by building on their own cultural background knowledge. This study is grounded in five overlapping theories. In this chapter a literature review of the theoretical and conceptual framework is presented. The first is Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory which discusses how social interaction and scaffolding form the basis of learning. Moll's, Amanti's, Neff's, & Gonzalez's (1992) notion of funds of knowledge, describes how cultural background experiences become acknowledged. Next is Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) transactional theory which discusses several points including how meaning of a literary text is personally and culturally constructed. Subsequently is semiotics, where individuals construct their world through their use of various sign systems. Then is a multiliteracies approach, where various forms of written, spoken, spatial, and visual are incorporated in addressing literacy; and multimodality, which involves the use of various modes of sign systems (music, art, drama, language, technology, and media). The final theory that is used to establish the confines of this study is the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008), which is an instructional model used for teaching content in a comprehensible way for ELLs while still helping them acquire basic language skills through a developmental language methodology.

Understanding the meaning making process of English language learners can be compared to an orchestra, where various aspects of literacy flow into a rhythm with one another. Just as an orchestra blends the notes of different instruments, so does meaning-making blend various communicative modes or sign systems. Each of these notes, or sign systems, can be used uniquely to create a distinct sound or representation of literacy. Short, Harste, and Burke (1996) align with the orchestra metaphor by stating, “all literacy events are multimodal, involving the orchestration of a wide variety of sign systems” (p.14).

This literature review explores the different instruments used to create a distinct sound for classroom practice. Similar to the way a conductor composes a piece through the integration of different sounds, this research relied upon information from different areas of study including personally relevant writing, competing Discourses, socio-cultural theory, funds of knowledge, transactional theory, semiotics, multiliteracies/ multimodality in addition to Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). This chapter discusses the theoretical and practical rationale for a conceptual framework which incorporates visual images as instructional tools into Arabic high school ELLs’ writing instruction. Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural perspective and Rosenblatt’s (1938) transactional theory form the conceptual frameworks of this qualitative study.

On one hand, Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory explains how learning emerges from interactions with others, cultural environments and materials’ resources where acknowledging individuals’ funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez’s,1992) becomes valuable. Funds of knowledge suggest that people are knowledgeable about the material needed to interact in their daily life. Taking the socio-cultural perspective as a theoretical background for this research study helps in understanding the impact social



interactions can have on acquiring language proficiency for ELLs. On the other hand, Rosenblatt's (1938) transactional theory reflects on how learners create meaning and generate unique interpretations of a literary text based on their prior experiences and cultural referents. Adopting Rosenblatt's (1938) transactional model for this qualitative study enhances awareness about the importance of recognizing Arabic high school ELLs' personal and cultural resources within the learning environment. Both theories, the socio-cultural perspective and the transactional mode, highlight the need for ELLs with opportunities to socially create meaning based on personal and cultural background knowledge. Through engagement in explanatory talk, classroom discussions, and creation of artifacts as a response to various literary texts, Arabic high school ELLs can explore the use of sign systems, other than language, as means of communication.

Looking at theoretical models that support multimodal ways of communication creates opportunities for transforming classroom curricula to meet the needs of diverse learners, including those who struggle with articulating themselves through language alone. Many research studies indicate that the use of visual images as a communication system (drawing, pictures, storyboards, and artistic artifacts) positively impacts student achievement in writing: Andrzejczak, Tranin, & Poldberg (2005); Berghoff et al., (2003); Cowan & Albers (2006); Dyson (1993); Eisner (2002); Graves (1994); Olshansky (2003); Siegel (1995; 2006); Smagorinsky (2001); Zoss, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell (2007); and Whitin (2002, 2005). By looking at socio-cultural and transactional theoretical models, teachers and researchers can gain a sense of the various ways visual representations and drawings can support writing. Finally, adopting the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008) as an instructional model used for teaching content in a comprehensible way for ELLs

facilitates acquisition of language skills. This chapter is divided into eight areas of research: (1) Personally Relevant Writing, (2) Competing Discourses, (3) Literacy as a Socio-cultural Practice, (4) Funds of Knowledge, (5) Role of Teacher as Mediator, (6) Semiotics, (7) Multimodality and Multiliteracies, and (8) Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol.

Since writing is a difficult and intricate process, and the difficulties are compounded with the language barriers Arabic high school ELLs face, it is important for these learners to have many opportunities and various ways to respond to text. For Arabic English language learners, difficulties in language are compounded with cultural disconnects where social norms and expressions are alien. Through scaffolding Arabic high school ELLs' use of language via interactions with visual images, teachers can connect to students' prior knowledge, provide a springboard for reflection and writing, and enhance their academic and social interactions. ELLs are caught up in an atmosphere of competing Discourses, which can be addressed by immersing them in meaningful literacy practices that also reinforce academic and social skills.

### **Personally Relevant Writing**

Writing is one way to provide Arabic high school English Language Learners with opportunities to explore various Discourse environments. Diaz-Rico (2004) stresses the recursive nature of the writing process, which involves continuous negotiations. Arabic high school ELLs' diverse linguistic and cultural background experiences necessitate teaching writing in a way that maintains self-awareness, personal relevance, language acquisition, and self-articulation. Becoming participants in the "academic culture" (p. 166) requires that these learners need to learn how to compose written pieces that draw on their own personal knowledge and cultural referents. In this way, they can explore how each Discourse provides various

possibilities of communications; thus, they can progressively become immersed in the new dominant culture, with the potential for preserving their own voices.

In addition to being a personal outlet, writing can also be viewed as a social construct since it involves understanding the intricate relationship among the reader, the writer, the text, and the context in which the writing act occurs (Diaz-Rico, 2004). Arabic high school ELLs' willingness to launch into writing is often based on their desire to reflect on their own ways of living, personal expressions, and social circumstances. Providing these learners with ample time and opportunities to write on frequent basis is important for integrating and expanding on their current perceptions of self and society. Planning for writing learning experiences that give these learners a "real reason for writing" (p. 167) and providing them with a "safe environment for writing" (p. 168) with appropriate scaffolding at various phases of writing enhance writing.

Writing as an integral part of an individual's life helps students to experience authenticity through writing (Kirby, Kirby, & Liner, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) argues that drawing is the symbol structure used for preparing children to develop written language and express themselves. Drawing, a graphic representation of speech that emerges on the foundation of verbal speech, is one of the preliminary phases in the natural development of written language. Based on experimental observations, Vygotsky (1978) shows how children's drawings represent real written language. Children should be provided the opportunity to symbolically represent both simple and complex phrases. This reveals children's predisposition to experience change from entirely "pictographic" to "ideographic" writing that enables them to depict personal experiences using symbolic tools, drawing (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 114). Drawing replaces verbal language and this reflects the natural progression of writing development.

To make writing “relevant to life” motivates children to launch into writing regardless of their verbal linguistic barriers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 118). Graves (1994) argues that writing arises from personal reservoirs and cultural referents. Based on his own personal experience with writing, Graves (1994) reveals how “reading the world” (p.36) and drawing on meaningful daily life experiences evokes ideas for writing. In the early stages of writing, it is crucial to take the initiative to write through daily quick reflections. In the subsequent stages, the words in the reflections start eliciting new implicit meanings and pose new questions such as “What does that have to do with me? With people? With the world?” (p. 37). He suggests that every individual write, believing that everyone has something to write about. Teachers need to educate students to believe in themselves as creative writers with distinct voices in the society. Graves (1994) writes, “Unless children see themselves as authors with something to say, as writers with the power to initiate texts that command the attention of others they may remain as sheep both in the classroom and later in the larger society” (Graves, 1994, p. 44-45). ELLs need to express their voices. They are silent students who get lost in the shuffle when their personal and cultural background experiences are not heard because teachers are too busy demanding that these learners test at a certain level.

Graves (1994) believes that the craft writing is a tool used to express human thought and “transcend oneself in space and time” (p. 34). Students often associate writing with forced assignments in school; therefore, they lose the essence of understanding the real purpose of writing for themselves. Writing is a means of helping individuals communicate their personal thoughts and make sense of their own experiences. Realizing that everyone has something special to convey is the most challenging part of writing. Writing is not the only way to convey

meaning. The next section discusses other forms of expression that represent various Discourses.

### **Competing Discourses**

When knowledge about the Discourse of the dominant culture is deficient, individuals construct their own ways of meaning-making processes in order to convey their ideas. Arabic high school ELLs approach language through various lenses, which shape their social and academic interactions. These learners bring a variety of Discourses from the home environment; however, they become immersed in a mainstream culture where they are being asked to conform to particular social norms in order to gain social capital as students (Gee, 1999).

Gee (1999) defines a Discourse as use of language “and other stuff-as ways of acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing, and using various sorts of objects, symbols, tools, and technologies,” so that individuals can gain “socially recognizable identity” (pp. 7, 21). Taking a social role requires each individual to “appropriately recognize” (Gee, 1999, p. 24) others performing Discourse of a particular culture. Simultaneously, each individual “gets recognized by others . . . in the practices of doing” (p.24) what is culturally expected. While primary Discourses are those that individuals are originally socialized into through their home of origin, secondary Discourses are those that people acquire through involvement in different social groups, formal institutions, and public associations (McKay, 2007). Gee (2001b) describes the primary Discourses as the non-dominant Discourses, which often get associated with a particular social system of a specific social group that does not have access to the profits of social goods. Yet, secondary Discourses are dominant Discourses that are usually related to the social roles acquainted with a privileged status quo where individuals share the benefits of social goods.

Dominant discourses comprise a particular language, a distinctive worldwide language in which some things are regarded as inherently more important or true than others, a set of concepts that are held in common by those participating in Discourse, rules for judging what is good or bad (acceptable or inappropriate), contributions, and procedures that are applied to determine who may be allowed to join the discourse community. Dominant Discourses inevitably support existing power structures and are vital to them (Brookfield, 2001, p. 14). Dominant Discourse of formal schooling, for instance, positions minority students as underachieving learners merely because their language practices and cultural backgrounds are different. Delpit (1988) discusses concerns regarding minority students who are not considered part of the “culture of power” (p. 282). Minority students experience estrangement simply because the “cultural capital” of the dominant group expresses particular language patterns and ways of communicating, thinking, and acting that conflict with their own codes (p. 285). Learning language codes and value systems embedded within the educational setting of the new culture become a responsibility for minority students. These students need to learn the patterns of Discourse of the cultural capital to actively take part in the society.

Despite the social capital gained when individuals can communicate in mainstream culture, Arabic high school ELLs often struggle because of English language barriers and lack of cultural background in dominant culture. These personally disempowering exchanges are also problematic because as Freire (1970) points out, school settings privilege one particular form of discourse in order to preserve the status-quo of the dominant culture. Minority students are deprived of practicing their own discourse. “Silencing of other discourses” results in widespread “monologism,” where the language of the dominant discourse becomes advantaged (Worthman, 2008, p. 444). The next section explores the differences between the different Discourses Arabic

high school ELLs are presented with and suggest that an exchange of cultural knowledge is important for educators and students.

Interactions in a variety of cultures provide opportunities for Arabic high school ELLs to expand their Discourses, creating space for integrating into a variety of cultures. Although these learners are interacting and gaining resources to interact in their dominant culture, they still need opportunities to bring their own cultural rituals and beliefs into academic community. It is important that a space is created for the inclusion of multiple Discourses, rather than demanding conformity.

### **Cultural Rituals and Exchanges**

Gee (1990, 1999, 2001b) believes social interactions in various Discourses are a way of acquiring new ways of being socially recognized. Students who have a broader understanding of the use of language, props, behavior, and other tools to communicate in primary and secondary Discourses are socially able to switch between discourses. Code switching is an approach that aids individuals to converse in socially and culturally right ways and reflect on their various ways of speaking to different audiences in socio-cultural contexts (O'Neal & Ringler, 2010). The ability to code switch is culturally advantageous, as students can draw on their own personal lives to make sense of the new social environment. They make connections and can further highlight the distinctions between the two competing Discourses.

#### ***Cultural rituals***

A part of understanding the role of Discourse in various communities is to consider the cultural rites and rituals (Diaz-Rico, 2004). Each culture practices its rituals differently. For example, there is a formal ritual for students in the United States to line up while waiting for the teacher. However, according to Bilatout, Downing, Lewis, & Yang (as cited in Diaz-Rico,

2004), Hmong students from Laos are used to more formality. These students are expected to stand and wait by their seats for the teachers to be dismissed for their lunch. They also hold their hands in front of their faces when passing by the teacher which indicates social respect and is embraced by the Hmong students. ELLs' teachers should understand the variety of cultural rituals and integrate some of these social behaviors in learning experiences targeted at exchanging different cultural perspectives (Diaz-Rico, 2004).

The Discourses used in school often conflict with these culturally rooted and practiced by students in their home environment, or these cultural ideas they have received from their home country before arriving in America. Diaz-Rico (2004) refers to Philips' (1972) study that shows how cultural behaviors of Native American students in Warm Springs vary from American mainstream culture. Native American students are often hesitant to share answers within a whole group or take the initiative in class discussions. Contrary to the American school setting which focuses on group work projects, working with peers works better for Native Americans. Similarly, Furey (as cited in Diaz-Rico, 2004) also reveals how selecting individuals for commendation arises feeling of embarrassments for Japanese students. While striving for competition is valued within the Japanese culture, proving one's self can only occur within a group. Arabic high school ELLs may struggle with sharing their ideas in the classroom environment because they are afraid their cultural or personal perspective might not be taken into consideration. They are often anxious about the ways others will perceive or stereotype their culture. These fears may impede Arabic ELLs' interactions with others, particularly within the learning environment.

Knowing the language, the discourse, of a certain culture alone does not imply individuals' full engagement in a particular social context. Rather, it is through active



participation in the social norms of a culture including the use of its Discourse that an individual's social identity becomes acknowledged. To socially contribute demands that each individual "appropriately recognize" others performing Discourse of a specific culture (Gee, 1999, p. 24). Concurrently, individuals gain social recognition by performing what is culturally expected. For example, Gee (1999) shows how becoming a physicist demands adopting and practicing verbal as well as non-verbal ways of acting like a real physicist such as using appropriate materials in a lab while conducting experiments in the field. For Arabic high school ELLs, cultural rituals and exchanges are essential because they represent an individual's identity within the new culture. Providing these learners with the opportunity to practice their own cultural rituals creates a less threatening learning environment. Acknowledging diverse ways of learning, conversing, and performing academic work is essential because it has the potential to enhance Arabic ELLs' self-esteem as they feel their cultural reservoirs are valued.

### *Social exchanges*

Gee (1999) believes schools are social institutions responsible for transmitting cultural knowledge through indoctrination of the Discourses of a particular social context. Being enrolled in American schools requires Arabic high school ELLs to act as "real" mainstream students. Using "school like" language, for example, demands practicing Discourse of English including its written, spoken, gestural, and listening aspects (pp. 24, 39). Lack of competence in "doing their part" by actively taking roles in conversations and other participatory practices as a result of language barriers and other social and cultural factors, often prevents Arabic ELLs from engaging in conversations and other academic social practices (Gee, 1999, p. 24). These learners may choose silence over the challenges they may face when connecting with the teacher or other peers. Their deficiency in knowledge about the use of language variations and recognition of the

dominant Discourse thus becomes a challenge (p. 34). Arabic high school ELLs need to be actively engaged in significant social learning experiences that allow them to make use of, create, and engage with the Discourse of the dominant culture (Gee, 2001b).

The development of socially situated-sensitive pedagogical approaches helps in enhancing academic Discourses for Arabic high school ELLs. Although explicit instruction is needed for the teaching of the dominant Discourse, Gee (2001b) argues that, “social languages are acquired by socialization” (p. 719). Thus, he asserts, “While some forms of (appropriately timed) scaffolding, modeling, and instructional guidance by mentors appear to be important, immersion in meaningful practice is essential” (p. 719). These social interactions help Arabic ELLs learn the language as well as appropriate social behaviors in a culture.

Minority students’ Discourses are often viewed as violations to the standard mainstream code. Delpit (1988) believes minority students should have the “right to their language, their own culture. We must fight cultural hegemony...” (p. 291). Providing minority children with the opportunity to recognize and value the code of their culture is quite important (Delpit, 1988). Through poetic representations, Tonso and Prosperi (2008) reveal how minority Latin American students, for instance, face educational practices and policies in U.S. schools that suppress their voices. The following quote, for example, represents the silencing of Latino American students’ voices within the American mainstream school setting. Tonso and Prosperi write, “I swallow the dirt and choke on it...There are many people who do not understand English that are present... But we are like statues pretending to be there...” (p. 41). Depriving Latino American students from practicing their Discourses and “when all is in pure English” often lead to alienation and marginalization (Tonso & Prosperi, 2008, p. 41). These students end up losing the privilege of articulating their thoughts and expressing themselves in the new learning environment.

In addition to the struggle with how they are perceived, school environments may also unintentionally further the marginalization of ELLs through the structure of their assignments or social norms. Classroom learning experiences designed according to rigid use of time and space may further create cultural conflicts for ELLs (Diaz-Rico, 2004). Monitoring instruction in a very systematic way may frustrate these learners whose life styles are not controlled in this way at home (Diaz-Rico, 2004). For instance, requirements to complete assignments on time may create a feeling of resistance for Arabic high school ELLs. These learners need ample time to work on learning activities so that they process and engage with the information. Teachers in the United States often correlate rate of performance with students' intelligence since standardized tests are frequently tests based on speed (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). ELLs' teachers should act as "time mediators" (Diaz-Rico, 2004, p. 270) in order to facilitate learning for their students with diverse cultural needs. For instance, teachers can aid classes to conform to the schools' rigid schedule while offering differentiated instruction for individual ELLs within the time fixed (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Taking time into consideration thus requires effective ELLs' teachers to reflect on how their learners have been educated to use time, how they deal with promptness in their cultures, and what specific types of activities they can complete rapidly and which they cannot.

Time is one issue, but another issue is the perception of intelligence that teachers may have of ELL students. These teachers, along with the many standardized tests given in a classroom, often evaluate students on their ability to recognize and use Standard English. This can be problematic for students who are coming from a different cultural mindset. Diaz-Rico (2004) shows how much emphasis on teaching of CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), in the preliminary stages of acquiring English, excludes ELLs from the learning

environment. For example, when comparing two concepts, a language arts teacher may ask, “Which concept can be used as an analogy to describe the thunderstorm?” The term analogy is particular to Language Arts subject area. Arabic high school ELLs could have prior knowledge about that concept of analogy in their native language; yet, participating knowledgeably in the classroom requires Arabic ELLs’ teachers to activate their learners’ ability to access their knowledge since they may not understand the vocabulary word, analogy, being used.

Arabic high school ELLs need to be offered the opportunities to experience “exploratory, playful, and experimental uses of speech” so that learning becomes a worthwhile social experience for them (Smagorinsky, 2007, p. 66). Taking roles in impulsive classroom discussions demands Arabic high school ELLs have acquaintance with current news and background information on significant topics. Duff (2001) provides an overview of topics that minority students often seem to lack knowledge about within the mainstream school setting. These topics include:

- White House scandals, the Columbine High School shooting, wars and unrest in other countries (e.g., in the Balkans, the Middle East, Ireland),
- Natural disasters, scientific breakthroughs, little-known facts, and local events.
- Interspersed with these topics were references to sports scores, new movies or television shows, and pop culture celebrities (p. 116).

To engage Arabic high school ELLs in genuine interactions with their native-English speaking peers may enhance their development of the language and socialization in the mainstream Discourse (McKay, 2007). The “Discourse socialization” viewpoint advocates that becoming a social participant in a learning community requires learning the discourses related to the community and its social practices (Duff, 2001, p. 123). Teachers should become aware of

meeting the diverse needs of their ELLs and offer appropriate levels of scaffolding “to ensure equitable access to the curriculum and the potential for all students to learn and succeed” (Duff, 2001, p. 123). In order to understand the intricacies of language acquisition and its production within academic discourse setting for Arabic high school ELLs, it requires taking the socio-cultural perspective into consideration.

### **Literacy as a Socio-Cultural Practice**

According to Vygotsky (1978), “Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (p. 90). Acknowledging various Discourses within the dominant culture facilitates the learning process for all learners regardless of the linguistic variations and cultural diversities they bring. Ongoing dialogue among individuals within social context cultivates an environment conducive to learning. Since the acquisition of language involves language as well as behavioral and social cues, it is important to provide students with instruction that immerses them in the various components of the new culture. This interplay can be supported through the creation of artistic projects. Eisner (2002) suggests that art is important because it helps students learn to transact with multiple materials to shape and represent their own knowledge of academic concepts and social Discourses. As Arabic high school ELLs are acquiring language, they may draw their ideas from others, almost mimicking the ideas before internalizing the concepts and revealing their own understandings.

One way of exploring the ways different ELL students have internalized understandings of their own culture and the English culture that they are now immersed in is by examining the child’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept, which arises from the work of Vygotsky (1978), serves as a transactional zone in which the evolution from interpsychological

to intrapsychological performance occurs (Turuk, 2008). In the premature phases of development (interpsychological phase), the child gains knowledge via interaction. Subsequently, that knowledge is internalized once the individual brings his personal experiences to it (intrapsychological phase) (Turuk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) states,

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)... All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (p. 57)

The shift from social to individual possession of knowledge is a “transformation of what had been learnt through interaction(s)” (Turuk, 2008, p. 248). Therefore, interactive opportunities are important for Arabic high school ELLs as they explore how to interact with one another, texts, and self-created artistic representations. Specifically through these social interactions, students move through the learning process as they absorb experiences and construct knowledge.

Since learning is a continuous process of evolving into higher-level skills, scaffolding is necessary. Cazden (1983) refers to scaffold as “a temporary framework for construction in progress” (p. 6). Scaffolding requires the presence of a more experienced individual who provides assistance and modifies level of support to guide a child’s learning processes (Cumming-Potvin, 2007). Through scaffolding, Arabic high school ELLs have the capacity to grasp and acquire academic language and complex literacy skills with appropriate levels of guidance and classroom support.

Scaffolding literacy, for example, occurs in interactive dialogue journal where students and teacher exchange brief written informal conversations (Boyle & Peregoy, 2008). When ELL students are first introduced to journal writing, they may write an entry in the journal

accompanied by a drawing; subsequently, the teacher answers back via writing by providing constructive remarks or promoting questions that have the potential to enhance conversations. Teachers can model written language structure and use of vocabulary through written responses as they elaborating on their ELLs' preliminary entries. Journal writing hence presents ELLs teachers with chances for scaffolding and modeling simultaneously. Through these meaningful experiences, learning can take place.

### **Funds of Knowledge**

Based on Vygotskian (1978) perspective that learning is a social process, which occurs within a socio-cultural context, is the concept of funds of knowledge which suggests that people are knowledgeable about the material needed to interact in their daily life (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez 1992; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The term funds of knowledge, is simply meant "to refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., p. 133). This concept is particularly important in a classroom because teachers can use the students' current cultural knowledge to help students engage in classroom instruction. Funds of knowledge expands upon more common notion of "culture" ( p. 139) which is largely associated with the show of folkloric demonstrations, folktales, artistic artifacts, and dance recitals of a culture by focusing on the "social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region..." (p. 139). Therefore, the students' household lives are seen as bounded by rich, multifaceted cultural reservoirs. By taking the role of facilitators rather than mere dictators of knowledge, teachers acknowledge learners' unique experiences which are often shaped by a variety of socio-political, ideological, and cultural influences. Building on students' prior knowledge and cultural reservoirs in planning and delivering instruction leads to progressive

education (Dewey, 1938). From a progressive pedagogical perspective, students are motivated to become active participants in the learning process when they make personal connections and relate to the subject matter. When students' funds of knowledge are acknowledged, it helps in changing the dominant status-quo of perceiving minority communities as inferior; thus increasing what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as "cultural capital".

The students' funds of knowledge are acknowledged as teachers learn about their students. From a Vygotskian's (1978) viewpoint, the notion of funds of knowledge acts as a "cultural artifact" (González et al., 2005, p.21) that supports in mediating teachers' understanding of learners' social lives within their household communities. Teachers employ students' prior knowledge and cultural resources as foundations to scaffold teaching of new concepts (Amanti, 2005). By gaining more insights into students' household communities it may reduce challenges associated with helping them to learn (Moll, 2005).

### **Role of Teacher as a Mediator**

By adopting the funds of knowledge approach, teachers cease to take a role as mere transmitters of information and are open to co-constructing the meaning with others. This requires that teachers identify with their role as a mediator. As mediators they often act as the negotiator between the students' community values and school curriculum. Teachers as mediators become active catalysts of intermediation who understand that learning is a socially constructed experience which can lead to social transformation. The role of teacher as mediator highlights the teacher's ability to shift power relationships in the learning process. He or she recognizes the students' responsibility in the learning process and builds on their cultural practices and linguistic variations in order to uphold their experiences as strengths rather than



deficiencies. Teachers as mediators are indispensable because they are able to connect the student's personal experiences with the curriculum.

Appreciating rather than stereotyping various cultural practices of minority students mirrors mediating role of teachers (Floyd-Tenery, 2005). For instance, acknowledging oral traditions of Mexican histories and narratives recounted by students of Mexican origin reflects on accepting cultural diversity in classrooms. Students should be invited to relate to their cultural practices, such as holidays, foods, and original myths with moral lessons about mythical characters (king, god, goddess, queen) in their culture. Although teachers are required to use the current mandated curriculum, they should frame it in a way that recognizes the life experiences of students. When teachers acknowledge the learners' various cultural, linguistic, and personal referents, multiple interpretations are brought to the social learning context that increases the social capital of the entire class.

Teachers also mediate the knowledge exchange through discussions with their students. Freire ([1970], 1994) argues that knowledge is attained when people come together to exchange ideas and construct new knowledge. Simultaneously, students take leadership in their own learning processes by expressing their voices and sharing their opinions via interactive dialogues. Freire ([1970] 1994) states:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach (61).

Establishing open communication with students and their families provides teachers with resourceful information about students' cultural and historical backgrounds. Transferring unique

cultural variations to classrooms, in turn, create an atmosphere of caring, acceptance, and “*confianza*” (p. 129) (trust) among teachers, parents, and students.

As individual students construct meaning, they are interacting with larger socio-cultural communities. These interactions inform the individuals’ perspectives of the way they should act, believe, and value within the frame of different Discourses. Since Discourses are continuously renegotiated, they must evolve from individual’s experiences. The transactional approach explains how individuals expand to include various emerging perspectives as they bring resources to the forefront and infuse their ideas with others. As individuals engage with others who use different perspectives and languages, they are able to expand their Discourses, which become a rich supply for learning and expressing their linguistic skills (Ajayi, 2006).

### **Transactional Theory**

Probst (1994) argues each literary experience should involve “respect for the uniqueness of the individual reader and the integrity of the individual reading” (p. 38). Rosenblatt (1978) explains the interactive engagement with text as the transaction theory. From this perspective, engagement with a text transforms the text as well as the individual. Prior knowledge and experience play a significant role where the reader “draws on his past experiences with life and language as the raw materials out of which to shape the new experience symbolized on the page” (p. 26). Bringing personal resources to the text helps evoke new meanings. Simultaneously, reading the text closely enriches individuals’ personal and cultural reservoirs. Part of the growth in learning comes from viewing the author’s personal and cultural perspectives, which may be different from the reader’s current frame of reference. Through transactions, a text moves beyond “merely inkspots on paper” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 25) and toward an evolving experience.

Rosenblatt (1978) states, “A novel, poem, or play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols” (p. 25).

Based on Rosenblatt’s transactional theory (1938), learners are able to construct meaning of a literary text once their personal reservoirs, such as linguistic variations, personal experiences, and cultural referents, are valued and accepted. Rosenblatt (1988) believes “We make meaning, we make sense of a new situation or transaction, by applying, recognizing, revising, or extending elements drawn from, selected from, our personal linguistic-experiential reservoir” (p.3). Yet, meaning-making does not inherently exist in the text or in the reader, but occurs due to a process of transaction between the reader and the text.

Although Rosenblatt suggests that transactions are a natural process, Wilhelm (1997) suggests that many adolescents struggle with this process and classroom instruction must support and enhance their interactions. Wilhelm (1997) argues some readers are unable to transcend the boundaries of reality and create a “secondary world” (p. 162) while reading a text. They are struggling learners who lack knowledge and use of proper reading strategies, mainly visualizing technique, that enable them to experience transactional experience with a text. Wilhelm (1997) states,

The response of engaged readers is intensely visual, empathic, and emotional. By focusing in class on the importance of these evocative responses, that is, entering the story world, visualizing people and places, and taking up relationships to characters, less engaged readers are given strategies for experiencing texts and were helped to rethink reading. (p. 144)

Following this perspective, effective teachers need to help their struggling readers make use of reading strategies through modeling how skillful readers think about and interact with a text. Wilhelm (1997) stresses it is important to provide ample opportunities for struggling learners to improve their reading skills. Through the modeling of reading strategies and the

implementation of engaging literary visual experiences, reluctant readers learn how to create their own meanings by eliciting “active responses” (p. 471). They get the opportunity to live the aesthetic experience of reading. Providing struggling readers with the chances to experience reading of illustrated books and the production of symbolic representations, collages, and picture books based on their reading conveys the message that reading is seeing (Wilhelm, 1995). Through use of visual art, not only do reluctant readers view what they are reading, but they also evoke responses that are emotional, thus connecting their own lives to the text literary experience.

Offering Arabic high school ELLs the occasion to create their meaning of a text by “seeing” (Wilhelm, 1995, p. 468) what it is they are reading and interacting with the text is essential. Through teachers’ modeling of and supporting use of mental imaging as a technique to evoke a literary experience, Arabic high school ELLs can “see what they read” (p. 470). They are these learners who lack dominant language discourse to respond to a text by merely relying on oral skills. The making of visual art, as a tool to respond to reading, enables ELLs to “visualize what they read” (p. 470). In addition, creation of artistic pieces activates Arabic high school ELLs’ background schemata thus allowing them to experience the “lived-through” (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) meaning construction of a literary text.

Internalizing ideas through creating various artifacts also aligns with the work of Smagorinsky (2001) who suggests that meaning is derived from the cultural context where individuals share common experiences and set of social norms. Meaning-making interpretations are often culturally constructed. “Reading is thus a constructive act done in conjunction with mediating texts and the cultural-historical context in which reading takes place” (p. 137). This transactional process is highlighted with an example of a Confederate battle flag. While some

see the flag as a symbol of strength and independence, others see it as a sign of disempowerment and inhumanity. Through cultural interactions, individuals learn and negotiate different meanings of dominant cultures and the power, which these particular cultures have to establish “their values as authoritative and sovereign” (p. 136). Readers, therefore, are acculturated to read texts in ways imposed by the dominant culture. The context includes possible sanctions by those with the greatest cultural capital. Without recognizing the various perspectives that can arise from a text many voices, including those of ELL students, can be lost.

In order to engage students and provide a framework for them to interact in the classroom literature should be accessible and relevant to the reader’s life (Probst, 1994). Relevance is important because they are able to make connections and generate new ideas. Generating meaning thus resides in that common ground where the reader and the text interact. Accepting multiple interpretations to a text rather than imposing one interpretation offers learners the chances to respond to experience the reader response approach.

Writing, similar to the transactional process of reading, is also an engagement of interacting with texts (Rosenblatt, 1988). Just as readers deal with a physical text, writers encountering a blank piece of paper have their personal linguistic, personal, and cultural variations to build on while composing their written text. Writing is a process that embodies what the writer experiences at a certain time under both internal as well external socio-cultural circumstances. “Any new meanings grow out of, are restructurings or extensions of, the stock of experiences the writer brings to the task” (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 7). The writer is always transacting with a range of personal, cultural, and social reservoirs. The writing acts as a representation of the writer’s both personal and socio-cultural experiences.

Providing Arabic high school ELLs, for instance, with the chance to use a variety of approaches in responding to literature, such as creating artistic artifacts or drawing, may be efficient; it releases them from the restraints of limited linguistic barriers they have when it comes to verbal or written expressions. Through creating their own ways of personal responses, Arabic high school ELLs may start capitalizing on who they are and what they value in the new culture. Artwork acts as an outlet to more reflective written responses that enable Arabic high school ELLs to experience the aesthetic stance of writing.

Overall, planning for literacy strategies that engage Arabic high school ELLs in expressing themselves through the extended use of visual representations and prolonged discussions may have the potential for opening up avenues of communication that allow for the active construction of meaning. Building upon these learners' prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural referents may support both them and their teachers as they bring modes of multi-layered interpretations into the classroom. Providing learning opportunities that makes use of visual representations followed by discussions may also motivate Arabic high school ELLs to experience the possibility of generating different interpretations and making new connections. Thus, designing learning experiences that promote multiple opportunities of meaning-making should become the norm of a student-centered classroom practice (Whitin, 2005).

### **Semiotics: A Meaning Making Approach**

Many literacy theories including Wilhelm (1995, 1997), Probst (1994), Smagorinsky (2001), Rosenblatt (1938, 1978, 1988) are grounded in the conceptual framework known as semiotic theory. Semiotic theory suggests visual and other nonlinguistic sign systems are as equally valuable as language. The use of visual expression has a powerful impact because it does things that of forms of language (or gesture, or any other sign system) cannot do. Hence,

both visual and non-linguistic sign representations are considered to be equally significant in communicating meaning and evoking new experiences. Artistic depictions are often utilized by readers in their attempt to respond to literary texts and create their own world in a narrative account. From a semiotic perspective, readers do construct meaning; but as Smagorinsky notes (2001) in “If Meaning is Constructed, What is it Made of?” that the “stuff” of meaning-making includes socio-cultural forms of mediation as well as signs. According to semiotic advocates, reading does not happen unless readers form mental representations that reflect on their transaction with a text. Using visual images through use of art, for example, enable learners to comprehend, experience enjoyment, and remember a text.

A semiotic perspective considers individuals to be active makers, social catalysts, and modifiers of the various representational modes accessible to them (Kress, 2000). Siegel (2006) reveals how both semioticians, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-1958) incorporated sign systems as modes of communications to help individuals articulate their thoughts and construct meaning. While Saussure focused on the linguistic aspects of sign systems, Peirce reflected on the value of using all sign systems by taking into account the context in which signs are interpreted. Peirce (1931-1958) elaborated on how meaning is constructed using various sign systems by revealing the semiotic-triadic relationship of an object, a sign (representamen), and an interpretant. In the semiotic triad, a sign (representamen) primarily acts as something that represents a specific idea. An interpretant then becomes the creation of an original meaning in the mind of the person perceiving the sign. Subsequently, the interpretant starts representing the thoughts related to the object referred to as the ground of the dynamic object. Taking various means of communication including language to construct meaning will be based on Peirce’s viewpoint of semiotics in this qualitative study. Semiotics provides the

opportunity for all learners to use a variety of expressive outlets to explore their ideas within discourse environments.

Berghoff (1998) believes that sign systems like art, music, drama, math, and language represent various ways of communicating. In an attempt to create and communicate meaning, individuals employ use of different signs in different cultural settings. Similarly to language, each of the sign systems (art, dance, music, etc...) stands as a representation for something. Yet, all the sign systems work in corresponding means of communication. While gestures and signals are used as complementary sign systems for verbal language, drawing maps act as supplementary ways for explaining oral directions. Sign systems work in interrelating ways because they are interdependent systems used to help individuals in expressing their ideas in multiple ways. From a semiotic perspective, a sign, the basic unit of meaning common to all sign systems, can be anything that stands for something to someone. Yet, a sign still does not directly convey meaning. For example, hearing a word (sign) of *chien* does not imply that a meaning will be formulated in the person's head unless that person knows French since *chien* is an equivalent for the word dog (Berghoff, 1998).

Signs mediate between two individuals constructing meaning. Although signs are used to convey and create meanings, there is no direct relationship between the meaning delivered by the sender of the sign and the meaning composed by the receiver of the sign. This belief that meaning evolves from negotiations with sign systems aligns with the transactional theory, where meaning is individually negotiated (Rosenblatt, 1976). The meaning created by the receiver of the sign is often based on his/her own personal knowledge and background experiences. Yet, within social groups, meanings constructed correspond with the meanings originally articulated. This is due to the fact that individuals share common belief systems and views of the world



around us. Signs become connected with specific meanings as individuals utilize them with themselves and with others to communicate.

A semiotic theory challenges the notion that humans transfer meanings in direct means. On the contrary, meaning is mediated through signs where individuals make meanings of signs that are familiar to them. This idea contradicts with the belief that the connection between signs and system is that each sign has one rigid meaning. From a semiotic perspective, each sign system has one or more relationships depending on the interpreter of the sign and the social context in which the meaning is made. This assumption clashes with the educational mindset where educators tend to believe and teach students that there is only one correct answer for each problem and that each word will have one universal meaning in the dictionary.

Using sign systems, mainly art (drawing and visual representations), individuals can experience quality of "thirdness", a kind of meaning-making that allows learners to generate various interpretations founded on the basis of personally constructed meanings and other socially shared cultural experiences (Berghoff et al., 2003, p. 355). Rather than viewing each sign (word) as having a fixed meaning, a learner explores possible meanings of a single sign. A sign= (becomes equivalent to) possible meanings coupled with possible expressions. Thirdness thus enables learners to discover a world of possibilities rather than accept fixed answers as being the norm. Smagorinsky (2001) refers to Eco's (1985) interpretation of a sign, where a sign represents a "relation of referring back, where . . . something stands to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity" (p. 176). This implies that a sign or a configuration of signs represents different meanings for different readers based on cultural referents brought to the sign itself (Smagorinsky, 2001).

Kress (2000) opposes the mode in which language is viewed as the superior mode whereas images merely act as tools used to depict “repeat visually” (p. 199) what is articulated verbally. By reversing the order, Kress (2000) reveals how creating a visual illustration helps an individual to construct meaning, transfer it, or regenerate it without relying on language mode for channeling information. Use of visual representations does not require individuals to have a “pre-existing linguistic account” of something (p. 196) since visual images mode is not a translation from language. Kress (2000) provides examples of non-western cultures that employ visual representations, such as Egyptian hieroglyphics, Chinese pictograms, and Australian Aboriginal iconographies, in lieu of language as means of communication and self-expression. These cultures value use of visual images, mainly drawing, as a creative and productive medium, which helps in articulating one’s feelings and thoughts based on personal experiences and cultural referents.

Semiotics orchestrates opportunities for learners to explore creativity since it involves use of multimodal approaches in learning. Use of multimodal strategies can help students actively construct and interpret meaning based on their personal and socially shared experiences. Knowledge is thus constructed from learners’ personal experiences and various ways of knowing (Wilhelm, 1995).

Semiotic theory provides literacy teachers the opportunity to discover various modes of transmitting meaning other than language while instructing their ELLs (Dehart, 2008). In the absence of proficient oral communication in English and cultural unawareness of the dominant Discourse, Arabic high school ELLs may experience the benefits of using various modes of communication, including visual representations. Composing aesthetic artifacts provides Arabic

high school ELLs the opportunity to express their voices. Through metaphorical representations can construct meaning that makes academic as well as personal connections.

Using drawing and symbolic illustrations to demonstrate writing, for instance, reflects on the possible experience of using art as a communication system (Berghoff et al., 2003). Based on the generative power of the use of various sign systems, Siegel (1995) illuminates on the significance of integrating arts using drawing and visuals. Transmediation, the generative power of translating meanings from one sign system (language) to another (pictorial representations), allows learners to invent connections between two sign systems where the connection did not exist before.

Whitin (2005) also explores the nature of transmediation. Through the use of metaphorical representations, exploratory talk, and literary interpretations, Whitin (2005) reveals the feature of non-redundant potential of the use of visual representations and patterns of discourse as tools for mediating thought and promoting construction of various levels of literary interpretations. Via use of sketch-to-stretch, “a visual representation of colors, lines, symbols, and shapes to convey one’s understanding of conflict, character, theme, or feelings” (Whitin, 1996, p. 101), as a metaphorical representation, students constructed their understanding by interpreting events from the story (language sign). Students were encouraged to articulate their views on the sketches by writing a variety of responses that mirrored their sketches (Whitin, 2002). When learners’ prior knowledge experiences and cultural referents were valued within the classroom setting, variations in responses were generated (Whitin, 2005).

Overall, planning for literacy strategies that engage Arabic high school ELLs in expressing themselves through extended use of visual representations and prolonged discussions may have the potential for opening up avenues of communication that allow for active

construction of meaning. Building upon Arabic high school ELLs' prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural referents may support them and their teachers as they bring modes of multi-layered interpretations into the classroom. Providing learning opportunities that makes use of visual representations followed by discussions may motivate Arabic high school ELLs to experience the possibility of generating different interpretations and making new connections. Thus, designing learning experiences that promote multiple opportunities of meaning-making should become the norm of a student-centered classroom practice (Whitin, 2005).

### **Multimodality and Multiliteracies**

When verbocentrism, the reliance upon words at the exclusion of other forms of communication, fails to convey complete internalization of understanding, multiliteracies and multimodality pedagogies may provide alternative means of transmitting meanings (Dehart, 2008). Multiliteracies allow individuals to construct meanings from the range of multimedia, variety of visual imagery, music, and sound that encounter them each day in addition to written and spoken words (Cope & Kalanatzis, 2000). Multimodality also recognizes equal significance of all modes in communication (Kress, 2000). By taking a semiotic perspective into consideration, various forms of communication serve in helping individuals create their own meanings. Literacy educators may find it valuable to start looking at the potential of using various sign systems for making meaning.

New London Group (1996) advocates for multiliteracies as a literacy pedagogy that incorporates various forms of written, spoken, spatial, and visual in addition to understanding multiplicity of discourses. Literacy should be seen as including various forms of digital technology, mainly sound, music, images, and words. Considering diverse cultural contexts and linguistic variations, technological inventions, as well as globalization in societies requires

understanding the various cultures that connect and diversity of texts that are widespread. Nowadays, individuals are exposed to texts that require understanding different modes of texts concurrently in order to make meaning (Bull & Anstey, 2007). For instance, while individuals are having a conversation with others in the sitting room, they may be also watching news that demands them to focus on print, look at images, and simultaneously make inferences from behaviors displayed by news broadcasters.

In an attempt to address what sounds proper education for natives and immigrants, mainly Arabic high school ELLs, who do not know D/discourses of national language, multiliteracies may become one of the alternative approaches (New London Group, 1996). Within an Aboriginal cultural context, for example, visual means of representation seems to have a more profound effect than the mere use of language in communicating meaning. Yet, as educators endeavor to adopt multiliteracies approach, there are still claims about canonical texts, political rightness, and standard language. Considering the linguistic and cultural differences of Arabic high school ELLs within the school settings nowadays necessitates adopting a multiliteracies pedagogy that takes into account employment of various languages, different forms of English, and means of interactions that go beyond cultural and national restrictions (New London Group, 1996).

In addition to New London Group's notion of multiliteracies (1996), Kress (2000) also calls for multimodality. Multimodality recognizes equal significance of all modes in communication. According to Kress (2000), multimodality involves use of various modes of sign systems (music, art, drama, language, technology, and media) as "semiotically articulated means of representation and communication" (p. 185). He criticizes the notion that modes such as "written language" or "spoken language" should be viewed as "monomodal" (p. 184) means

of communication. Considering multimodality, for example, as a gesture language suggests its multimodality as a representation system. Kress (2000) believes all texts are multimodal; however, use of language is often the prevalent modality. Effective teaching practices should not rely on language alone; rather integration of various sign systems allows a wider ability to express one's self. Taking the widespread of visual mode in current communication into consideration thus requires viewing language and literacy as "partial bearers of meaning only since the other modes of information have become more prominent" (p. 35).

Although language is a social inherent cultural tool used in mediating meaning, individuals still use other means of social practices in order to be accepted within any social context. Visual representations act as complementary systems of oral and written communications. When there is a lack of knowledge about dominant Discourses, Arabic high school ELLs may struggle with connecting to others in academic settings. Considering semiotics and propagation of meaning-making alternatives in the globalized world, multimodal and multiliteracies pedagogies may become quite important in enhancing Arabic high school ELLs' literacy learning (Ajayi, 2009). Multimodal and multiliteracies approaches recognize the interrelationships among various kinds of semiotic modes in conveying communication and creating new designs. This leads to the full understanding of non-redundant potentials of generating new means of human expression. Through multimodal and multiliteracies approaches, Arabic high school ELLs may experience development of their own understanding and meaning-creation processes in a diverse cultural classroom environment (Ajayi, 2009).

Dyson (1993) believes that through use of multiple means of representations, mainly art, learners can tackle important issues that matter to their lives. Creating a "permeable curriculum" (pp. 28-34) that acknowledges learners' social world and cultural resources and allows them to

connect writing to their lives is quite important. Dyson (1993) reflects on the interrelationship between oral language, drawing, and writing. Via drawing, learners are able to express their perceptions of their new social surroundings in the dominant society and cultural background experiences. Drawing as a metaphorical representation provides learners with opportunity to explore effectiveness of using visual representations as tools of social intermediation (Dyson, 1993). Acknowledging learners' socio-cultural background experiences into classroom setting helps in mediating learning, where language acquisition becomes socially constructed. Arabic high school ELLs' teachers need to emphasize teaching of English language through engaging their learners in meaningful interactive learning experiences.

Ajayi (2009) argues that using multimodal approaches may allow Arabic high school ELLs chance to articulate their thoughts by using different forms of communications and generate various literary interpretations based on their diverse personal and cultural experiences. Shifting away from language, multimodal and multiliteracies models seek unconventional means of reading, understanding, and creation of texts. Understanding the intricate literacy methods like "multidirectional points of entry into texts" (p. 587), is one of the multi phases of multimodal and multiliteracies models. Multiliteracies and multimodality may enhance opportunity for Arabic high school ELLs to launch into reading by interpreting visuals, identifying the layout of the text in order to be engaged with the text. The proposed research is designed to explore this area that has received little attention in the research literature.

Ajay (2009) shows how adolescent students learning English acquire new literacy experiences using multimodality, mainly infusion of verbal texts and visual images. By creating a classroom environment that aims at connecting with learners' real world literacy experiences, ELL teenagers are able to experience use of multimodal tools in making their own meaning.

Ajayi's (2009) study reveals the ways junior high school ELLs generated possible interpretations of a cell phone advertisement's images by creating their own visual representations in order to reflect on their understanding. Subsequent to providing each student a color copy of a cell phone poster, ELLs were required to interpret the messages embedded to prospective buyers through the design of visual images, text format, and colors presented in the poster. Eventually, these learners were given chances to create their own visual depictions to show their understanding of the commercial text and write around five sentences to justify their drawing. Scaffolding these ELLs' writing through offering group members' help and teachers' support enhanced collaboration and promoted interaction. The findings of the study revealed how these learners' generated meanings of the poster text represented their own social and cultural experiences.

Analyzing ELLs' visual representations showed how their drawings represented their understanding of the advertisement (Ajayi, 2009). For example, one student composed a written piece accompanied by a drawing of a police car and an adult male dialing 911, a Verizon phone, and an intersection at two streets. The student's rationale for the drawing was that his mom got him a mobile phone to call 911 in case of an emergency. Along the drawing, in the composed written text, the student jotted down, "cell phone will help me get help if I am in trouble" (p. 592). Yet, the justification given for choosing the color red in the drawing was to symbolize "Blood", the title of a gang in the student's neighborhood (p. 592). In this situation, the student connected his meaning-making of the mobile phone commercial poster with his own personal experiences of living in the city of Los Angeles, where many families constantly experience dread of gang aggression. Shifting away from using language, the student made use of a visual representation to articulate his understanding of the text in addition to constructing new meaning. Thus, through use of multimodal resources, ELLs were able to discover non-redundant potential



of the generative power of transmediation, the transformation of meaning-making from one mode of communication to another.

Recognizing association between illustrations, colors, and use of layout format often enhance ELLs' conceptualization of the switching connection between language and visual representations (Ajayi, 2009). The projected research is intended to shed light on this area that has been rarely addressed for Arabic high school ELL population in the research literature. Multiliteracies pedagogy may allow Arabic high school ELLs to discover how other means of meaning, other than language, become active sources of representations, continuously recreated by these learners in their attempt to accomplish their various cultural roles. In the absence of verbal language, employment of visual illustrations and drawing may aid Arabic high school ELLs overcome language barrier as sole means of constructing meaning. Although multimodal and multiliteracies are often used interchangeably, each of the terms adds unique perspectives to 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy practices. Both multiliteracies and multimodality approaches advocate for a conceptual development of what is acknowledged as literacy. Within the constant changing globalized society, new literacy practices must be discussed and recognized as intricate ways of communication. Through use of a wide variety of modes, Arabic high school ELLs may become "designers" of their own "social futures" (New London Group, 1996, p. 92). Modeling employment of visual strategies based on Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008) may be also a methodological approach needed in supporting integration of visuals into writing instruction for ELLs.

### **Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP ®) Model**

Students whose native language is not English need to be provided with educational programs that help them attain success in school in order to become active members of society in

the future. Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) is an instructional model used for teaching content in a comprehensible way for ELLs while still helping them acquire basic language skills through a developmental language methodology. SIOP® is also intended to help teachers in preparing their ELLs achieve academic high school expectations.

SIOP® is a research approach based on former research done by the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) (Echevarria et al., 2008). It is a model basically applied for providing professional developments for educators in designing lesson plans that support sheltered instruction for content-established English as a second Language (ESL) courses. SIOP® involves use of a set of instructional approaches that promote teaching of content to students learning English in addition to addressing gradual acquisition of English language. Some of these methods consist of cooperative learning, building on students' personal experiences, vocabulary improvement, employment of visual representations, and use of modified and adapted texts in addition to extra complementary materials.

SIOP® protocol consists of thirty features assembled into eight essential components: Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/ Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/ Assessment (Echevarria et al., 2008). These components target at providing effective teaching pedagogies which are important for English learners in addition to offering research-based methods that promote learning for all students. On one hand, features under Lesson Preparation focus on planning of a lesson, taking into account language and content objective, employment of supplementary resources, and usefulness of activities. Presenting grade-level curriculum through adapted instruction in English to ELLs and via integrating appropriate content and language objectives boosts learning literacy skills. Helping ELLs acquire academic language proficiency as an integral part of daily

lessons must be consistently addressed in teachers' planning. On the other hand, acknowledging students' personal and cultural background experiences and activating their prior knowledge as well as developing their academic vocabulary form the basis of building background. Yet, promoting comprehension through modifying teacher speech, offering modeling, and implementing multimodal approaches enhances comprehensible input. Through employment of visual materials, graphic organizers, modified texts, and demonstrations, teachers will help their ELLs make connections between content being taught and students' prior knowledge and experiences.

Moreover, engaging students in meaningful strategies, providing instructional support, and enhancing critical thinking skills capitalize on role of Strategies component in SIOP® model. For example, planning activities that consider students' various learning preferences such as auditory, visual, kinesthetic, musical, and others helps in meeting diverse ways of learning and communicating. Preparing for strategies that take into account students' cultural backgrounds and learning styles encourage them to become risk takers with language and fosters a nonthreatening learning environment.

Through integrating effective strategies, interaction occurs. Interaction, an essential SIOP® component, gets established when teachers focus on elaborated speech and allow for suitable group configuration of students taking language and content progress into consideration. For instance, offering learning opportunities that allows interaction with teacher, peers, and text promotes elaborated discourse and higher thinking skills. Language development subsequently occurs via social interaction as teachers act as facilitators in helping students construct meaning based on their understanding of text and classroom discourse (Vygotsky, 1978). Involving students with educational conversations and meaningful learning experiences enriches language

development and helps in applying new knowledge and transferring content knowledge. Hence, it is through Practice and Application, one of SIOP® distinguished components that students are offered chances to rehearse, apply, and develop language and content learning. Meeting lesson objectives and considering appropriateness of lesson pace to students' various capabilities levels are confirmed through Lesson Delivery, the consequent SIOP® component. Finally, teacher's review of important language and content ideas, ongoing assessment of students' learning through scaffolding, and offering feedback ensure Review/Assessment, a significant SIOP® component, takes place.

In the current study, I offer a multimodal approach to learning through providing my ELLs the opportunity to use visual representations as springboards to writing. I used supplementary materials such as pictures, drawing, overhead transparencies, along with modified mandated curriculum reading texts to make content comprehensible for ELLs chosen for the study. I integrated picturing writing technique and engaged my participants in effective SIOP® strategies mainly Picture Sorts, Square Word Personalized (Vogt, Echevarria, & Short, 2010), Visual Discovery Strategy from Teacher's Curriculum Institute (n.d.) and Short Story Flow Chart (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008) to help them build on their cultural experiences and develop their literacy skills in writing. I took the role of a teacher facilitator and provided students with opportunities of discussion during think aloud time and writing times where interaction occurred. My ongoing informal assessment of students' learning through offering support and giving various opportunities of promoting writing skills capitalized on the indispensable function of monitoring ELLs' progress on consistent basis. Taking SIOP® as a pedagogical framework in helping ELLs achieve language and academic proficiency promotes acknowledging their culturally and linguistically diverse needs within the learning environment.

## Summary

Although writing provides an avenue of communication within the socio-cultural context individuals are interacting in, it is still considered a complex learning process for Arabic high school ELLs. Lack of vocabulary and knowledge about syntax of English language makes Arabic high school ELLs encounter the impediment of expressing themselves in words. Challenges in articulating thoughts are often interrelated with cultural conflicts, which result in widening the gap between Primary and Secondary Discourses. Encountering the experience of competing Discourses within the new mainstream culture requires that teachers explore various teaching methods so that learning can occur. Planning, modeling, and implementing meaningful literacy experiences should include opportunities to connect with visuals as well as make connections to one's cultural heritage.

Visuals may provide Arabic high school ELLs with tools needed to launch into writing and help them in internalizing language through use of images (Dehart, 2008). Arabic high school ELLs who are learning how to write need this supplementary scaffold, and in the case that their learning styles align with visual modes of learning, it may be beneficial to make use of additional experiences that visual learning provides (Dehart, 2008). By adopting teaching methodologies that merely foster use of verbal representations and discard visual language and multiliteracies in addition to multimodality approaches render the prevalence of a one size fits all.

Social interaction aids in helping Arabic high school ELLs acquire language acquisition within an authentic learning environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In the absence of verbal communication, adopting multiliteracies and multimodality pedagogies that are based on semiotic theoretical framework may offer Arabic high school ELLs the chance of exploring

creativity and discovery in meaning-making processes. When these learners experience use of visuals as a sign system of communication and conveying meaning, they are more inclined to launch into writing.

In summary, this literature review revealed the significance of teaching to write, mainly for Arabic high school ELLs. When Arabic high school ELLs build on their prior knowledge, linguistic variations, and diverse cultural referents it helps them visualize what they are reading (Wilhelm, 1995) and experience transactions with the texts. Acknowledging these learners' funds of knowledge may enhance the potential of generating new literary interpretations, which are symbolically represented in their use of visuals. Investigating the effectiveness of incorporating visual images and drawing as catalysts to writing instruction has become indispensable in the field of education. Further examination on probing how learners may reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning in their visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them to spring board writing should be considered. The next chapter presents the methodology used to examine how visual representations and drawing are used as springboards for reflection and writing by the six Arabic high school ELLs.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how Arabic high school English language learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from their visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them in disclosing cultural identity to springboard writing.

The main research questions framing this study are:

1. How do the Arabic high schools English Language Learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity in constructing meaning from their visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creation of artifacts?
2. In what ways do the Arabic high schools English Language Learners (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?

This research employed a qualitative research methodology which highlights the impact of social interactions on learning within a cultural context mainly for Arabic high school ELLs. Due to a cultural shock and language barrier in the mainstream culture, I provided each of the participants the opportunity to express his/her thoughts through the integration of symbolic representations in the writing component. Therefore, the most appropriate design for this kind of research was the qualitative case study. An examination of patterns and cultural themes related to the case were investigated through the use of multiple data collection sources. The data sources included the following: pre-questionnaire, field note observations, audio-taping, a post-questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and the students' artifacts.

## **Research Design**

I used a qualitative case study research design in this study because it allowed me as a researcher to explore the above stated research questions and to reveal the findings through an in-depth analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Yin (2003) believes “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life-context...” (p.13). A case study examines a group of particular individuals and investigates their actions under a specific situation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). This study, in particular, explored how Arabic high school ELLs reveal their cultural identity in their metaphorical representations and writing when visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic artifacts were used as springboards within a real-life educational context and this validated the case study design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008).

In order to recruit participants who would best meet the needs of the research study, I used purposive sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). I relied on my personal knowledge of participants as well as my understanding of Arabic culture to choose the sample. The context that the population was selected from was a suburban high school outside of a large Midwest state. The class that participated in this study class was social in nature, as I believed in open discussions, and opinion sharing on a regular basis.

## **The Role of Teacher Researcher**

Teacher research often originates from the tendency to form a thorough comprehensive picture of classroom experiences. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) argue that teachers' contributions to research on teaching should be acknowledged in the educational field. While methodical approach refers to various ways of teachers' collecting information and keeping written records of all teaching experiences, deliberate inquiry aims at conducting a teacher-



research that is well designed and executed. Through the consistent use of teachers' journals, essays, classroom studies, and observations, teachers' research become valuable.

My research in the current study might be viewed as a self-referent action (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). It was established through rigorous procedures which framed the study with theoretical backgrounds and provided adequate documentation. I believe examining human behavior within the actual social setting, in this case the classroom, mirrors what regularly happens.

Taking on the role of a teacher and researcher is also another form of teacher mediation (Floyd-Tenery, 2005). Contrary to non-teaching researchers, teacher researchers have a more in depth awareness and benefit from adopting a mediating stance within the learning environment. In the current study, I established mutual understanding with my participants; an insider's lens into my students' learning and their lives; and accessibility to their records and their demographics. By reflecting on the voices of both "teacher and learner, insider and outsider" (p. 128), authenticity in conducting this case study was established.

### **Case Study Research Protocol**

I formed a protocol to ensure reliability of the current study (Yin, 2003). I used a protocol as a guide to collect data from a single case study. I provided a rationale for the study, formed the case study questions, made a reference to theoretical frameworks and pertinent readings about the topic, and laid out the data collection procedures including the data collection plan and site selection.

I captured significant and unpredicted events in the actual field of study rather than merely focusing on ordinary events. I also offered a comprehensive picture of the topic being examined and showed impartiality in taking certain biased beliefs. I was careful to avoid

potential prejudices in collecting data. Being responsive and open-minded allowed me to value the occurrence of new situations rather than view them as possible threats to data collection.

Working with a group of Arabic high school ELLs with different cultural and personal background experiences required me to take a flexible stance, where acceptance of unpredictable events tended to be the norm. By listening attentively, I received information from multiple sources of data collection (Yin, 2003). While the interviewees told about an event, I not only heard the precise words but also sensed the mood and the emotion.

### **Site Selection and Description of Participants**

#### **Setting**

The investigation took place in my high school classroom. The high school is located in a suburban community in a mid-western state in America. The school is part of a big district that is considered the fifth largest in the state with approximately more than 18,000 students. The total student population at the participating school was 2363 at the time of the study. The student population is made up of 2.4% African American students, 0.38% Asians, 1.27% Hispanics, and 95.94 % Caucasians. Almost 93% of these Caucasians are Arabs.

Phoenicia High School is the pseudonym I gave to the high school to ensure confidentiality in this case study. Phoenicia High School is a school that services ninth to twelfth grade children in an Arab American suburban community in a Midwestern state. This city has a large Arab-American community, as 29.1% (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2001) of its inhabitants are Arab Americans who speak a non-English language at home (U.S. Bureau, 2001; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2001). Since 2001, there has been a huge influx of Middle Eastern students into this community because of war in their native countries. About 69% of the student population qualifies for a free or reduced cost lunch.

Phoenicia High School services the needs of immigrant high school students of an Arab-American by providing them with educational services in a bilingual program. This program was started in 1976 as a result of the arrival of non-native English speaking immigrants to this urban community. The community served by Phoenicia High School has changed over the past two decades from a European-American neighborhood to an Arab-American neighborhood.

### **English Language Proficiency Testing (ELPA)**

English Language Learners at Phoenicia High School are required to take the ELPA test where their scores actually determine their placement level in the Bilingual program. ELPA (English Language Proficiency Assessment) is a standardized test used to assess the English language proficiency levels of learners who are English Language Learners in the chosen state. Students are assessed on their listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills by taking both written and oral tests. ELLs' identification is based on home language surveys (HLS), which is referred to as Title VI No Child Left Behind [NCLB], (2002) (Michigan.gov Home or MDE). In that survey, students are asked to answer the following two questions:

1. Is the student's native tongue a Language Other Than English (or *LOTE*)?
2. Is a *LOTE* spoken in the student's home or environment?

If students report yes to one or both questions, then they are required to be tested for English proficiency by taking the ELPA Initial Screening. The scores of the ELPA Initial Screening in addition to other data collected from the school district determine the eligibility of the students to receive ELL services. Whereas NCLB (2002) requires reporting three performance levels (basic, intermediate, and proficient), the chosen state's ELPA mandates reporting five proficiency levels, mainly: Basic (B), Low Intermediate (LI), High Intermediate (HI), Proficient (P), and Advanced Proficient (AP).

## Michigan's ELPA Performance Levels

Ranking within the ELPA performance levels of 1-5 in addition to scoring low on state standardized testing (MEAP, Explore, Plan, or MME) help determine the eligibility of a student to receive English language learning (ELL) support. Table 1 illustrates the five ELPA performance levels.

Table 1

### *Five ELPA Performance Levels*

<b>5 (ELPA Basic) level</b>	<b>Reflects on students' least or no</b> English language attainment in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as defined by grade level standards in the state.
<b>4 (ELPA Low Intermediate) level</b>	<b>Reveals limited or emergent</b> English language achievement in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as determined by student's grade level standards in the state.
<b>3 (ELPA High Intermediate) level</b>	<b>Shows almost adequate or mostly advanced</b> English language acquirement in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as determined by students' grade level standards in Michigan.
<b>2 (ELPA Proficient)level</b>	Demonstrates <b>adequate or advanced</b> English language attainment in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as determined by students' grade level standards in the state.
<b>1 (ELPA Advanced) level</b>	<b>Represents complete internalization and practical functioning</b> of sophisticated English language skills in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as determined by students' grade level standards in Michigan.

Adopted and modified from ([dearbornschools.org/departments/english-language-learners](http://dearbornschools.org/departments/english-language-learners))

Phoenicia High School offers services that are suitable to the level of various students' needs in its Bilingual Program. Table 2 demonstrates the levels and kinds of services that are provided to students of each ELPA level at Phoenicia High School. Ranking within the ELPA performance levels of 1-5 in addition to scoring low on state standardized testing (MEAP, Explore, Plan, or MME) help determine the eligibility of a student to receive English language learning (ELL) support.

Phoenicia High School offers services that are suitable to the level of various students' needs in its Bilingual Program. Table 2 demonstrates the levels and kinds of services that are provided to students of each ELPA level at Phoenicia High School.

Table 2

*Overview of the Eligibility of Students from Grades 3-12*

Grades 3-12	
Students who perform within the range of <u>Basic</u> or <u>Intermediate</u> levels of ELPA (3-5) are qualified for services.	Students who perform within the <u>Proficient</u> or <u>Advanced</u> levels of ELPA (1-2) and have not met passing scores state assessment testing on MEAP, Explore, Plan, or MME, as are entitled to receive services.

Adopted and modified from ([dearbornschools.org/departments/english-language-learners](http://dearbornschools.org/departments/english-language-learners))

Each level of the ESLs' classes is characterized by the presence of a mixed age group of high school students. These students' grade levels may vary from freshmen to senior year depending on the transcripts offered to the administration office at the time of enrollment in the bilingual program.

### **Description of Participants**

I chose a purposive sampling as a way of selecting appropriate students for this study. I selected six Arab high school English language learners from Language Arts ESL 2 classroom. Three criteria employed for the selection of the six subjects included (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995): students scoring at the basic ELPA 5 performance level, literacy level in the native language, and being immigrants to the United States for less than two years prior to conducting the study. Since each level of ESL classes includes a group of students from a multi grade level (9-12) and multi age group (14 to 19), specific grade level, and age were not requirements for participant selection.

The six participants are immigrants to United States of America from different Middle Eastern cultural backgrounds such as Yemen and Lebanon. They are learners who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are entitled to receive free lunch under Title I regulations. Each of these participants represented different cultural beliefs in addition to various literacy background experiences in native language (Arabic) and in some cases Arabic and French. I informed participants that I will use pseudonyms to identify them.

### *Ayat*

Ayat is a fifteen- year old female Lebanese participant who had literacy background in Arabic. Ayat confided with me that she immigrated with her family to the United States in 2010 so she and her other two siblings could attain better educational opportunities. Ayat also disclosed that she was raised in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon where she attended a mixed-gender school up to seventh grade. She further revealed to me that she enjoyed living in her own country because she feels she belongs there. Ayat wears hijab in a very trendy way but does not wear Abaya (long robe). Ayat told me that wearing hijab reflects on her own respect to her Muslim religion and she values her cultural heritage.

### *Hadi*

Hadi is a sixteen-year old male Yemeni student who speaks and reads Arabic. Hadi shared that his family immigrated to the United States of America to improve their socio-economic status and seek better educational opportunities for their children. Hadi was raised in a rural area in Yemen. Most women are expected to wear hijab (scarf on the head) there and some are forced to cover their faces with the veil. The value of the hijab reflects on the religious belief Yemeni cultural heritage, females should wear hijab and dress up in “Abaya” (long robe).

Throughout his schooling years back home in Yemen, Hadi was enrolled in a gender separated small school. Hadi also shared how the teachers in the school were mainly males and the classroom was crowded with students. Contrary to the crowded classroom experience in Yemen, Hadi shared that he likes American schools. Being in a classroom of 22 bilingual students allowed Hadi the opportunity to participate and get his voice heard.

### *Hikmat*

Hikmat is a fourteen-year old male Yemeni student who speaks and reads Arabic. Hikmat shared that he, his brother, and his father immigrated to the United States so that the father would get better job and would ensure good education for his sons. Hikmat's mother and sisters stayed in Yemen because the father believes it is better for females to be raised in their conservative culture.

Hikmat grew up in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen where he attended a gender-separated school through eighth grade. Hikmat also shared how he had experienced interrupted schooling in his middle school years because of his medical condition. Lack of attendance in schooling life has affected Hikmat's proficiency performance in his native language. Although Hikmat can read and speak Arabic fluently, his academic writing in Arabic is limited.

### *Maha*

Maha is a fifteen-year old female Lebanese participant who had both a non-Roman alphabet literacy (Arabic) and Roman-alphabet literacy (French). Maha told me that she immigrated to the United States so she could get attain educational opportunities. Maha's oldest brother and his wife welcomed her and her mother in their house since their immigration. Maha also revealed that she was raised in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon where she attended a mixed-

gender school up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She further disclosed to me that she enjoyed living there because she feels she belongs there and that she and her mom are planning to visit Lebanon in summer.

### ***Rawaa***

Rawaa is a fifteen-year old female Yemeni participant who had literacy background in Arabic. Rawaa shared that she immigrated with her family to the United States so her family could better their socio-economic conditions and guarantee good education for their children. Rawaa also revealed to me that she was raised in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen where she attended a gender-separated school through seventh grade. Rawaa wears hijab and dresses up in Abaya [long robe]. She comes from a conservative family where females are expected to wear hijab and Abaya at the age of nine. Rawaa communicated with me her fear of not abiding by the cultural and religious norms such as wearing hijab and abaya in addition to not missing any praying time at home when her father is around. Rawaa also confided with me that she always makes sure she is obeying her father's orders, especially when it comes to embracing their Yemeni cultural traditions in America. Yet, Rawaa still respects her Muslim religion and she values her cultural heritage.

### ***Sael***

Sael is a fourteen- year old male Yemeni student. Sael started attending school in the United States after his parents sought better educational opportunities for him and sent him to live with his uncle in the United States in December 2009. Sael's father visits him every six months and stays with him in his uncle's house. Sael's father preferred to leave his wife and daughters in Yemen because he believes females need to be raised in a conservative society like Yemen. Sael's mother and sisters wear hijab and abaya.



Sael fluently speaks and reads Arabic. He was raised in Sanaa where he attended a mixed-gender school through middle school. Most females are expected to wear hijab there because this is a religious conviction. Similar to Hadi, Sael also shared that the teachers in the school were both males and females and the classroom was packed with students. Contrary to the cramped full classroom experience in Yemen, Sael shared that he likes American schools.

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **Purpose and Description**

By using a qualitative case study approach, I employed various kinds of data to provide a thorough description on the case under examination. Data collection included pre-questionnaire, participant observations, field notes, reflective journals, post-questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, audio-taping, and participants' physical artifacts (Spradley, 1980). Data collection records and analysis followed guidelines of case study analysis from Yin (2003) and ethnographic data collection from Spradley (1980), and Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte (1999). Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte (1999) believe that using multiple sources of data provide means of "confirmation" (p. 131) or validation for each other. I wanted to ensure that each research question was answered by multiple sources of data collection. This occurred when information deducted from one source was also verified by information from a different source. For instance, I corroborated or "cross checked" (p. 131) data collected from questionnaires in the current study by interviews from subjects chosen for the study, field notes, participant observations, artifacts, and reflective journals. The process of redundancy in collecting data ultimately led to triangulation. Triangulation was indispensably needed in this study for "confirming or cross-checking the accuracy of data obtained from one source with data collected from other different sources" (p. 131). Using these data collection materials required my

knowledge of the various methodological techniques followed in a case study. Table 3 presents these sources of data collection and their strengths and limitations (Yin, 2003). A thorough explanation of each of the data collection material followed.

Table 3

*Sources of Data Collection and Their Strengths and Limitations*

<b>Data Collection Materials</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<b>Pre-questionnaire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected information on Arab high school ELLS' experiences in terms of the use of visual images and drawing prior to the study</li> <li>• Enabled the researcher to gather information to determine participants' readiness level in terms of using visual images and drawings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrectness in participants' responses in recalling the regularity of the exposure and use of visual images in other classes.</li> </ul>
<b>Participant Observations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic-Provided real information on what was occurring in the context and in real time</li> <li>• Deeply perceptive-Offered insights into the interpersonal behaviors</li> <li>• Provided perception of real situations from an insider's point of view rather than an outsider's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Incorrectness in recall of information</li> <li>• Impartiality due to investigator's control of events for being a participant observer</li> <li>• Potential inaccurate depiction of a phenomenon due to investigators' engagement in the events too</li> </ul>
<b>Field notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Precise-contained specific details on participants, events, and behaviors within the context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impartiality on the investigator's part in recording information</li> </ul>
<b>Post-questionnaire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected information on Arab high school ELLS' level of motivation based on use of visual images and drawing in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential bias in participants' responses in order to please the researcher, being the teacher at the same time</li> </ul>
<b>Semi Structured Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directed-Gave focus on the topic of the case study</li> <li>• Insightful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response bias</li> <li>• Reflexivity where interviewees responded in a way that pleases interviewer</li> </ul>
<b>Reflective journals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded conjectures and investigator's experiences, fears, and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Biasness</li> </ul>
<b>Audio-taping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimized partiality in analyzing data, helps in collecting accurate information</li> <li>• Allowed for providing an extensive narrative description for each observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential bias on behalf of the students in intentionally saying or doing things to report answers the teacher wanted to hear</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided insights into cultural background variation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selectivity and biasness in interpreting cultural features</li> </ul>

Data Collection Materials Adopted and Modified from Yin (2003)

### **Description and Rationale of the Pre-Questionnaire**

I developed a pre- questionnaire to collect information on Arabic high school ELLs' experiences in terms of the use of visual images (Appendix C). I administered the pre-questionnaire in my classroom after school dismissal time on the second day of the first week of conducting the current study (Table 4). I gave participants approximately 15-20 minutes to respond to the questions. I offered them the option of not responding to questions if they did not feel comfortable answering.

The purpose of this pre-questionnaire was to find out how much had Arabic high school ELLs been exposed to use of visual tools prior to the study. It was only through administering it that I was able to gather information regarding readiness level in terms of using visual images and drawings. The pre-questionnaire was also significant since it helped in collecting data compatible with the goals of the current study. I translated the pre-questionnaire into Arabic. I took into consideration the limited English proficiency of the Arabic ELL participants and wrote the questionnaire in their native language to ensure their understanding of the items and quickened the response rate. The survey consisted of six closed-ended questions designed in a form of multiple-choice questions followed by a few sub-questions. Some questions asked about participants' gender, grade level, and background exposure to use of visual images and drawing. Other questions asked participants whether they viewed themselves as artists or visual learners. I also asked students were to respond to the frequency of the exposure and use of visual images in other classes. At the end, there was a question that asked about students' use of visual products, drawing, and other graphic organizers (Tooley, 2009).

The questions in the pre-questionnaire required the participants to reply by writing. I took the layout of the questions into consideration. I provided the questions in an organized way

where there was no occurrence of more than one question on an individual line (Franekel & Wallen, 2008). I based the format of the pre-questionnaire on “closed-ended questions” (Appendix C). The questions were non-leading in nature and avoided use of ambiguous words and sophisticated vocabulary.

### **Description and Rationale of Participant Observations**

Participant observations allowed me to view the reality of the situation, which was the integration of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creations as catalysts to writing instruction (Yin, 2003). I observed participants after school dismissal time for 16 hours total (two consecutive hours for each session) over a period of five consecutive school weeks (See Table 4). They read-aloud and used visual representations and drawings as tools to launch into writing. Being the researcher and the teacher at the same time required me to be an active participant. Therefore, audio-taping became quite indispensable. Audio-taping minimized the potential inaccuracy of depicting specific events that might have occurred.

### **Description and Rationale of Field Notes**

I took field notes to describe the learning environment and comment on participants’ visual images and drawings (Tooley, 2009). I particularly examined social interaction and ongoing support using visual representations and drawings. The research followed the principles of language that were used by the participants, mainly: a) language identification principle and b) the verbatim principle (Spradley, 1980). I used some methods of identification, mainly quotation marks and brackets in order to identify the language that was used for each of the field note entries. For instance, I used quotation marks to identify the participants. However, I used brackets to reflect on my own reflections and interpretations (Spradley, 1980).

I followed the technique of making a verbatim record of what participants said during class time and interviews in the method of data collection. This principle of “getting things down word-for-word” by writing down the participants’ statements in the social context or during the interview allowed me to get a thorough picture of how visual images were being utilized in writing (Spradley, 1980, p. 67). The use of concrete language in making descriptive observations helped me in giving specific details of what was occurring in the field and aided me in expanding my field notes too. The presence of audiotapes at the table cluster of these six participants helped me to expand my notes after observation time.

I collected field notes for each session of the eight observations where I examined the events occurring in the classroom for two consecutive hours per observation session. I also took notes whenever it was possible (Spradley, 1980). I had to ensure that potential use of participants’ native language was recorded in the field-notes (Spradley, 1980).

### ***Condensed field notes***

Two different kinds of field notes make up the record for this case study (Spradley, 1980). During the actual field observations, it was impossible to write down everything that occurred or everything informants said. I took condensed notes in a form of phrases, single words, or disjointed sentences to record the information “right on the spot” (Spradley, 1980, p. 69). These condensed notes also aided in recording important key terms and phrases in order to identify significant events in the social situation I observed (Spradley, 1980).

### ***Expanded field notes***

The importance of my condensed notes was revealed as it was expanded upon the completion of each of the field observations. After each field observation and after making a condensed account, I followed what Spradley (1980) refers to as the procedure of making an

expanded account. Expanded account required me to fill in gaps by adding details and recollect events that were not recorded instantly in the field.

### **Description and Rationale of the Post-Questionnaire**

A post- questionnaire (Appendix D) was also given to participants on the third school day of the fifth week of the study (Table 4). Participants completed the questionnaire after school in about 15-20 minutes. I administered it as a whole group and provided participants the option of not answering some questions if they did not feel comfortable in answering. Students selected whether they wanted to complete the survey in Arabic or English.

The purpose of the post-questionnaire was to examine students' level of motivation in terms of using visual images and drawing in writing. The questions, adapted from Sundre's scale (1999), measured participants' motivation. There were four statements in the questionnaire and students responded by choosing a number from a 5 point Likert scale. At one end of the scale, number 5 represented the level of least agreement, or "Strongly Disagree" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008, 124). However, at the other end of the scale, a 1 represented most agreement or "Strongly Agree" (p. 124). The use of Likert scale aided me in evaluating the level of participants' perceived engagement.

### **Description and Rationale of Semi-Structured Interviews**

The purpose of the two semi-structured interviews was exploratory. Exploratory semi-structured interviews were chosen for two important purposes: (1) to examine domains that are considered to be important and (2) to gain a deeper understanding of the students' culture, and (interactions within the study site (Schensul et al., 1999). Through the interviews, I was able to gain more insights about the participants' beliefs about use of visual images and drawings as springboard to writing.

Schensul's, Schensul's, and Le Compte's (1999) interview protocol guidelines were followed for the construction of good semi-structured interview questions. I took into consideration the sequence of questions in constructing the open-ended interviews. For instance, the questions in the interviews were ordered according to sections or certain domains and by level of generality versus specificity. On one hand, I grouped all questions on the same domain or topics together to facilitate my organization of ideas. On the other, I ranked questions from the most general to the most specific to help me in collecting and analyzing data.

Each of the interviews consisted of questions that related to the study research questions (Appendix E). I adopted some of the questions from Stanford University Study of Writing interview questions. I carried out two semi-structured interviews and each of them had the same. Due to limited English proficiency, interview questions were translated verbatim into Arabic where interviewees had the opportunity to either answer in Arabic or English. The participants had enough opportunity to elaborate on their responses and ask for clarifications. Later, I translated these transcribed responses verbatim into English when Arabic was used.

I conducted the first interview individually for each of the participants on the last three school days of the fifth week of the current study. I also administered the second semi-structured interview individually for each of the participants on the second, third, and fourth school day of the sixth week of the study after school time. The purpose of conducting this second interview was to ensure that the findings based on the data analysis were accurate and aligned with what the interviewees mainly intended to communicate. Each of the first and second semi-structured interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes. The use of a semi-structured interview allowed me to probe into other areas of concern through guided rather than directive questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Probing was evident by using queries such as asking

interviewees “Do you want to add something else?”, “What do you mean by that?” Some of the questions were designed to respond to concentrate on Arabic high ELL’s school’s experiences and their use of visual images. Other questions intended to find out to what extent Arabic high school ELLs got motivated to write.

### **Description and Rationale of Reflective Journal**

My journal took the form of a diary. I reflected on my own conjectures and recorded all my experiences, fears, and challenges that arose during the fieldwork (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980). Dating each journal entry and making a reflective record of fieldwork basis enabled me to take into consideration personal biases and to carefully consider their influences on the research (Spradley, 1980).

### **Description of and Rationale of Audio-taping**

The employment of audio-taping aided in minimizing partiality in analyzing data, helped to collect accurate information, and allowed the provision of an extensive narrative description for each observation. I informed participants that the study was about experiencing use of visual images and drawings in the Language Arts class. This minimized potential bias on behalf of the participants in intentionally saying or doing things to impress me as a teacher while engaged in the activities related to integrating visuals and drawing in writing.

### **Description and Rationale of Physical Artifacts**

Participants used physical artifacts (work of art such as collages, drawings, creation of storyboards) as tools to help them launch into writing. Using these artifacts, I examined how cultural features and variations reflected on and connected to participants' writings. Participants created artistic pieces based on writing prompts related to cultural experiences in the second, third, and fifth weeks of the current study (See Table 4).



## **Data Collection Procedures**

### **Consent Approval**

A consent form (Appendix A) written in English and translated verbatim into Arabic was obtained and documented. I informed parents/guardians about the nature of this research study through a letter sent to them (see Appendix A). I also addressed the purpose of the study in the consent form where I provided my e-mail and contact information. I attached a permission slip for parents/ guardians to sign that they understand the purpose of the study, to make them aware of the responsibilities of their children, and assent to their child participating in the study to the consent form.

Students between 14 and 17 needed an assent form. A doctoral Arabic high school teacher at the school took care of obtaining assent forms. I obtained school permission prior to the start of the study (see Appendix B). Due to the possibility of limited or lack of English, the use of Arabic language ensured that the parents/guardians of participants understand the purpose of the research and this would promote the response rate from them.

### **Rationale for the Selection of Materials**

Although I obtained the permission to conduct the study after school, I still decided to follow the district mandated curriculum. I wanted to explore viable ways to provide cultural access to these texts through interactive and multimodal instructional practices. Adapting district mandated materials in ways to be more culturally responsive for my students occurred through offering them the use of metaphorical representations (visual) as catalysts in reading and writing. I wanted my participants, Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, Rawaa, and Sael to experience richness of constructing meaning through use of other sign systems (art) other than language in a rich discourse-based settings, reflect on their own cultural referents, and springboard their writing.

The materials for this study incorporated various kinds of visual information in order to support the research questions. I based the use of visual representations and drawings on the following three themes: Food, Greed Versus Happiness, and Love and Sacrifice Versus Selfishness. In each of the reading selections, participants interrelated with the literary texts and used visual images and drawings as springboards to their writing. I used particular criteria for the reading selections. One criterion was choosing literary texts where images and illustrations were used to prompt Arabic high school ELLs to predict, visualize, and interact with the given text (Andrzejak et al., 2005; Tooley, 2009). Another criterion was selecting texts that matched with participants' appropriate age level and reading level based on the reported ELPA scores. The third criterion looked at the appropriate length of each reading selection where reading and incorporating writing activities about each story would not exceed two to three sessions of teaching (2 hrs. per each session). The set of literary texts included two narrative pieces, the adapted version of "The Gift of the Magi" based on a story by O. Henry (2004), a myth, "The Midas Touch" (O'Sullivan & Newman, 2006), and an expository text, "The Food Guide Pyramid" (O'Sullivan & Newman, 2006).

### **Instruction**

The study took place for a period of six successive school weeks (Table 4) in my classroom after school dismissal time. I paced out instruction and expanded on the weekly plan of instruction to allow participants sufficient time to process information and internalize concepts. Prior to any writing activity, I began the instruction of each of the reading selections with the think-aloud. During the think-aloud, I used text images in order to model how to predict what the reading selection would be about through visualizing the text. I modeled the employment of visualization as a technique. For instance, the development of picturing details

of a text provided participants with the chance to create their own drawings about a text subsequent to reading it at the early stages of writing (Tooley, 2009). Asking participants to bring in their own pictures about a certain reading selection and describe them prior to reading encouraged them to develop awareness of the role of visual illustrations and thus start using it as a tool to launch into writing.

Table 4

*Procedures of Data Collection*

Sequence	Materials	Instruction	Data Collection
Week 1 On the second school day of this week	Pre-questionnaire	Administered as a whole group with participants in class after school dismissal time	Pre-questionnaire (Appendix C)
Week1 On the last school day of this week	“The Food Guide Pyramid”	Read and Think-Aloud (visualizing)Using photographs-visuals from Internet and text (pyramid diagram) SIOP® strategy- Picture Sorts (Appendix F)	-1st observation (2 hrs.) -audiotapes
Week 2 On the second school day of this week	“The Food Guide Pyramid”  Expository	-Prompt: Write about your favorite healthy food. What foods are healthy in your culture? What foods are not healthy? Explain. Pre-writing strategy- creating a poster of a pie chart -Use of the SIOP® strategy- 4 Square Personalized word(Appendix G)	-2nd observation (2 hrs.) -audiotapes
Week2 On the last school day of this week	“The Gift of the Magi” narrative	- Read and Think-Aloud (visualizing) -Using Visual Discovery SIOP ® strategy (Appendix H) - Pictures and use of promethean board	-3rd observation (2 hrs.) audiotapes
Week 3 On the second school day of this week	“The Gift of the Magi”	Pre-writing: Write a story about a time you have received a special gift from someone close to you on a special holiday back home. Storyboarding to plan a story (narrative writing) - During drafting -use of Storyboard to start writing	-4th observation (2 hrs.) audiotapes
Week 3 On the last school day of this week	“The Gift of the Magi”	-Final stage writing(creation of a story or picture book from Storyboard) accompanied by a writing narrative piece	-5th observation (2 hrs.) audiotapes
Week 4 On the second school day of this week	“The Midas Touch”	- Read and Think-Aloud (visualizing) -Using pictures, illustration books, and creation of a timeline	-6th observation (2 hrs.) audiotapes

Week 4 On the last school day of this week	“The Midas Touch” Narrative	Prompt: Create an original myth with a moral lesson about a mythical character in your own culture. Think of the character’s motivations and describe their traits. Pre-writing:(Storyboard In the form of a Story Flow Chart SIOP @Strategy) (Appendix J) - During writing use of Storyboard, story frames, or drawing to outline ideas using signpost words	7 <sup>th</sup> observation (2 hrs.) -audiotapes
Week 5 On the second school day of this week	“The Midas Touch”	-Final piece of writing( Accompanied by the creation of a Collage on the mythical character)	-8th observation (2 hrs.) -audiotapes
Week 5 On the third school day of this week	Post-questionnaire	-Administered for whole group of participants	Post-Questionnaire (Appendix D)
Week 5 On the last three school days of this week	1 <sup>st</sup> semi-structured interview	-Conducted individually 2 interviews per day after school	Interview 1 (Appendix E)
Week 6 On the second, third, and fourth school day of this week	2 <sup>nd</sup> semi-structured interview	-Conducted individually 2 interviews per day after school	Same Interview (Appendix E)

I based the writing lesson on a prompt relevant to the selection read and discussed. Each lesson consisted of my modeling of the use of a visual representation or drawing, participants’ think and share time, followed by independent writing time (Wei, 2005). During that time, participants drew and used the visual illustrations and drawing as springboards to their writing. I used visuals to model writing instruction including pictures, drawings, and graphic organizers (Tooley, 2009). Participants in turn used their visual representations and drawings as scaffold to their writing. Employing the “Picturing-Writing” process that allowed the use of visual art as a stepping-stone to the writing process was expected to help my Arabic high school ELLs participants launch into writing (Andrzejak et al., 2005, p. 4). I also employed the same visual representations and drawings used as storyboards as scaffolds during writing (Tooley, 2009).

I presented exposure to visual representations as storyboards to writing at the early stages of writing, mainly brainstorming and pre-writing (Tooley, 2009). I used some of the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP®) strategies. SIOP® is a research-based type of sheltered instruction developed by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) to assist in making content area comprehensible for English Language Learners. Modeling strategies helped participants develop their academic skills in generating ideas and developing creativity for their writing based on their interactions with the chosen read literary texts. After presenting and using visual images and oral texts, I invited participants to create their own visual representations or drawings as springboards to their writing.

A presentation of the think-aloud strategy was introduced in the first session of “The Food Guide Pyramid” (see Table 4, week 1). Using pictures of food of various cultures, human body, charts, visuals from Internet and text (pyramid diagram) helped participants to predict and make connections by building on prior knowledge. I also employed the SIOP strategy, Picture Sorting (See Appendix F), to assist participants in realizing role of using visual representations in generating ideas. Participants expanded on these ideas when they created their own visual representations and drawings prior to writing.

In week 2 (Table 4), I asked participants to respond to the following writing prompt: “Write about your favorite healthy food. What foods are healthy in your culture? What foods are not healthy? Explain”. I invited participants to create a poster in the form of a pie chart by finding or drawing pictures of their own healthy diet by referring to various kinds of foods from their cultures and arranging the pictures in an interesting way as springboards to their writing. I also modeled and implemented use of SIOP® strategy, 4 Square Word Personalized Strategy

(See Appendix G) to help participants organize their ideas and find appropriate descriptive vocabulary words for their writing.

Through think-aloud strategy, I introduced an adapted version of the narrative piece, "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry (2004) on the last school day of second week. I modeling and used the Visual Discovery SIOP® strategy (See Appendix H) during that session. Bringing pictures that had biblical references and showing pictures on promethean board that had to do with holiday from different cultures helped in activating participants' schema and encouraged them to make connections with the text. I provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the text and in expressing their cultural referents through the writing session in the third school week of the study. Prior to writing time, I guided them to create their own Storyboards (See Appendix I) in response to the following prompt: Write a story about a time you have received a special gift from someone close to you on a special holiday back home.

Storyboard strategy is a form of picture writing technique originally used by ancient Egyptians as a cultural tool known as hieroglyphics to help in understanding societal hierarchy of their world (Essley, Rief, & Rocci, 2008). A Storyboard represents a writing design consisting of set of boxes (or any geometrical shape) put in a sequential order. The writer is supposed to add ideas, draw pictures, or insert symbols, or a text in each of the boxes provided. The pictures could take any form such as simple or sophisticated cartoons, photographs, or any form of a graphic organizer or illustration.

On the last school day of the third week of the study, I asked participants to use their Storyboards to revise and edit their pictures and their drafted lines done during the fifth week writing session. Creating a story and picture book following the template for Steps for creating a Story and Picture Book was the final stage of writing.

I introduced “The Midas Touch” myth (2004) as a new literary genre on the second school day of the fourth week. I presented think -aloud strategy by looking at pictures in the story and in illustrated books about mythical characters who learned a moral from their adventures. A timeline of important events in the story was created. The participants and I added drawings and sign post words (first, next, later, then, finally, but, also, for example, etc. . .) to the timeline. We used the timeline as a technique to retell the plot of the story in a sequence.

I offered a whole block of writing session on the last school day of the fourth week of the study. I guided participants to use the SIOP® Storyboard template offered in a form of a Story Flow Chart (See Appendix J) (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008) to respond to a given writing prompt. The prompt asked participants to create an original myth with a moral lesson about a mythical character (king, god, goddess, queen) in their culture. Participants had to think of the mythical character’s motivations and describe his/her traits while writing about his/her adventures in the myth. As a prewriting strategy, I prompted participants to use the storyboard of a flow short story by drawing their own illustrations or pictures. The same flow chart storyboard was used during writing where participants outlined their ideas and wrote down text based on their elaboration on their own visual representations. Use of signpost words helped participants in identifying logical chronicling of events in their stories.

Writing a one paragraph narrative piece in the form of an original cultural myth followed the creation of a collage of the mythical character chosen for the story on the second school day of the fifth week of the study. Coloring, sticking pictures, or forming visual representations from dough to represent mythical character or flow of important events was the alternative offered for making a collage. I provided participants with the materials needed to complete the task.

## **Data Analysis**

Merriam (1988) argues data analysis is an inductive process that begins in the data collection phase. I collected data from field notes, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, artifacts, audiotapes, and reflective journals. Spradley (1980) believes data analysis is “a search for patterns,” (p. 85). In the initial stage of the analysis process, I searched for patterns and major themes emerged. Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte (1999) also consider that data analysis is a “recursive or iterative process” (p. 147) since it is cyclical in nature. I discovered new ways to explore the information and created new domains as salient events emerged in the data collecting process. The codes were not pre-arranged but rather generated from the raw data collected. All of the data collected in this study were “organized, sorted, coded, reduced, and patterned into a “story” or interpretation that responds to the questions that guided the study...” (Merriam, 1998, p. 148). I followed the procedure of sorting, coding, sifting, and organizing data as I searched for patterns.

### **Initial Analysis**

During the initial analysis, the major themes and categories emerged and the guiding questions were further explored. I started coding data during and after the data collection process to look for emerging themes relevant to the guiding questions. I was searching for patterns which would interrelate with the initial three research guiding questions in order to gain insights on how the use of visuals as catalysts to writing will help my six Arabic high school ELLs mediate their meaning, launch into writing, and connect to their cultural referents.

### **Intensive Analysis**

Initially, I had 3 research questions that were used to frame to major themes across the data collected by following Merriam’s (1988) intensive analysis process. I continued to search



for patterns to discover the categories within the cultural identity theme. This consisted of carefully decoding the students' writing in relation to the visuals and the major theme that emerged. I looked for repetition of concepts and ideas, and documented key words and phrases in this phase. I considered the data collected from field notes, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, artifacts, audiotapes, reflective journals, and artifacts, where each of the six participants is considered as a mini-case. I analyzed participants' responses based on the themes that emerged during the initial analysis stage (Stake, 2006). Merriam's (1998) intensive analysis process guided me in examining the participants' writing as I began to identify the categories which surfaced. I constantly revisited the emerging categories while comparing and contrasting the data. At this stage of the analysis, the interrelatedness of the categories was explored for the purpose of reaching the assertions phase.

The results of this stage in the analysis process led to a reformulation of the guiding questions which are presented below:

1. How do the Arabic high schools English Language Learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?
2. In what ways do the Arabic high schools English Language Learners (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?

As I concentrated on my new research questions, the major themes supported me in looking at, sorting, sifting, and organizing my data to decide on the categories. The intensive analysis continued as I incorporated Spradley's (1980) modified version of domain analysis to sort the data into more refined categories. I looked for semantic relationships by examining the visuals to reexamine and consider the earlier themes and continued to search for the major

categories. This was done by conducting a comparative-contrast analysis across the six individual case studies. The themes which remained constant throughout the intensive analysis phase provided major information about the purpose of the study. The study offered an affirmation of the importance of the use of visual representations, self-created drawing, and other artistic creations as agents to help Arabic high school ELLs reflect on their own cultural identity and construct meaning and employ them as springboard to writing.

The emerging themes answered my research questions. The two major themes are: *Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals* and *Perpetuation of Female Subordination*. These themes emerged based on my field note observations, interviews, artifacts, questionnaires, reflective journal, and artifacts. Reflecting on the findings and considering the themes that had emerged led to writing the final report. I employed an adapted version of Stake's (2006) worksheet for presenting the case study theme in relation to the research questions, categories and sources.

Table 5

*Intensive Analysis Chart*

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
<b>Theme 1:</b> Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals	Question 1: How did the Arabic high school (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?	A. A Detailed Account of Hadi's Development from Drawing to Writing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional State in Drawing</li> <li>2. Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning</li> </ol>	Artifacts ( self-created drawings-writing pieces) Interviews Pre-questionnaire Post-questionnaire
	Question 2: In what ways did the Arabic high schools (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?	B. A Detailed Account of Hikmat's Development from Drawing to Writing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Entree to the new Discourse in Drawing</li> <li>2. Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning</li> </ol> C. A Detailed Account of Maha's Development from Drawing to Writing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maha's Colorful Drawing</li> <li>2. Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning</li> </ol> D. Ayat's Connections	
<b>Theme 2:</b> Perpetuation of Female Subordination	Question 1: How do Arabic high schools (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?	A. The Woman's Position: "Long Haired Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Hadi's and Sael's Visual Discovery Discussion B. The Woman's Place: "Entertainment Storytelling Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Rawaa's Development from Drawing to Writing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Importance of Expressing Cultural Beliefs to Start Writing</li> <li>2. Discuss Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning</li> </ol>	Artifacts ( visuals-self-created drawings-collage-writing piece) Field notes Observations Interviews Pre-questionnaire Post-questionnaire
	Question 2: In what ways do the Arabic high school (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?		

### **Mini-Case Analysis**

Each student participant had a pseudonym and the data collected were analyzed based on the themes that emerged in the intensive analysis phase. Each of the mini-cases gave me deeper insights into examining closely the case being studied which was the employment of visuals as catalysts to writing for Arabic high school ELLs. I thoroughly looked into each participant's mini case to investigate its distinguished contribution in relevance to the purpose of the study and to the emerging theme (Stake, 2006). All of the data were looked at closely based on these initial findings to foster building up the assertions with evidence.

### **Cross-Case Analysis**

I conducted Stake's (2006) cross-case analysis of the six mini-cases to compare and contrast the data in order to identify commonalities and salient themes across the case of each of the participants. During this phase of analysis, recognizing similarities and differences of each mini-case to the others was indispensable. Finally, I offered the affirmations based on the in the findings report. These assertions mainly emerged from data analysis.

I employed and adapted a version of Stake's (2006) cross-case analysis method where I compared and contrasted the six students' mini-cases in regards to the findings and themes. I identified commonalities and dissimilarities among the mini-cases. Most importantly, I relied on data from different sources to ensure triangulation and support of the findings.

### **Trustworthiness of the Case Study**

This study embodied a set of data collection and data analysis procedures which were needed to meet its level of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue there are four criteria of trustworthiness that need to be met in a naturalistic inquiry mainly, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It is through prolonged engagement, persistent observation,

triangulation (comparing multiple sources to corroborate information and support findings with evidence), referential adequacy (examination of data analysis after findings) and member checks (taking initial interpretations and findings back to the respondents from whom the raw data were originally collected) that credibility of a qualitative study is reinforced to support the findings. Offering thick and rich description of raw data enhances the transferability of the research findings to other contexts in the educational field. Triangulation and audit trail (a detailed log for explaining extensively how data were gathered and analyzed) establish dependability and confirmability of a qualitative research.

### **Credibility**

Based on Guba's and Lincoln's (1985) concept of trustworthiness, I wanted to ensure that this research will be trustworthy. Through my triangulation analysis, persist observations, member checks, and peer debriefing, credibility was met.

### ***Triangulation***

The use of multiple methods in this case study such as questionnaires, field notes, recorded interviews, observations, and documentations in the reflective journal ensured triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This triangulation of data collection aided to examine whether participants beliefs about use of visual images conformed into their interview responses and were portrayed through the actual use of visual representations and drawings during writing. For instance, via the use of multiple sources of data collection in this study, what participants reported in the semi-structured interviews was checked against what I observed or what I documented in the observations and field notes (Merriam, 2009). Triangulation occurred using multiple sources of data. I coded observation field notes based on student utilization of visual representations and drawings. I corroborated the elicited themes from data collected by

reviewing the data with my major advisor. Triangulation was also met by analyzing the questionnaire responses, observation field notes, reflective journals, and following up the observations with conducting semi-structured interviews. Conducting an interview with the same subjects twice also facilitated in making the research findings rigorous (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### ***Persistent observations***

Persistent observation took place for 16 hours. Although I was the researcher, I still took the role of a participant observer by conducting significant observations. I was attentive to context, setting, and participants throughout the study. This required me to distinguish between ordinary and extraordinary events occurring and urged me to look at the salient ones in more depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Recording the salient incidents immediately was quite hard since I was the teacher and researcher at the same time. The use of a tape recording and reflective journal helped in identifying the significant events that occurred during while conducting the study.

### ***Member checks***

Member checking allowed me to check for accuracy of the interpretations of the data collected and analyzed with my participants from whom the data were obtained. Member checks occurred throughout the initial and intensive data analysis while my participants engaged in the use of visual representations and drawings as springboards to writing as well as after the data collection phases. Member checking gave my participants the chance to evaluate accuracy and precision of preliminary results, correct erroneous information, and challenge me of what could have been considered a misleading analysis of interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This

technique prohibited the participants from claiming misunderstandings on behalf of me and enriched the credibility of the study.

### ***Peer debriefing***

My honesty was tested by exposing me to searching and challenging questions by another expert (doctoral student who speaks and writes in Arabic) in the same field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Debriefing occurred after each session throughout the study and after member checking. Through ongoing analysis of the data collected and analyzed, the debriefer helped reveal potential biases and assumptions made on my behalf. Both the debriefer and I documented each encounter we experienced for the sake of audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Transferability**

Offering thick and rich description based on field notes, data analysis, and findings enhanced the possibility of making the current research findings transferable to other contexts in the educational field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My reliability in this study required me to give adequate thick and descriptive data. My use of direct quotes from participants' semi-structured interviews and field observations in the current study enriched the description.

### **Dependability**

Dependability required presence of an inquiry auditor (my major advisor) who examined the product of inquiry, mainly data of the findings and the records from her point of view of accuracy. An inquiry auditor also ensured that the findings and interpretations were supported by the data and were logical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of an audit trail during the analysis phase helped to address dependability.

### ***Audit trail***

In this study, the audit trail acted as a log for explaining extensively how data were gathered, how categories emerged, and how interpretations were made throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used a reflective journal as a record to document things discovered, problems experienced in gathering data, or questions posed. I used the audit trail technique as a running record of my interpretation and analysis of the data collected.

### **Confirmability**

The aim of confirmability was to determine whether the findings were well founded on data collected and analyzed rather than grounded on my personal assumptions or biases in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I followed Lincoln's and Guba's (1985) suggestion of reviewing the following kinds of raw record data :1) raw materials such as written field notes and interview notes; 2) data analysis, including writes up of field notes; 3) synthesis products, mainly interpretations and inferences of data collected; 4) and instrument progress information such as observations and interviews.

### **Meeting Ethical Behaviors**

Meeting ethical considerations is a challenging task in a case study. Merriam (1988) believes that to ensure a study has been ethically conducted and data have been morally disseminated depend on the researcher herself. I obtained written informed consent and written assent prior to conducting the study and this ensured that coercion in participation did not occur. Informing participants that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any time also ascertained ethical behavior. I provided participants and their parents/ guardians with information about the rationale of study, its promising findings, and its possible implications on them as Arabic high school ELLs and this enhanced level of meeting ethics too. Giving



participants a preference in not answering certain questions in interviews and questionnaires provided they did not feel comfortable answering some questions control level of putting pressure on them in responding. Finally, confidentiality of participants' identities and discretion of the actual name of the location ensured that I had followed ethical guidelines. Asserting ethical consideration was significant in obtaining findings that were well founded in data collected and analyzed as well as ensuring the safety and confidentiality of participants.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how Arabic high school English language learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from their visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creation of artifacts and employ them as catalysts in disclosing cultural identity to spring board writing. This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology, mainly research design, research protocols, procedures, and methods that were taken to conduct the current research. A qualitative research approach was adopted for conducting this case study. Using a case study required me to provide adequate data derived from the actual field. I followed case study protocols in collecting data by mainly using pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, observations through field notes and audio-taping, two semi-structured interviews, students' artifacts, and reflective journal. I also addressed meeting rigor of trustworthiness and ethical considerations to ensure the plausibility of the research findings and guarantee that transferability could occur. The next chapter will present and analyze the findings of the study where themes emerged based on data collected and analyzed.

## CHAPTER 4: Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) were able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them to spring board into writing. As the participants, Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, Rawaa, and Sael wrote, they were able to make meaning and reflect on their culture as it related to their new culture. They reflected on their culture and were able to write. As they wrote they were able to reflect more. The reflection was important because it really did bridge one culture and another. The six participants were purposefully selected to participate in this qualitative case study. The data were collected from field notes observations, questionnaires, interviews, artifacts and my reflective journal. This chapter will provide an analysis of the finding, using Merriam's (1988) intensive analysis process. This process helped in identifying the major themes across data based on the following research questions:

1. How do the Arabic high school English language learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?
2. In what ways do the Arabic high school English language learners (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?

This chapter presents the findings in two major themes of which are subdivided into a total of five categories. The first theme is *Cultural identity ties to religious rituals*, which discusses how participants relied upon religion as a significant cultural factor in identifying their cultural identity and connecting to the new culture and its Discourse. Through reflection on their

religious rituals, participants revealed how they still embrace the norms of their cultural heritage. As they hold on to religious rituals, they are able to foster the preservation of their cultural identity as well as create a bridge between their native Discourse and the Discourse of their engagement in American culture. As the participants engaged in the research, they reflected on how they attain social recognition by actively participating in the social norms of a culture and performing what is culturally expected to be appropriate. The second theme, *Perpetuation of female subordination* elaborates on the subservient role of a woman, which highlights the culturally embedded ways of stereotyping women as means of sustaining the existing status-quo of a culture. Although the participants were presented with three literary texts, the adapted version of “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry (2004), “The Midas Touch” (O’Sullivan & Newman, 2006), and “The Food Guide Pyramid” (O’Sullivan & Newman, 2006), the stories that showed more deeply how cultural identity ties to religious rituals and revealed more clearly the perpetuation of female subordination were the first two mentioned ones.

### **Theme 1: Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals**

Through daily life practices, such as those experienced in religious rituals, people learn what is considered to be culturally accepted, expected, and appropriate. As individuals seek social acceptance they also learn to converse in socially acceptable ways within a given context. Understanding and internalizing behaviors, language, and ways of interacting are often passed down from social institutions, such as religious communities, and shape the ways individuals understand who they are in relationship to their social context. Cultural identities are continuously shaped and fashioned as individuals engage in new environments, such as school.

Drawing upon one’s cultural identity is especially helpful in a new environment, such as an academic environment, as demonstrated by the six Arabic high school ELLs in this study.

Their Muslim practices helped them represent their individual identity within the new American culture. Cultural rituals embedded in their religious practices were the gateway to express their ideas in writing. When I offered these learners the opportunity to reflect on their own religious rituals, I created a less threatening learning environment.

Theme one provides insights into how religious rituals are interrelated with cultural identity as revealed through the visual representations and writing pieces created by the participants. As the data show, the participants reflected on their unique cultural identity by highlighting and exploring particular religious holidays of embracing cultural rituals as part of their cultural identity and as new ways of accessing the new Discourse of the American society. In the interviews conducted, participants confirmed how they built on their own cultural referents, mainly religion when they used visuals as catalysts to writing. I reviewed my reflective journals of classroom observation field notes to analyze how cultural identity was addressed through the reflection on religion in the participants' visual representations and writing. From my observations, reflective journals, pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, writing pieces, and artistic artifacts, and through their responses in our interviews, it was clear that all participants made the connection to who they are by disclosing their religious identity and the cultural and spiritual practices tied with it.

In Theme 1: Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals, I discuss and analyze detailed accounts of Hadi's, Hikmat's, and Maha's visual representations and writing pieces. I provide an explanation through thick rich description of how their visual representations helped them to compose written pieces by relying on significant cultural factors such as religion in revealing who they are in the new American culture. As the analysis of their visual representations, writing pieces, and interviews show, Hadi's, Hikmat's, and Maha's religious foundation, and

their identification with the rituals, was a significant cultural factor as visuals were integrated and used as catalysts to writing.

In the first subcategory, I introduce Hadi. Hadi described a time he received a gift from his uncle during the Eid. I provide a description of how Hadi's use of visuals as catalysts to writing assisted him in constructing meaning while reflecting on his religious rituals, a significant aspect of his Yemeni cultural identity. As the upcoming analysis shows, Hadi demonstrated the potential to disclose his cultural identity by reflecting on his own religious rituals through his visual representations and his writing piece.

In the second subcategory, I present Hikmat. Hikmat also described a time he received a gift from his uncle during the Eid and gave a gift to his girlfriend. His reflections of the religious practices also allowed him to access the Discourse of the new American culture. As the forthcoming analysis shows, Hikmat revealed the ability to articulate who he is through his visual representations and his writing piece by building on religious rituals and practicing them in the new culture.

In the third subcategory, I portray Maha's case. Similar to Hadi and Hikmat, Maha also described a time she received a gift from her sister during the Eid. I give a description of how Maha's utilization of visuals enabled her to construct meaning while illuminating religious referents as part of her cultural identity. Maha expressed who she is through her visual representations and her writing piece by building on her religious rituals as significant cultural factors. Maha also demonstrated the importance of color as a way of representing her culture. As she reflected on her ideas, she was able to springboard into thicker descriptions in her own writing.

### **Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Hadi's Development from Drawing to Writing**

Religious rituals often play an important role in helping students to internalize cultural norms and beliefs. They can also maintain the status quo where individuals can identify with the heritage associated with their cultural identity. When students build on their religious rituals as supplementary reservoirs to express who they are in the new culture, they become risk takers in the learning environment. I will explain the risk-taking as I carefully analyze and interpret the emotional states that appear in Hadi's drawings.

#### ***Emotional State in Hadi's Drawings***

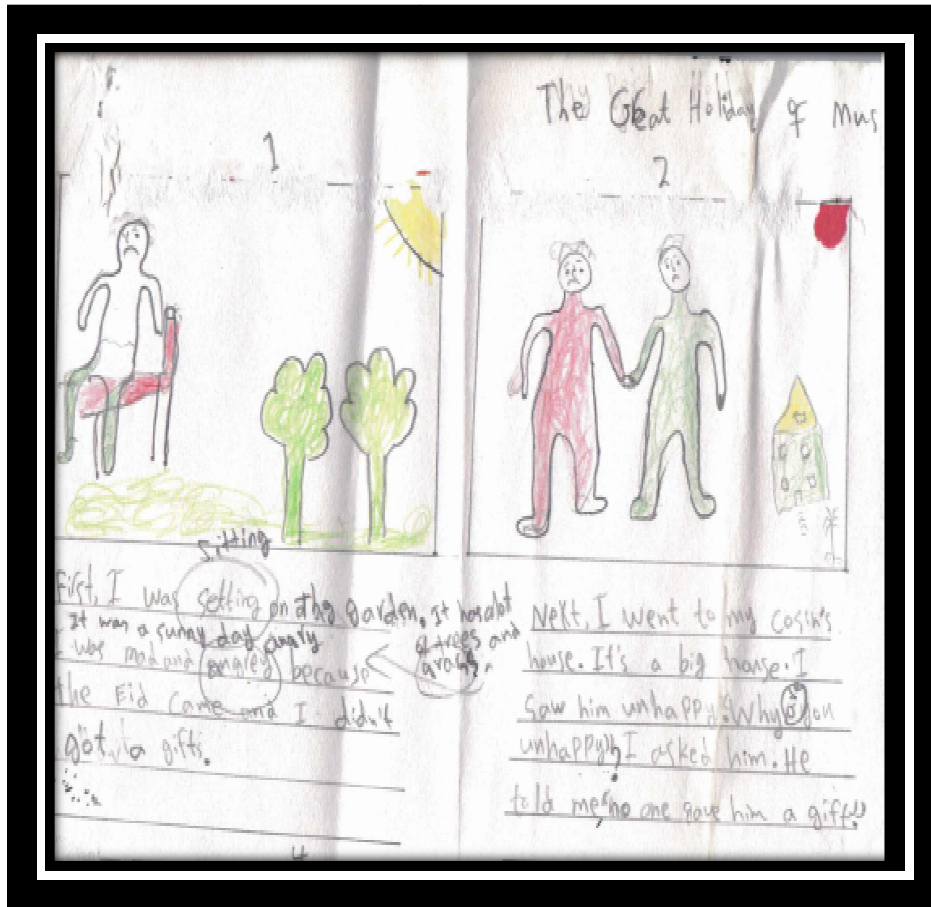
During the third week of the study, I gave Hadi an assignment to write a story about a time he exchanged a gift with someone during a religious holiday. The assignment was in response to reading and discussing "The Gift of the Magi", based on a story by O'Henry (2004) which is a ninth grade mandatory text at Phoenicia High School. "The Gift of the Magi" (2004) is a canonical literary text that addresses the theme of offering sacrifices for the sake of love. In addition to being a required text, I felt this story would help to support the research goals, as it provided a way for students to understand the value of exchange between a woman and man at Christmas time. The story also offered a way for students to understand an American holiday and make connections to the holiday Eid from their own country.

During this lesson, I discussed the story with my students and prompted them to make predictions and cultural connections to religious rituals associated with holidays in their cultures based on the use of visuals. Later, I invited the students to write a story about a time they exchanged a gift with someone during a religious holiday in their culture by using visual representations as catalysts to writing. My goals for the visual representation were two-fold. First of all, I wanted to examine how my students would construct meaning from the story

through their use of metaphorical representations. The second reason for including the visual strategy was to give students an organizational tool to guide their own writing. For this story, I modeled and used a Storyboard (Essley, Rief, & Rocci, 2008) technique as a scaffold to help the students get involved in drawing their own visual depictions of their stories prior to writing about them.

Hadi chose to create his story by drawing upon an experience he had with his uncle who gave him a gift during EidAl- Fitr. Eid Al-Fitr is a Muslim religious holiday that follows Ramadan, the fasting month. Hadi's Storyboard reveals the way he reflected on the religious rituals practiced during the Eid in his Yemeni culture.

In the first picture in the Storyboard (Figure 1a), Hadi drew the shining sun and two trees which in later illustrations show that the trees represented the direction of where he was heading—to his cousin's house. In his writing piece (Figure 1b), Hadi wrote, "First, I was sitting in the garden. It was a sunny day." Hadi did not mention the trees. Then, a feeling of sadness is depicted in the next picture where Hadi drew the picture of his cousin and himself standing next to his uncle's house. There, Hadi drew the trees again which shows that Hadi reached his destination. Hadi illustrated how he and his cousin were feeling unhappy and then wrote about this feeling (Figure 1b).



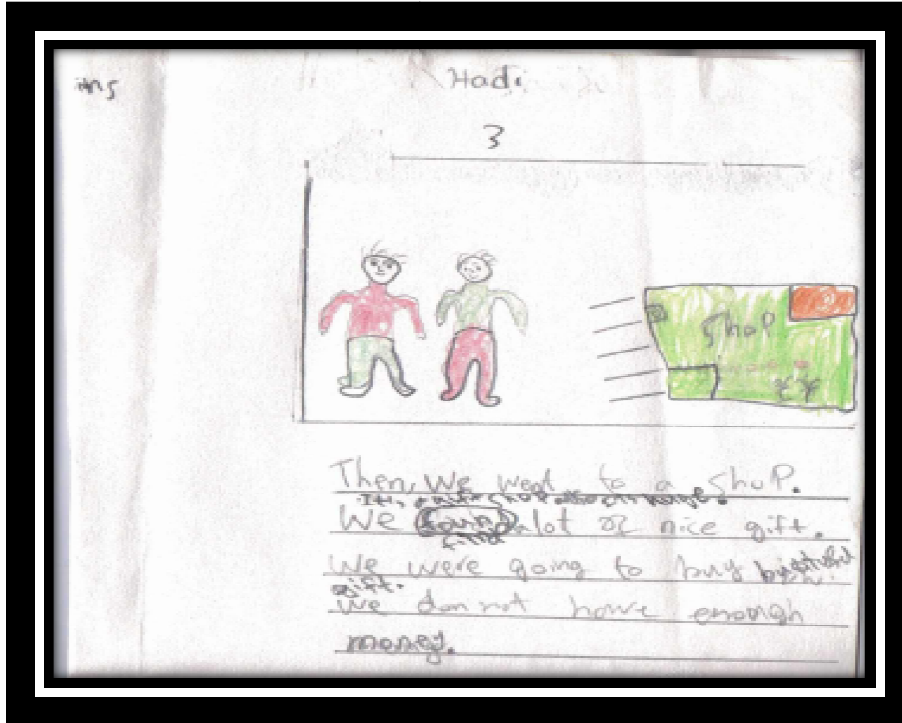
mad and angry.  
him unhappy.  
ift”.

Hadi showed his disappointment as he expected to receive a present on the Eid, a cultural norm in the Muslim tradition where parents, older relatives, older siblings, and the elderly give presents to the children. Evident in the sad faces of the two boys in the illustrations Hadi then wrote specifically about his and his cousin's feelings (Figure 1b). He stated that he was “mad and angry” and went to his cousin's house and saw him “unhappy.”



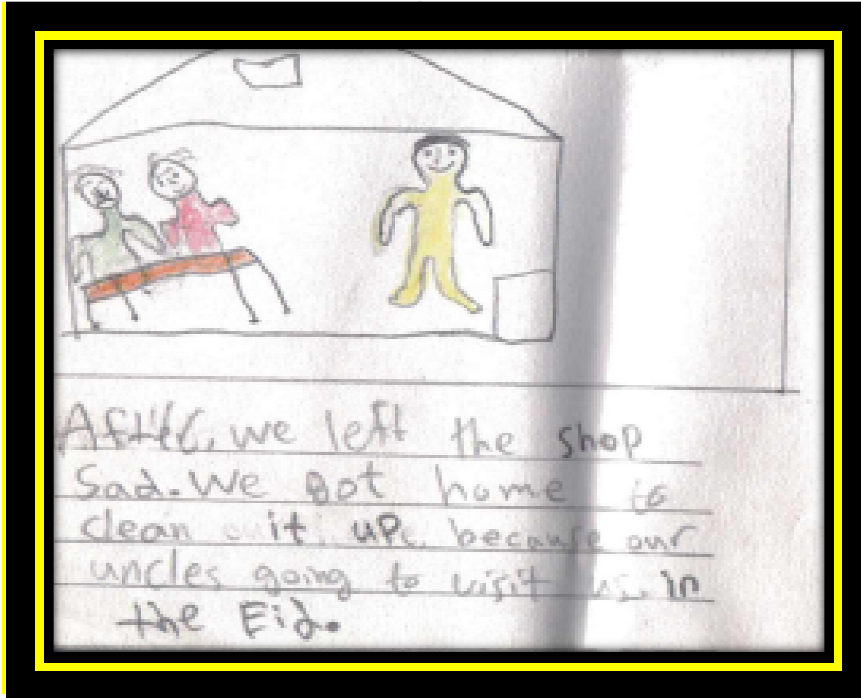
The pictures showed the sadness and the writing expressed not just sadness, but anger as well. The writing also captured why Hadi drew a sad face in the illustration and the context of the story. Hadi was able to explain how he and his cousin were disappointed which would be a common reaction of not being socially recognized by family members according to the religious tradition of receiving gifts on the Eid. Through his Storyboard (Figure 1a and 1b), Hadi clearly disclosed his feelings in the drawings about the religious holiday. It captured his religious identity and belief in the cultural norms of celebrating the Eid. The drawing generated ideas to the next part of the Storyboard which was the writing (1b).

In the next part of the Storyboard, Hadi drew the picture of his cousin and himself going to a shop to buy presents for themselves for the Eid. Again, Hadi described that they felt distressed because they could not afford to buy presents (See Figure 2b). The characters in this illustration are smiling which is a change to the illustration in Figure 1a. Then in Hadi's writing, it is revealed that he and his cousin are at the huge gift shop, which could be an expression of his anticipation for gifts. He wrote, "We were going to buy butiful [beautiful] gift".



nd] a lot of nice

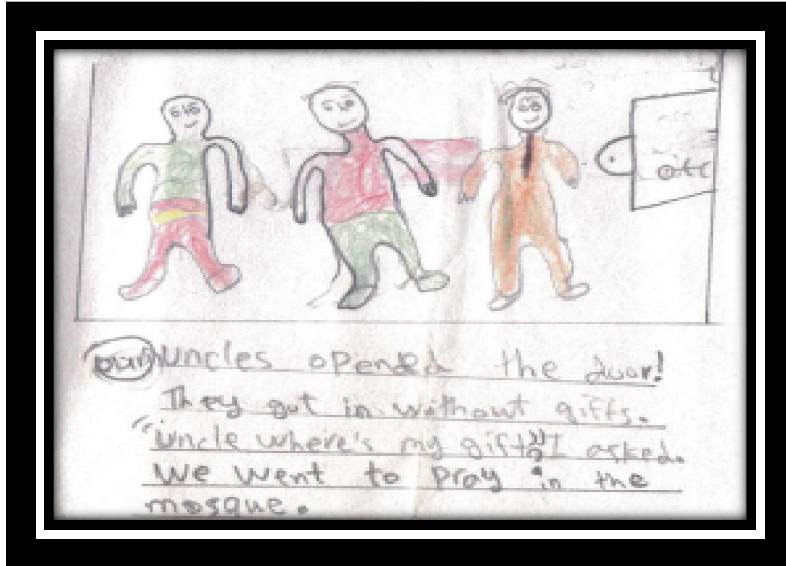
In comparison to the first two drawings where and he is “mad and angry,” in Figure 2b, Hadi chose to draw smiling people, describe the shop as nice, and the gifts as beautiful. This communicates his shift from sadness and anger. Hadi revealed early in the Storyboard process the ability to extend the feelings of the characters in the drawings to the subsequent writing. He also showed how he could express the mood of a place he drew by using various adjectives in line with the images. He created a written story that captured the tone derived from the illustrations.



uncles going to

In Figure 3a and 3b, Hadi continued drawing illustrations of his cousins and him cleaning the house as a preparation for family visits during the Eid.

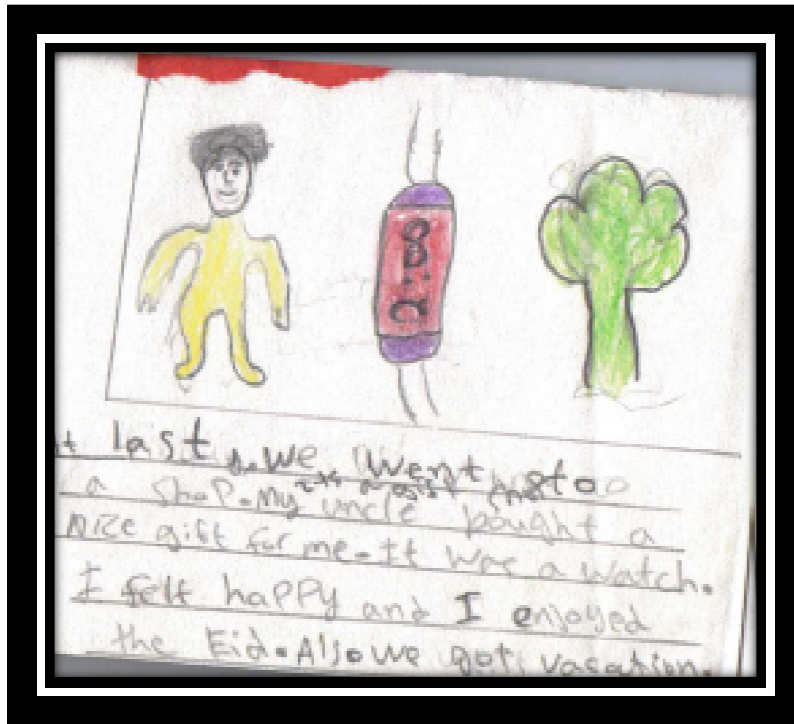
In the next Figure 4a and 4b, Hadi went further in his visual story by depicting his cousin, uncle, and himself standing in one line and praying in the mosque. Hadi drew the dome on the top of building and the young male figure praying in the mosque, a sacred praying place for Muslims and then wrote about it (See Figure 4b).



e's my gift?" I

From the pictures Hadi went on to writing about how “they got in without gifts.” He was able to build the written story from illustrations about the mosque with the information that once again, Hadi was forgotten in the traditional reception of gifts. He asked about the gift and then immediately talked about going to the mosque. Even as Hadi described the Eid and not receiving gifts, it is evident in his Storyboard the inseparability he had with the important Muslim religious practices of praying at the mosque.

Hadi ended his story by drawing himself feeling happy after receiving a watch as a gift and then wrote about it (See Figure 5b). Hadi did not draw the picture of his uncle taking him and his cousin to the gift shop but Hadi only illustrated receiving a watch a gift during the Eid.

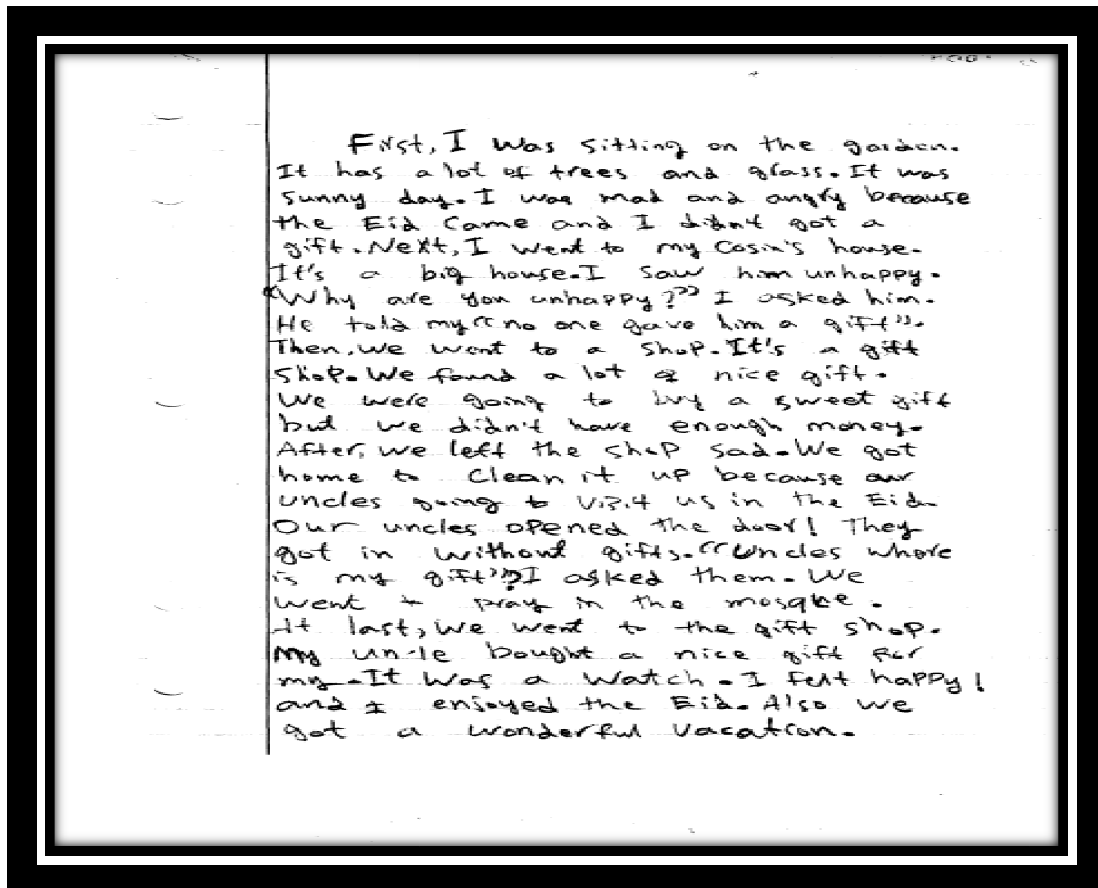


gift for me. It was  
ul vacation.

### *Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning*

Hadi makes a connection to the story of “The Gift of the Magi” (2004) when he drew the watch (Figure 1) and wrote about receiving it as a gift during the Eid (Figure 6). Yet, in “The Gift of the Magi” (2004), the husband asks the wife what she wants, and the wife asks the husband what she wants too. There is a shared sacrifice as each tries to please the others. In his Storyboard and writing piece, Hadi chose to show that the only one who ultimately sacrifices things is the uncle. Hadi is simply on the receiving end. Hadi identifies with his cultural heritage of how religious rituals are practiced in his Yemeni culture. As a child, Hadi is raised to

receive gifts from adults. Hadi abides by the cultural norms of the Discourse of his origin culture where religious rituals are celebrated and performed in conventional ways to maintain the existing status quo of his Yemeni culture.



was sunny day. I went to My [my] unhappy?" I asked shop. We found a money. After, we us in the Eid. Our asked them. We a nice gift for ful vacation.

Drawing in the Storyboard helped Hadi to express himself in writing (Figure 6). Although Hadi made many miscues in spelling and grammatical usage of words but his miscues did not interfere with the meaning making of his story (I provide corrections of these miscues between brackets). Although analysis of the miscues could provide a better understanding of the ways these participants made sense of the English language, the discussion of this topic is beyond the scope and research goals of this project. Hadi demonstrated his grasp of the language by depicting and writing his story in a linear way. In his Storyboard, Hadi drew pictures representing sequential events in his story where he constructed a chronological written piece (Figure 6). He used signal words such as “First”, “Next”, and “Then” to make sense of the sequence of the events in his story.

Hadi’s sketches showed how he disclosed his cultural identity in constructing meaning in his writing when he used self-created drawings in the Storyboard. Specifically, Hadi’s identification with the social norms associated with the religious rituals is reflected in his expression of various emotional states. By analyzing context of Hadi’s metaphorical representations, the idea of cultural norms was expanded and reinforced. Therefore, I looked closely at Hadi’s self-created drawings to understand the emotional state. Hadi wrote, “I was mad and angry” (Figure 1b); “I saw him unhappy.”(Figure 1b); “We left the shop sad.” (Figure 3b); “I felt happy!” (Figure5b). Through the use of the contrasting adjectives, Hadi reflected on his emotional state that varied from being mad, angry, and unhappy to feeling happy at the end of the story. The use of the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence, “I felt happy!” capitalized on setting the happy mood at the end of the story. In his writing, Hadi mentioned how nice and wonderful the Eid Holiday is. Hadi created a written story that captured the tone derived from the illustrations in his Storyboard.

Hadi claimed he is “somewhat an artist” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). He identified with his cultural identity by reflecting on the religious rituals of celebrating the Eid through the use of self- created drawings as agents to his writing. Hadi also claimed he is “always visual learner” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). Hadi used the images in his Storyboard to construct meaning of his written story on the Eid (Figure 6) while identifying with the status quo of celebrating religious rituals in his culture. As the interview below revealed, Hadi believed the use of visual representations helped him in spring-boarding ideas to connect to his culture through his writing (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 18, 2011; 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview, May 25, 2011).

Teacher: Tell me what has helped you start writing this semester?

Hadi: The pictures helped me to start writing, to start writing and make connections and predictions.

Teacher: What kind of connection?

Hadi: Connection to my culture. . . religious

Hadi: bray [meaning pray]

Teacher: Where did you see that?

Hadi: In the drawing ... from the Storyboard (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 18, 2011).

Hadi’s reflection on how the use of visual representations and drawings allowed him to make connections to his culture was also revealed during the second interview. Hadi again capitalized on how the use of drawings prompted him to reveal the way he practices his religious rituals during the Eid.

Teacher: Tell me how have you used visual elements (drawings, images, diagrams, charts, timelines, etc..) in your writing?



Hadi: I used the flow chart and the pictures and the Storyboard to organize ideas and to talk about the holidays.

Teacher: What did you say about the holidays in your drawings?

Hadi: About the Eid, about the Eid when we go pray together and visit my family (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview, May 25, 2011).

Considering Hadi's English language barrier, I kept his language intact despite its grammatically incorrect usage. My goal was to understand how the employment of visuals supported Hadi in revealing his cultural identity while constructing meaning in writing. Hadi reflected on how his use of visual representations helped him to make connections to his religious ritual in the Yemeni culture. Hadi did not overtly express his emotions in the interviews. He did not mention how he reflected on his emotional state through the use of self-created drawings in the Storyboard. Hadi only shared his emotions about how he felt during the Eid through his employment of visual representations. This may indicate his ability to best communicate his strong feelings through writing. Writing, then, served as a catalyst for setting the tone of the story and describing strong feelings in a given situation.

Hadi strongly believed that the employment of visuals engaged him in writing and encouraged him to show his best endeavor in writing (Post-questionnaire Appendix D). Hadi agreed that being creative in using visuals and images while writing was important. Hadi believed he is "always a visual learner" but "somewhat an artist" (Pre-questionnaire, Appendix C). He started to view himself as a writer and as an artist who utilizes visuals and pictures to reflect on his religion as an embodiment of cultural identity through his writing.

Teacher: How do you feel about yourself as a writer?

Hadi: I use visual pictures and make connections and ah...imagine. Also collect ideas.

Teacher: So, what kind of writer do you see yourself? I mean as an artist or not?

Hadi: Artist, ya, Because I use visuals and draw pictures (Interview, May 18, 2011).

Hadi could have deliberately provided positive responses in regards to the use of visual representations and drawings as scaffolds to writing in his interviews to please me as a teacher. However, his self- created drawings and writing piece confirmed how Hadi identified with the religious rituals associated with Eid in his culture. The integration of self-created drawings as catalyst to writing deepened Hadi's depiction of the changes in his emotional state that set the tone in his writing.

Based on the analysis of Hadi's visual representations in the Storyboard, his writing piece about the Eid (Figure 6), his responses in the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire, and interviews, the theme of **Cultural Identity Ties with Religious Rituals** is revealed. Hadi reflected on religion as an indispensable cultural factor in identifying who he is in the new culture. Hadi viewed religious rituals culturally associated with Eid as supplementary reservoirs for expressing his unique cultural identity. He disclosed his cultural identity when visuals were integrated as catalysts to writing. In the absence of English language proficiency, Hadi's use of visuals and drawings as means of communication became an indispensable resource in revealing his larger cultural values, religious affiliations, and social identities within the new American culture (Kress, 2000). Through his self-created drawings in the Storyboard, Hadi clearly disclosed his feelings in the drawings about the religious holiday. It captured his religious identity and belief in the cultural norms of celebrating the Eid. Hadi expressed the uniqueness of

his identity in the American schooling when he was engaged in culturally sensitive instructional practices. It is clear that Hadi benefits from the type of pedagogical practice that builds on his cultural referents, such as the use of visual representations. Because Hadi's English proficiency is very limited, using visuals as catalyst to writing becomes the means of communication that enables him to voice his ideas and beliefs.

### **Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Hikmat's Development from Drawing to Writing: Entree to the New Discourse in Drawing**

Individuals often seek acceptance within the social context of their cultural norms. Those who have a broader understanding of the use of language, behavior, and other means to communicate in Primary and Secondary Discourses are socially able to switch between Discourses and adapt to new situations (Gee, 1990). The ability to code switch is culturally advantageous, as individuals can draw on their prior knowledge to make sense of and engage in their new social environment. Hikmat is an Arabic ELL whose limited English proficiency restricted the ways he could verbally express his ideas in the new Discourse. When I provided Hikmat the opportunities to engage in culturally pedagogical practices of integrating visuals as agents to his writing, he felt empowered to disclose his cultural identity. Hikmat used his Primary Discourse as a bridge to understand his engagement in the new American culture.

As with Hadi, I gave Hikmat the assignment to write a story about a time he exchanged a gift with someone during a religious holiday in response to reading and discussing "The Gift of the Magi" (2004). Hikmat chose to describe a time he received a gift from his uncle during Eid Al- AlAdha and a time he gave his girlfriend a flower. Hikmat's Storyboard shows how he capitalized on his religious rituals of celebrating Eid as a supplementary reservoir to access the new culture.

In the first picture on the left in the Storyboard in Figure 7a, Hikmat drew a house and two people with a gift. He later explained that he received a wrapped gift from his uncle and in it was a big book. In the picture on the right in Figure 7a, Hikmat drew two people holding a flower with a heart above the present. He explained that this sketch illustrated the time he gave a flower to his girlfriend. Evident in his happy face in the illustrations, Hikmat showed his enthusiasm upon receiving a present on the Eid, a cultural norm in the Muslim tradition. Hikmat then wrote specifically about his the illustrations (Figure 7b).



ower

ok.

was raed [red] and

In Figure 7a, Hikmat drew of a heart and the scene of giving his girlfriend a red and pink flower during the Eid and then wrote about his illustrations (Figure 7b). Although Hikmat did not elaborate on the concept of love between a boy and a girl in his writing, Hikmat identified with the symbol of love, the heart, in his drawing and the development of this concept was expressed in his choice to characterize her as “my girlfriend.” Therefore, Hikmat’s self-created drawings helped him to express the feeling he experienced as an adolescent having a girlfriend in the new culture. As revealed in the pre-questionnaire, Hikmat came from Yemen, a conservative society where males are supposed to be dominant in this culture and are the ones who are expected to offer gifts to females. Hikmat still adopted the Primary Discourse of his culture, which considers it a cultural taboo for females to expect, or offer presents for their boyfriends.

Interestingly, he sketched his girlfriend with two braids. Hikmat’s girlfriend is someone who is most likely not Yemeni because she does not wear a hijab nor is she depicted as having refused his flower. Hikmat’s story took place in America, and the girlfriend is someone Hikmat might have met in his new culture. While Hikmat and some of his family members may have carried this tradition of celebrating the Eid miles from Yemen, they did not leave this tradition behind and it may reveal that Hikmat has assimilated into American culture. The acceptance of a girl who does not wear a hijab and accepts a flower—even the idea that he openly called her “my girlfriend”—implies that Hikmat expressed a level of comfort that is considered atypical in Yemeni culture. Hikmat’s openness with a girlfriend with braids and one that accepts flowers showed that he had begun to accept the Secondary Discourse of the mainstream culture without experiencing cultural conflict within the Discourse of his Yemeni culture. This touches on the notion of female’s silence in Yemeni culture, which will be discussed in theme two.

Hikmat reflected on his religious ritual of celebrating the Eid to experience accessing acceptance of becoming socially recognized in the Discourse of the new culture. His new social identity enabled him to realize the importance of having a girlfriend in adolescence. Through his Storyboard (Figure 7a and 7b), Hikmat thoroughly revealed his cultural awareness of receiving a gift during the Eid in the drawings about the religious holiday. However, his drawings also highlighted his understanding of forming his identity as an adolescent in the new culture. The Storyboard captured Hikmat's religious identity and belief in the cultural norms of celebrating the Eid but it also capitalized on his views of what is meant to be an adolescent common in America. The drawing generated ideas to the next part of the Storyboard, which was the writing (7b).

In the next part of the Storyboard, Hikmat drew the picture of a big table with three males sitting including Hikmat in Figure 8a that was followed by writing in Figure 8b.



[baby lamb], It was

illustrating himself going to pray in the mosque. Hikmat depicted himself and wrote about other two males standing in one room and raising their hands to heaven and asking for God's blessing (Figure 9b).



Hikmat highlighted on the praying image in the Storyboard. As a Muslim, he is aware that praying is a religious duty that should be performed as part of the religious ritual of his Muslim identity.

Hikmat's visual depiction of enjoying the time during the Eid was further developed in his Storyboard (Figure 10a). He drew the image of himself playing outside with his friends and then elaborated on it in writing (Figure 10b).



er.

Hikmat ended the Storyboard in Figure 11a by drawing a picture and writing about himself hugging his friend after having fun in the Eid in Figure 11b.

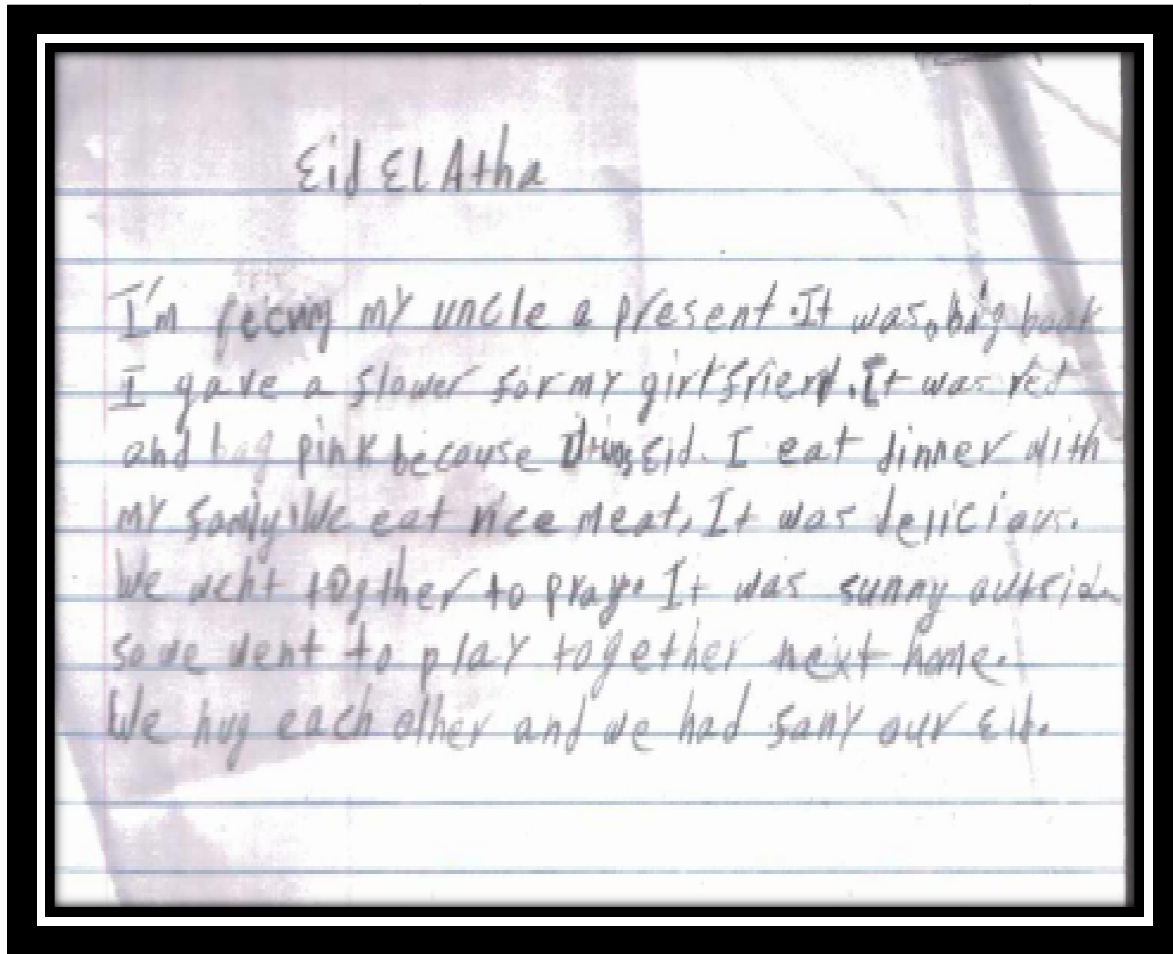




[fun] our Eid.

Hikmat revealed his belief in the importance of brotherhood and unity as a Muslim individual commonly embraced during the Eid.

The sketching of the smiling faces of Hikmat, his uncle, his girlfriend, and his family members revealed his feelings of excitement about the religious rituals associated with the Eid. The drawings mirrored the emotional tone in Hikmat's writings for each sketch; the writings extended the context, the naming of the characters and key cultural identification symbols as were presented in the drawings.



ve a flower for my  
 ly [family]. We eat  
 so we went to play

Drawing in the Storyboard helped Hikmat to express himself better in generating the writing piece on “Eid AlAdha” (Figure 12), although the writing was not perfect. Like Hadi, Hikmat made many miscues in spelling and grammatical usage of words; still, his miscues did not interfere with the meaning making of his story (I provide corrections of these miscues between brackets). Similarly to Hadi’s writing piece on Eid (Figure 6), Hikmat showed he had a

good sense that stories are linear. He used signal words such as “First”, “Second”, and “Third” to make sense of the sequence of the events in his story. In his Storyboard, Hikmat drew pictures representing sequential events in his story where he constructed a chronological written piece (Figure 12). Hikmat expressed his cultural identity in constructing meaning in his writing when he used self-created drawings in the Storyboard. He used descriptive words and adjectives like “bag (big)”, “delisuiuous” [delicious], “raed [red] and bank [pink], and “sinny [sunny]” to elaborate on his drawings in the Storyboard. Hikmat deepened his description of the big gift he received, the red and pink flower he gave to his girlfriend, the delicious feast he and his family had, and the sunny day he enjoyed during the Eid. Hikmat felt enthusiastic about the Eid because he associated it with the time of receiving what is expected in his culture and with the time of giving in attempt to access the new culture.

Hikmat claimed he is “somewhat an artist” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). He discloses his cultural identity by reflecting on the religious rituals of celebrating the Eid through the use of self- created drawings as agents to his writing. Hikmat also stated he is “somewhat a visual learner” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). He used the images in his Storyboard to construct meaning of his written story on the Eid (Figure 12). Hikmat showed how connecting to the religious rituals in his culture enabled him to access the Discourse of the new culture. He started viewing how writing connects him to his own culture and people. As he stated in the first interview, Hikmat realized that use of visuals supported him in articulating who he is in the new culture.

Teacher:       What do you use writing for?

Hikmat:       Writing helps you think about myself, my culture, and and other people.

Teacher: What did you think about the experience of using graphic organizers and drawing in writing?

Hikmat: Helped me to think of the story- make connection, that's it (1st interview, May 19, 2011).

Hikmat did not elaborate on how the use of visual representations helped him to make connection to the people in the mainstream culture to whom he referred to as "other people" in the interviews. Hikmat did not mention how he reflected on his adolescent relationship with his girlfriend in the interviews. Hikmat only shared his emotions and expression of his attempt to be accepted as an adolescent in the new culture through his employment of visual representations. The integration of self-created drawings as catalyst to writing expanded Hikmat's portrayal of the feeling of excitement he experienced as an adolescent in his writing. Below is a portion of the second interview where Hikmat explained that he recognized visuals as an aid to expressing his cultural connection.

Teacher: Why was the use of visual representations a successful and motivating experience?

Hikmat: I make connection to my culture, my people the Eid.

Teacher: Tell me how do you see yourself as a beginner writer?

Hikmat: I use pictures to get me idea. I like to writing idea about my culture, other people (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview, May 26, 2011).

Hikmat's expression on how the use of visual representations and drawings supported him in making connections to his culture was also shown during the second interview. Hikmat again emphasized how the use of drawings as catalysts to writing encouraged him to relate to his

culture and its religious rituals of the Eid. He further stressed on the significance of using visuals to connect with the other culture too by simply referring to its people as the “other people”.

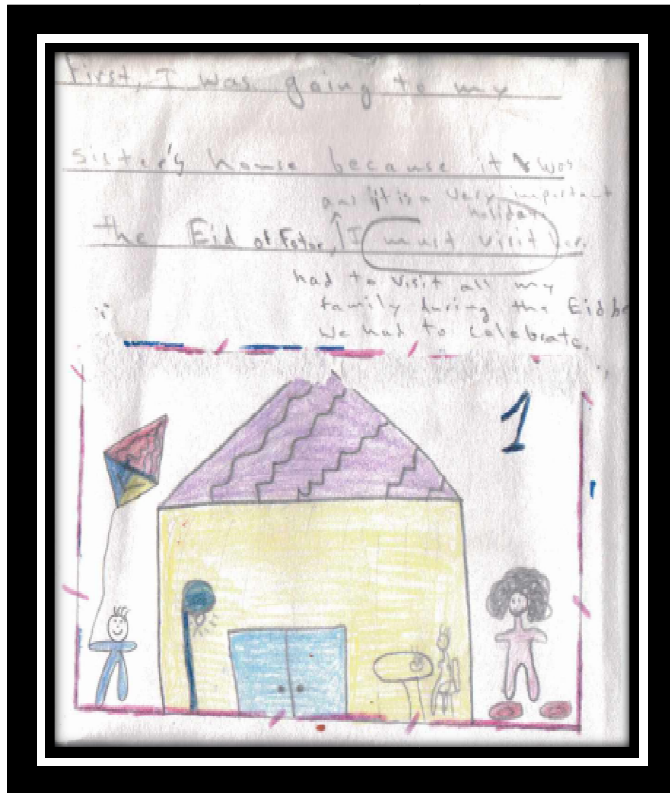
Considering Hikmat’s English language barrier, I kept his language intact regardless of its syntactically inaccurate usage. Keeping the language intact was important. It valued Hikmat’s literacy acts and did not interfere with my research goal of exploring how the use of visuals assisted him in disclosing his cultural identity while constructing meaning in writing. Hikmat reflected on how his use of visual representations as catalysts to writing enabled him to express who he is in the new culture. He shared how he connected to his culture through his employment of visual representations. Hikmat could have intentionally given the above responses in regards to the use of visual representations and drawings in his interviews to please me as a teacher. Yet, his self- created drawings and writing piece actually mirrored how he identified with his culture and attempted to access the new culture. The integration of self-created drawings as catalyst to writing enhanced Hikmat’s description of the way he belongs to his culture and the way he adapts to the new culture and this was expressed in his writing.

Based on the analysis of Hikmat’s visual representations in the Storyboard, his writing piece about the Eid (Figure 12), and interviews, he revealed how his reflection on the religious ritual of celebrating Eid connected him to the new Discourse of the American culture. Hikmat’s active participation in the social norms of the new culture including the use of its Discourse became acknowledged once his visuals were integrated as catalysts to writing about the Eid. Hikmat did not acknowledge a cultural conflict between his Primary Discourse of the Yemeni culture and the Secondary Discourse of the American culture. He drew on his religious cultural referents as an integral part of his cultural identity to get socially accepted in the mainstream culture. Hikmat articulated his beliefs about the distinctness of his identity in the American

schooling when he got involved in culturally sensitive learning experiences. It was evident that Hikmat benefits from the type of pedagogical practice that acknowledges his cultural referents, such as the use of visual representations. When English proficiency is a challenge, using visuals as catalyst to writing opens new ways of communication that will empower Hikmat to overcome the challenge of silence and choose to have a voice in the classroom.

### **Religious Rituals: A Detailed Account of Maha's Development from Drawing to Writing**

During the third week of the study, I gave Maha an assignment to write a story about a time she exchanged a gift with someone during a religious holiday. The assignment was in response to reading and discussing "The Gift of the Magi" (2004). Maha depicted and wrote a story about a time she received money from her sister during Eid Al- Fitr. Maha's Storyboard illuminated the religious rituals practiced through embracing unique social norms during the Eid in her Lebanese culture. In the first picture of her Storyboard in Figure 13 a, Maha drew a picture of herself going to her sister's house and portrayed how she felt excited because it was the Eid and then wrote about it in Figure 13b.



he Eid al fatar and  
 family during the

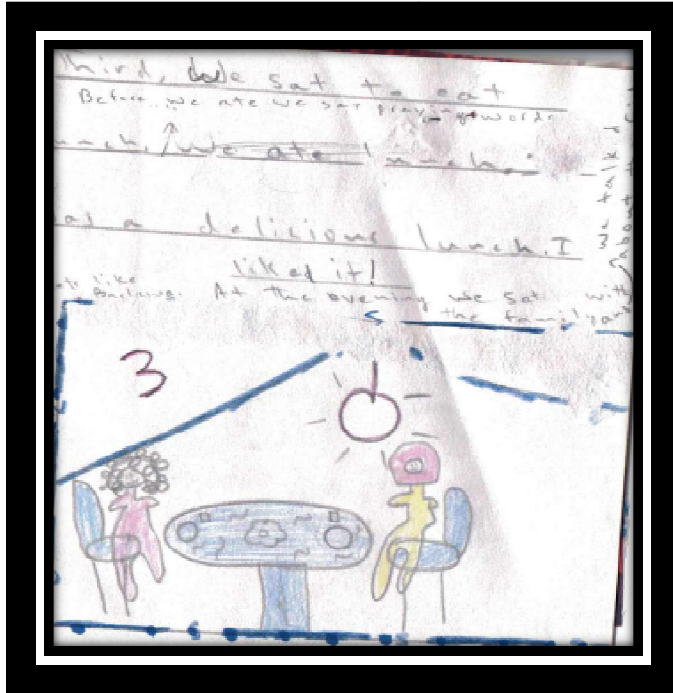
In her next Storyboard in Figure 14 a, Maha continued drawing her story and reflecting on how she and her sister celebrated the Eid. Maha drew and wrote about how she and her sister prepared for the Eid family dinner in Figure 14 b.



lunch because we  
 [Middle Eastern]

Maha went further in visually depicting the events in her story. In her Storyboard, Figure 15a, Maha discussed how she and her sister practiced the religious ritual of praying prior to eating. Maha also described how the food was delicious and then wrote about it in Figure 15b.

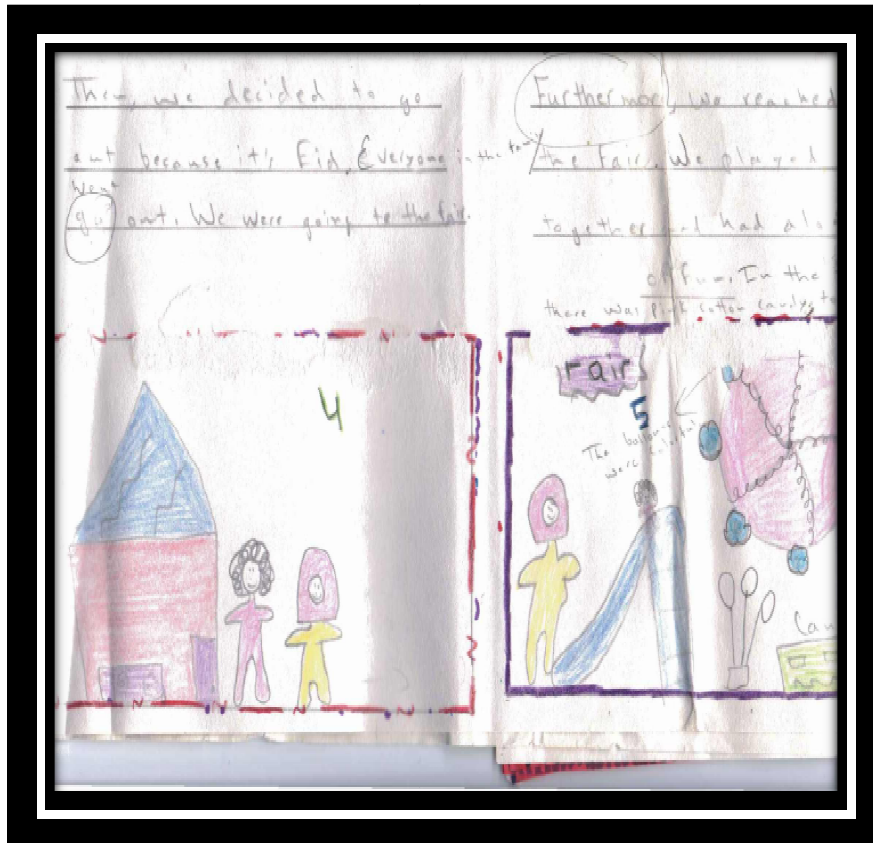




We ate lunch. It was  
and we talked

Maha only included the visual depiction of her sister being the family member sitting at the dining table and enjoying the Eid with her. Yet, Maha still reflected on the cultural norm of having big feast during the Eid where religious rituals such as praying before eating are capitalized on.

In the next Storyboard in Figure 16a, Maha drew vivid colorful depictions of the children's fair when she showed how she and her sister went to entertain themselves during the Eid. Maha drew the pink and blue ferris wheel, the colorful balloons, slides, and pink cotton candy in the children's fair. Maha elaborated on her illustrations of the children's fair and the feeling of happiness associated with it as a child in both drawings and writing in Figure 16b.



They go [went] out.

They had a lot of fun. In

Through her Storyboard (Figure 16a and 16b), Maha clearly revealed the entertainment experienced during the Eid. Her colorful drawings captured her belief in the cultural norms of celebrating the Eid. The drawing generated ideas to the next part of the Storyboard, which was the writing in the above Figure 16b.

Maha ended her story by drawing a picture of her sister giving her money as Eid gift. Maha stressed on the importance of “everyone giving a present”. Yet, Maha only sketched the illustration of herself receiving a gift.



ney because this

In her written piece (See Figure 18), Maha associated her religious rituals of celebrating the Eid and going to the children's fair with her cultural identity. Maha disclosed her cultural and religious identity in the new culture through the use of her self-created drawings as agents to writing.

Maha reflects on her religious rituals as an indispensable cultural factor in determining her socially accepted performance as a Muslim in her culture. Based on the cultural norms of celebrating Muslim religious holidays, Maha reveals the significance of embracing the unique social norms of celebrating the Eid. As a child, Maha like all other Muslim children, experienced the enjoyment and spiritual value of Eid once she visited the children's fair. Children's fair is an entertainment park set up during the Eid. This temporary amusement center

often involves bringing families together where children entertain themselves after receiving money as gifts from their elderly, older siblings, and relatives. Maha also capitalized on the religious ritual of wearing hijab when she drew a picture of her sister covering her head in all the illustrations in the Storyboard. Although Maha does not wear the hijab herself, she still reflects on it as part of the religious rituals in her culture through her self-created drawings.

Maha made a connection to the story of “The Gift of the Magi” (2004) when she drew the picture of herself receiving money from her sister (Figure 5) and wrote about receiving it as a gift during the Eid (Figure 6). Contrary to “The Gift of the Magi” (2004), which shows a shared sacrifice, Maha does not reflect on the reciprocal exchange of giving and receiving gifts between her and her sister. Maha showed how she is the only one receiving money as a gift from her sister. Maha identified with her cultural heritage of how religious rituals are practiced in her Lebanese culture. She reflected on her religious identity and conviction in the cultural rituals of celebrating the Eid where children are always on the receiving end.

## My Best Holiday Celebration

First, I was going to my sister's house because it was the Eid of Foter, and it is a very important holiday. I had to visit all my family during the Eid we had to celebrate.

Second, I arrived to my sister's house. I helped her to prepare the lunch because we were hungry. We ate Tabouli, Mloukhiya, and Middle Eastern Sweets like Baclawa.

Third, we sat to eat lunch. Before we ate we say praying words. It was a delicious lunch. I liked it! At the evening we sat with family we talked about the Eid.

Then, we decided to go out because it's Eid. Everyone in the family went out. We were going to the fair.

Later more, we reached the fair. We played together and had a lot of fun. In the fair there was pink cotton candy, toys, and balloons. The balloons were colorful.

Finally, we got tired so we went home, and my sister gave me money because in this holiday everybody must give to each others a presents.

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lunch. It  
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out. We

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ms] were

cause in

### *Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning*

Drawing in the Storyboard supported Maha in articulating herself better in the writing (Figure 18), although the writing was not perfect. Like Hadi and Hikmat, Maha also made many mistakes in spelling and grammatical usage of words; however, her miscues did not influence the meaning making of her story (I provided corrections of these miscues between brackets). The common miscues that Maha, Hadi, and Hikmat had were mainly in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Maha demonstrated her good sense of depicting and writing her story in a linear way. She employed signal words such as “First”, “Third”, and “Finally” to make sense of the sequence of events in her story. In her Storyboard, Maha drew pictures representing sequential events in her story where she composed a piece written in order (Figure 18). Maha disclosed her cultural identity in constructing meaning in her writing when she used self-created drawings in the Storyboard as a catalyst to writing. She used adjectives like “delicious”, “pink”, and “colorful” to elaborate on her drawings in the Storyboard. Maha intensified her description of the delicious food prepared for Eid, the pink cotton candy and the colorful balloons at the fair during the Eid. She obviously highlighted on the entertainment experienced during the Eid. Her colorful drawings captured her belief in the social norms of celebrating the Eid, which eventually generated ideas to writing.

Maha claimed she is “somewhat an artist” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). She identified with her cultural identity by capitalizing on the unique cultural norms of celebrating her religious rituals through the use of colorful self-created drawings as agents to her writing. Maha associated her cultural identity with religious and social norms in her drawings and writing. She used the images in her Storyboard to construct meaning of her written story on the Eid while identifying with the social norms of celebrating religious rituals in her culture. Maha

believes the use of visual representations assisted her in connecting to her culture in her writing (1<sup>st</sup>Interview, May 20, 2011).

Teacher: How does the use of visual representations and drawings help in reflecting on your own culture, traditions, and beliefs?

Maha: It helps me to make connections to my culture and life by looking at the drawings and pictures and using visuals

Teacher: Like what visuals?

Maha: Like Storyboard

Teacher: How did you make connection to your culture in the Storyboard?

Maha: Ah...ah... by the holiday, the Eid and the what when celebrate, how we celebrate, what we give to each other, and why we celebrate.

Teacher: So, what did you put in the Storyboard?

Maha: Pictures of what we do during the Eid, what what we eat, where we go, and we go to the fair and with it visit the family

Teacher: So, tell me how do you see yourself as a beginner writer?

Maha: Ah...I use visuals like collage, flow chart, Storyboard because it helps me get more ideas to write and imagine(1<sup>st</sup>Interview, May 20, 2011).

Maha did not give details on how the use of visual representations assisted her in making the colorful description of the Eid and the children's fair in the interviews. Yet, her self-created drawings thoroughly showed her vivid portrayal of celebrating the Eid. Maha only articulated how the use of visual representations and drawings helped her to connect to the way religious rituals are celebrated in her culture. The integration of self-created drawings as catalyst extended Maha's illustration of the entertainment experienced during the Eid in her writing.

Maha's articulation on how the use of visual representations and drawings supported her in making connections to her culture was also revealed during the second interview. Maha again capitalized on how the use of drawings as catalysts to writing inspired her to relate to her culture and its religious rituals of the Eid.

Teacher: How do you feel about the pre-writing experiences and activities you have been exposed to?

Maha: I like it because it helps helps me a lot in writing and it helps me to get more ideas and it's interesting. I use visuals. It helps me get more ideas and ah make connections

Teacher: How does the use of visual representations and drawings help in reflecting in your own culture, traditions, and beliefs?

Maha: It helps me see difference between my culture and other cultures. I look at the pictures the Storyboard and I think of Eid and how we celebrate Eid and get presents (2nd Interview, May 26, 2011).

In the interviews, Maha shared how she connected to her culture through her employment of visual representations. Maha could have purposely provided the above responses in regards to the use of visual representations and drawings in her interviews to gratify me as a teacher. Still, her self- created drawings and writing piece truly showed how she identified with her culture and visually depicted the entertainment she had during the Eid.

Considering Maha's English language barrier, I kept her language together although it was inaccurate. My aim was to know how the employment of visuals helped Maha in revealing her cultural identity while constructing meaning in writing. Maha reflected on how her use of



visual representations assisted her in making connections to her religious ritual in the Lebanese culture.

Based on the analysis of Maha's visual representations in the Storyboard, her writing piece about the Eid, her responses in the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire, and interviews, the theme of **Cultural Identity Ties with Religious Rituals** is revealed. Maha capitalized on religion as a significant cultural agent in identifying who she is as a Muslim individual in the new culture. Maha viewed religious rituals culturally affiliated with Eid as supplementary reservoirs for voicing her unique cultural identity in the Discourse of the American schooling. Maha disclosed her cultural identity when visuals were integrated as agents to writing. Visual representations and drawings provided Maha the opportunity to express her cultural identity by constructing meanings in her writing through the use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artifacts. It is obvious that the use of culturally sensitive instructional practices that builds on cultural referents, such as the use of visual representations supports Maha. Because of Maha's English language barrier, employing visuals as catalyst to writing becomes an indispensable means of non-verbal communication that enables her to express her ideas and beliefs.

Similarly to Hadi, Hikmat, and Maha, Ayat also reflected on religious rituals in revealing who she is in the American culture. Ayat expressed herself when visual representations were used as agents to her writing. Through the use of self-created drawings in her Storyboard on the Eid, Ayat disclosed her cultural identity in constructing meaning in her illustrations and writing too. Figure 19 is Ayat's written piece on describing Eid religious rituals when Storyboard Strategy was used as springboard.

## The Perfect Day in My Life

First I went to my grandparent house because it is the Aeed Holiday. I took a long time to arrive. We celebrate this Holiday every year because this holiday part of my religion.

Second, the whole family were there and my cousins too were over. We went to the kitchen. It was a huge kitchen. my grand ma was sitting on the clean shining floor and she cooked a Yummy meal I ate some of them. Then we decided to go some where to had fun. We went to a tea Fair. There was a very nice down there.

After that, we were so hungry. we decided to go to the park. We made a barbecue. It's so juicy.

and my cousin gave me a special gift because it was Aeed Holiday it was so wonderful necklace. I like it too much.

Finally, The night came fast and we enjoyed our day and we had fun. It was great day ever in my life.

iday. I took a long on.

e. We went to the floor. She cooked a l, we decided to go n there. After that, cue [barbecue]. It' Holiday[ meaning

day. It was a great

Ayat built on her own religious and cultural funds of knowledge to articulate who she is and what cultural and religious beliefs she embraces in the new Discourse. Ayat claimed she is “somewhat an artist” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). She disclosed her cultural identity by reflecting on religious and social norms in her drawings and writing. Ayat used the metaphorical representations in her Storyboard to construct meaning of her written story on “The Perfect Day in My Life” (Figure 19), although the writing was not perfect. Like Hadi, Hikmat, and Maha, Ayat also made many miscues in spelling and grammatical usage of words; yet, these miscues did not intervene with the meaning making of her story. Ayat believed the use of visual representations supported her in relating to her culture in her writing.

Teacher: How does the use of visual representations and drawings help in reflecting on your own culture, traditions, and beliefs?

Ayat: The visuals helped me to make connections to our culture like a Storyboard. When I write about the Eid.

Teacher: What did you like mostly about it (the experience of using graphic organizers and drawing in writing)?

Ayat: I liked using graphic organizers such as Flow Chart, collage, Storyboard to give me more specific ideas...ah...like they give me information about I'm gonna do and write in in a paragraph (Interview, May 25, 2011).

Ayat articulated how the use of visual representations and drawings assisted her in connecting to the way religious rituals are celebrated in her culture. In the lack of English language proficiency, the employment of visual representations as non-verbal means of communication helped Ayat in expressing herself.

## **Theme 2: Perpetuation of Female Subordination**

Traditionally, women of the conservative Middle Eastern culture have been depicted as subservient and silent. In many cases, the women who live in Middle Eastern countries or those who migrate to America are expected by peers and family to socially adopt particular ways of dressing, acting, talking, and interacting. Many Middle Eastern women feel pressured to act in a culturally conservative way and embrace the cultural norms in order to be socially accepted. Furthermore, a Middle Eastern female's relationship with a male is often based on the cultural norm where women are submissive and recognize the varying degree of power, mainly male dominance between the two sexes. She is required to maintain the existing status quo by actively participating in the social norms in a conventional appropriate way. If she does not adopt the conservative role in cultural participatory practices, it often prevents her from becoming recognized as a true conservative female. In the American culture, a conservative Middle Eastern female may choose silence over the challenges she may face when interacting with others within the new social context. Therefore, it is critical that educators in the new learning environment provide the Arabic female with the opportunity to reveal her Discourse in a non-threatening way so she is enabled to take an active role and she feels that her voice is important.

Theme two offers a detailed analysis on how culturally rooted perceptions about a woman are associated with identifying cultural identity. These culturally embedded beliefs are shown through the visual representations and writing pieces created by the participants. As the analysis shows, the participants reflected on their distinguished cultural identity by revealing the way they view a woman's role in their culture. I discovered how the participants openly disclosed culturally sensitive views of a woman's role within the new social learning setting. From field note observations, reflective journals, pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, writing

pieces, artistic artifacts, and through their responses during interviews, it was evident that the participants reflected on their culturally rooted values and beliefs when I offered them the opportunity to use visual representations, self-created drawing, and other artistic creations. I will present these experiences in the following two subcategories: *The Woman's Position: "Long Haired Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Hadi's and Sael's Visual Discovery Discussion* and *The Woman's Place: "Entertainment Storytelling Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Rawaa's Development from Drawing to Writing*.

In **Theme 2: Perpetuation of Female Subordination**, I offer detailed records of Hadi's and Sael's use of Visual Discovery Strategy (See Appendix H) and Rawaa's visual representations and writing pieces. I explain how the use of visuals, self-created drawings, artistic artifacts, and writing helped the participants to associate with the theme of cultural identity in relation to a woman's role in the new culture. Evidence based on the analysis of visual representations, writing pieces, pre-questionnaire, and post-questionnaire, and interviews show how Hadi, Sael, and Rawaa adopt culturally embedded views about a woman's position from their culture and articulate them upon using visuals as catalysts to writing.

In the first subcategory, I present more of Hadi's work and introduce Sael. Hadi and Sael expressed their beliefs about the women's position in their culture. I provide a rich and thick description of how Hadi's and Sael's use of Visual Discovery technique (See Appendix H) assisted them in reflecting on their cultural perception of how women are stereotyped as being vulnerable. As the upcoming analysis shows, Hadi and Sael disclosed their cultural identity as they reflected on their perceptions of women. They used this connection to further their engagement and motivation towards writing.

In the second subcategory, I present Rawaa. Rawaa showed how women are positioned in her culture. I provide a thorough description of how Rawaa's employment of the Short Story Flow Chart (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008), (See Appendix J) and creation of a collage as catalysts to writing supported her in revealing an understanding of the woman's role in her society. As the upcoming analysis demonstrates, Rawaa articulated the culturally embedded beliefs relating to stereotyping women as being submissive in her Yemeni culture through her visual representations and writing.

### **The Woman's Position: "Long Haired Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Hadi's and Sael's Visual Discovery Discussion**

During the research, I gave Hadi and Sael the opportunity to read the canonical text "The Gift of the Magi" (2004). I used the Visual Discovery strategy to present key concepts from the text. The lesson began with reading and then I presented several images from the book on transparencies to represent the major concepts. Through the use of Visual Discovery Strategy (See Appendix H), Hadi and Sael reflected on their own Yemeni cultural identity in relation to their perception about how a woman is socially recognized to be feminine. In this text, the female protagonist is identified as having long hair, which is often a traditional Middle Eastern quality associated with femininity and vulnerability. Hadi and Sael experienced interaction with a visual of a woman having short hair, sitting lonely, and feeling miserable by the window in a shabby apartment. The visual was mainly based on depicting Della, the female protagonist. Hadi and Sael interacted with the visual and made cultural associations with it during class discussion. In the presence of the other participants, the following conversation between Hadi, and me revealed the kind of cultural connection he came up with when I prompted him to elaborate on the visual of the woman having short hair.

- Teacher: What do you see in this picture?
- Hadi: I see a woman crying because she has short hair.
- Teacher: How do you think she is feeling?
- Hadi: I visualize she gets mad because her husband will beat her because she cut off her hair.
- Teacher: How do people view a woman should look like in Yemen?
- Hadi: The girls look good with the long hair.
- Teacher: Tell me what happens to a woman if she gets her hair cut in your culture?
- Hadi: If a woman cuts her hair, she gets ugly. Her husband will get another wife (FNO # 3, April 29, 2011).

Hadi's conversation disclosed one of the hidden culturally rooted beliefs often associated with the way of perceiving women's subservience in a conservative Middle Eastern culture, mainly beating them up. Hadi clearly stated how the woman in the image was crying after getting a short haircut. She was feeling mad and guilty because she failed in socially adopting particular ways of looking as what was expected from her as a woman by her husband. Hadi believed it is culturally appropriate to beat up a woman because it is part of his cultural identity as a male. As a conservative Middle Eastern male, Hadi asserted how a female's relationship with a male should be established on the cultural norm where women are subservient and accept the varying degree of control between the two sexes.

Hadi also revealed how having long hair, a traditional Middle Eastern characteristic, is often related to femininity and women's submissiveness. He stereotyped the woman in the image as looking "ugly" simply because she had short hair. It is culturally expected in Hadi's Middle Eastern culture that a female gets socially recognized as a true woman if she has long

hair. Hadi reflected on how his cultural perspective on positioning women as being subservient allowed him to perceive the woman in the image as being “ugly”.

Hadi capitalized on the third culturally deep-rooted belief of his cultural identity as a conservative Middle Eastern male. He stated it is a man’s right to get another woman (wife) if his first woman does not comply with the cultural norms of having long hair. The woman with the short hair is considered ugly from Hadi’s perspective and this entitles her husband the privilege of getting another woman. She rebelled against her subservient status by not adopting the conventional right way look of having long hair and this undermined her femininity.

Following the conversation with Hadi, I also prompted Sael in looking at the same visual of a woman having short hair. Sael built on his own cultural referents and made connection to the picture.

Teacher: Sael, I want you to look at the picture and tell me how is the woman feeling.

Sael: I think she is mad because wants to go out but she can’t.

Teacher: Why can’t she go out?

Sael: Because she is a woman.

Teacher: How do people view a woman should look like in Yemen?

Sael: When she cuts her hair, she looks like a man [FNO # 3, April 29, 2011).

Similar to Hadi, Sael also disclosed his cultural identity as a conservative Middle Eastern male in regards to women’s subservience in a two-fold way. First, Sael stated that the woman in the image was feeling mad and she wanted to go out but she could not simply because she is a woman. Sael is raised to believe in the subservient status of women whose freedom should be restricted because of their gender weakness. Sael comes from a traditional Yemeni society that



considers it a cultural taboo for a woman to go out by herself without a male to protect her. Sael considers a woman a defenseless creature who always needs a man to protect her.

Secondly, like Hadi, Sael associated femininity with having long hair. Sael viewed the woman with the short hair in the image as a man. Sael believes it is culturally unacceptable for a woman to have short hair; otherwise, she will be violating the cultural norms of the existing conservative status-quo. As a traditional Middle Eastern male, Seal is assertive in maintaining women's subservient role as means to perpetuate male's supremacy in the status-quo of the conservative culture even in the new Discourse.

Interestingly, the other participants, mainly the three females did not vocally express their opinion when Hadi and Sael articulated their beliefs about how a woman is perceived and positioned in the conservative Middle Eastern culture. Rather, Rawaa, Maha, and Ayat chose silent expression over challenge. Hadi and Sael come from a conservative cultural background that views women as submissive to man's authority. Hadi and Sael are culturally raised to believe long hair defines a woman's femininity and therefore it is a cultural taboo for women to have short hair. Hadi argued that a woman's failure in practicing the Discourse of the Yemeni culture and cutting her hair short should result in a physical punishment, thus, demonstrating the male assertiveness in his culture. Hadi perceived himself to be physically superior to a woman simply because he is a male. Hadi claimed that a husband has the right to marry another woman if his wife violates following the social norms in the way she is expected to look (FNO # 3, April 29, 2011). Sael also reflected on his traditional view of stereotyping a female as a male if she rebels against the culturally expected norms of her role as a true woman (FNO # 3, April 29, 2011).

Hadi identified with his cultural identity by reflecting on the conservative mind-set of perceiving a women's role. He used the image provided in the Visual Discovery Strategy to construct meaning in revealing his conservative Yemeni identity. Hadi claimed he is "always a visual learner" (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C) and through the interview reveals that he believed the use of visual representations helped him in visualizing ideas connecting to his cultural beliefs.

Teacher: How does the use of visuals and drawings help in making connections to your culture, traditions, and beliefs?

Hadi: I made connections to my culture and visualize things in my culture.

Teacher: Which visual or drawing did you use to make connections and visualize?

Hadi: The flow chart, and the collage, and the Storyboard, and the pictures on the overhead (referring to the Visual Discovery Strategy) (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 18, 2011).

Similarly, Sael also talked about the importance of visuals to make cultural connections. Sael also proclaimed he is "always a visual learner" (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). He disclosed his cultural identity by expressing his views about women's vulnerable role in his society. When Sael related to the image given in the Visual Discovery Strategy, he constructed meaning in showing his traditional Yemeni identity. Sael believed the use of visual representations and pictures supported him in making cultural connections.

Teacher: Sael tell me what has helped you start writing?

Sael: The picture, the picture, the visual and the Visual Discovery and the Storyboard. They help me to make connection and prediction...eh...

making connection and prediction and start thinking when I look at the picture and I connect them to my culture (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 19 2011).

Hadi and Sael reflected on how the use of visuals supported them in making cultural connections. However, it was only through the presence of a visual (the picture of the woman having long hair) that Hadi and Sael expressed their culturally rooted beliefs in regards to female subservience in their Yemeni culture. Again, Hadi and Sael are always visual learners whose employment of visuals prompted them to delve into their culture and disclose deeply embedded beliefs. Hadi and Sael also confirmed their views on how the visuals encouraged them to capitalize on hidden cultural beliefs during the second time they were interviewed.

Teacher: How does the use of visuals and drawings help in making connections to your culture traditions, and beliefs?

Hadi: I visualize pictures, make connections to my culture and imagine to get ideas (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, May 25, 2011).

Teacher: Sael tell me what has helped you start writing?

Sael: Ah... the Visual Discovery helped me helped me to make connection and prediction and I connect the picture to my culture. Ah...and when I look at the picture, I get more ideas about my culture and the visual that make me imagine (2nd Interview, May 24, 2011).

The analysis of Hadi's and Sael's interpretations of the visuals during classroom discussion revealed the theme of **Cultural Identity Ties with Religious Rituals**. Both Hadi and Sael capitalize on the significance of positioning women in subservient way to maintain the existing status quo of their Yemeni conservative culture. Both Hadi and Sael perceive women's position in relation to the way their long hair defines women's femininity. Hadi and Sael voice

their culturally rooted beliefs of how they view male female relationship in their culture by relying on their cultural reservoirs. The use of the visuals through the Visual Discovery Strategy supported them in conversing in the new culture about their own Discourse. Still, it would have been quite interesting to know whether Hadi and Sael would have shared their culturally rooted beliefs pertaining to a female's subservience if they were given the opportunity to elaborate on them in writing.

### **The Woman's Place: "Entertainment Storytelling Subservience"—A Detailed Account of Rawaa's Development from Drawing to Writing**

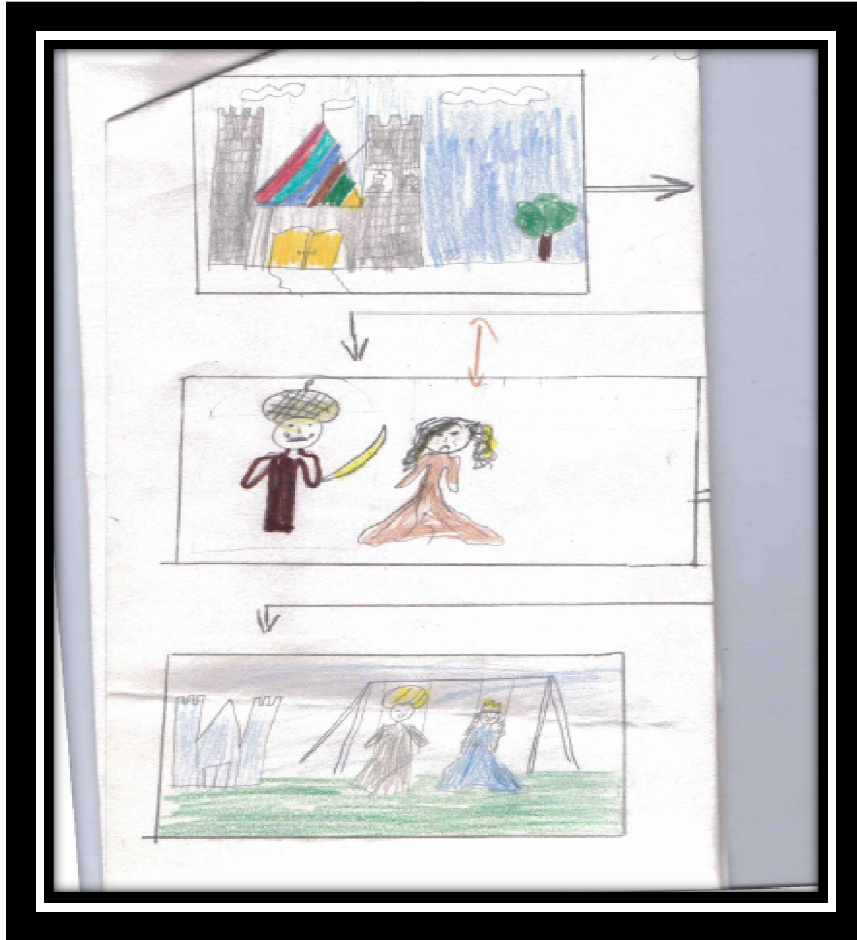
Cultural perceptions often play an important role in helping students reflect on the culturally rooted beliefs they bring to the learning environment. Belief in culturally originated conceptions can often maintain the status quo where individuals can identify with the social norms associated with their cultural identity. When students build on their cultural beliefs as supplementary reservoirs to express who they are in the new culture, they become empowered to proclaim themselves in the learning environment.

#### ***The Importance of Expressing Cultural Beliefs to Start Writing***

In the fourth week of the study, I gave Rawaa an assignment to write an original myth about a mythical character in her own culture. The assignment was in response to reading and discussing "The Midas Touch" (2006) which is a ninth grade mandatory mythology text at Phoenicia High School. This myth portrays King Midas and his motivations to become the richest man in the world. I chose this particular text because it reflects on a Greek myth with a moral lesson. In addition to being a required text, I felt this story would aid in supporting the research goals, as it offered a way for students to make connections to the myths underlying hidden cultural beliefs and values from their own country.

During this lesson, I discussed the story with my students and prompted them to make predictions and cultural connections to myths in their cultures based on the use of visuals provided in the text and by me from the Internet. Later, I invited my participants to create a timeline using visual representations to retell their version of this myth. My goals for the visual representation were bi-fold. First of all, I wanted to examine how my students would construct meaning from the story through their use of metaphorical representations. The second reason for including the visual technique was to provide students an instructional device to guide their own writing and organize their ideas. For this story, I used the Short Story Flow Chart Strategy (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008) as a springboard to writing about the origin myth. The Short Story Flow Chart is a prewriting strategy used to help students organize ideas and internalize the main elements of their story (including characters, setting and plot) as well as think about what they have read through questions such as: what was your favorite part?; and what was something you learned?.

Rawaa chose to create her story by drawing on her cultural background knowledge. After plotting her ideas on the Short Story Flow Chart, Rawaa combined her ideas from the character as well as her background knowledge from “A Thousand and One Nights” also known as “Arabian Nights” to describe her mythical characters Queen Shehrazad and King Shahrayar. Shahrayar was a cruel king whose distrust in women led him to kill them after one night of marrying them. One day, the king married Queen Shehrazad whose determination and wit to stay alive were revealed through her telling of endless stories as entertainment means to please King Shahrayar. Rawaa portrayed her story of “A Thousand and One Nights” by simply sketching it in the Short Story Flow Chart.



' – Castle Scenery.  
 .bian Golden Ages

In her Short Story Flow Chart (Figure 20), Rawaa sketched the setting of her story that takes place in a castle representing the Arabian Golden Age. The castle looked like a fortress surrounded by big high walls. There in the castle, lived a king and a queen. Rawaa drew a simple sketch of her mythical character, King Shahrayar who with the turban on his head looked like Calife (Arabian Sultan) during the Arabian Golden Age. Rawaa also illustrated how the king's authority entitled him to slaughter women with his sword. The depiction of the sad face

on the sketched character of Queen Shehrazad reflected on her fear of the king's power and sanctions revealed in his possession of a sword. Specifically, Rawaa disclosed the queen's utter submission to the king's authority by portraying her body posture with both shoulders and hands down on both sides as if she were in complete surrender. The drawing of the walls too revealed how the queen was besieged in the castle and was forced to live by the rules of the king who represented male's supreme power on females during that time. Interestingly, in the last picture in Figure 20, Rawaa portrayed the picture of the king and the queen enjoying their time on the big swing in the castle's garden. Entertainment ruled out the scene where feeling of fear and sadness suddenly disappeared. In her drawing, Rawaa captured the scene of the open space where there was a mere depiction of a castle with no walls surrounding it. Rawaa disclosed how both the king and the queen looked as if they were equals in being free and not restrained by any social duties or responsibilities imposed on them by the Discourse of their cultures.



Rawaa continued her visual representation of her story by expanding on the characters' mood of happiness and entertainment. In Figure 21, Rawaa drew the picture of King Shahrayar sitting next to Queen Shehrazad and enjoying her storytelling. Contrary to the drawing in the second picture in Figure 20 depicting the queen's sad facial expressions and utter submission to man's supremacy, the drawing in Figure 21 capitalized on the queen's smiling face and her ability in expressing her voice as a female in the king's palace. Rawaa portrayed her queen taking a new body posture with her hands up in the air and a big smile on her face. Rawaa showed how Queen Shehrazad was able to articulate herself in the presence of the king. Yet, it was the portrayal of what looked like a theatre that clearly captured the whole idea of how Queen Shehrazad was able to maintain her role as a wife providing happiness to her husband, King Shahrayar. Rawaa sketched the picture of a theatre with black and red curtains dangling from both sides where the choice of the red color reflected on how royalty is often associated with the red color. The portrayal of the theatre depicted how Queen Shehrazad was performing her cultural role as a wife in the same way an actress plays her role on the stage of a theatre.

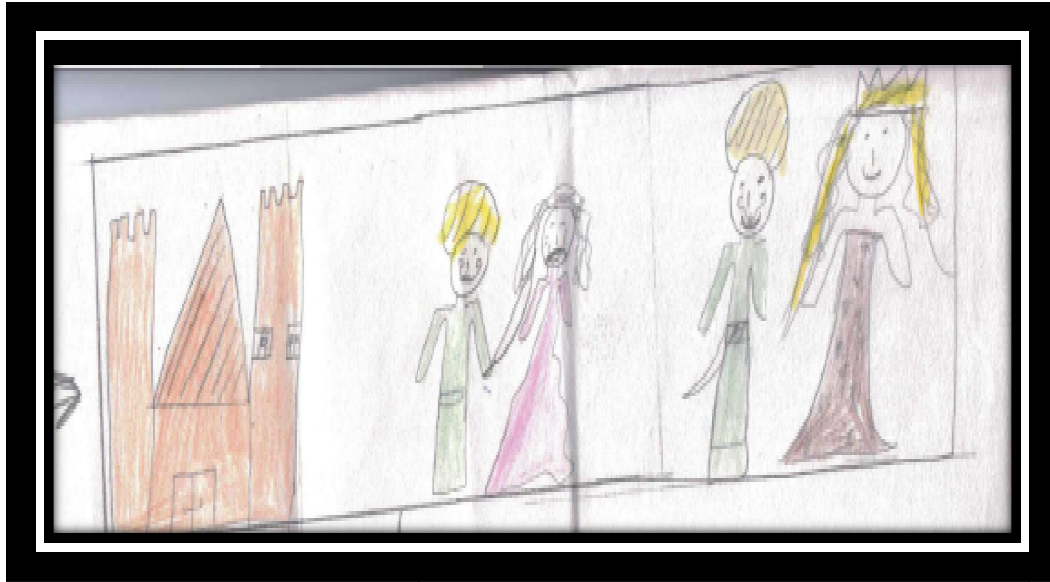
In Figure 22, Rawaa depicted how the queen was telling stories to the king. The queen's role became entirely associated with entertaining King Shahrayar who looked really happy.



- Storytelling times.



Writing the word “stories” in the image (Figure 22) highlighted on the power of storytelling as a cultural ritual of entertaining kings during the Arabian times.

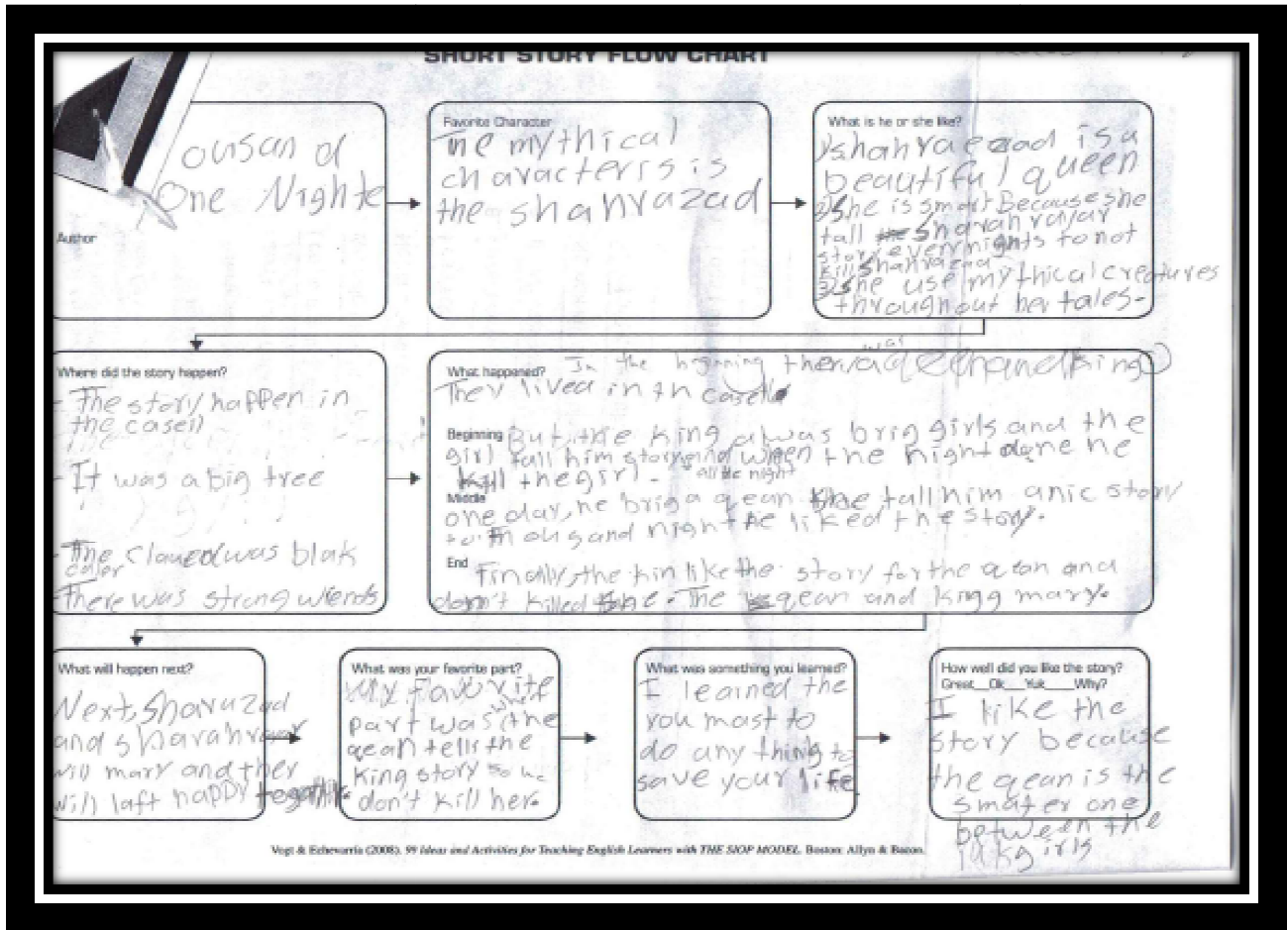


– Happiness  
in the castle

In comparison to the first drawings where Queen Shehrazad was sad and scared in Figure 20, Rawaa chose to draw the smiling face on Queen Shehrazad again in Figure 23. This reflects on the character’s sudden shift from feeling scared and sad to feeling secured, happy, and accepted. Rawaa showed early in the Short Story Flow Chart the potential to express the feelings of the characters in the self- created drawings.

Rawaa used visual illustrations that revealed her prior knowledge about Arabic culture. She disclosed her cultural identity by reflecting on the perpetuation of female subservience in her conservative culture through her visual representations. Rawaa is aware of women’s position in her culture and she used her knowledge to represent the way men punish their wives if they fail

to perform what is culturally expected from them. Rawaa reflected on female subordination by illuminating on how a female role is defined by entertaining a man, as part of the cultural norms in her Yemeni culture. Her revelations on her culturally rooted beliefs in relation to women's role were further transferred into her writing in her Short Story Flow Chart (Figure 24).



"One Night"

he tall [tells]  
thical creatures

as a big tree. The  
s [winds].  
ved in the caseil  
.] him story all the  
an [queen] she tall  
ly, the king like  
marry.  
laft [live] happy

ing story so he

e.  
: one between the

Rawaa based her writing on the self-created drawings in her Short Story Flow Chart (Figure 24) and then described the setting in her writing. The drawing of the colorful castle with big walls, the illustration of the big tree, and the clouds in the sky were all depicted in the drawing. Rawaa also wrote about how Queen Shehrazad saved her life by telling King Shahrayar stories. Rawaa generated her ideas in writing from her drawing of the queen telling stories in Figure 22. She drew the picture of curtains in the theatre of the castle to reflect on how the queen succeeded in entertaining the king and saved her life at the end. Rawaa showed how she could express the setting and the mood of a place through her use of the metaphorical representations. She produced a written story based on her own illustrations.

I also gave Rawaa an assignment to create an artistic piece of the collage (Figure 25) based on the visual representation of her story “A Thousand and One Nights”. The goal of this assignment was to help Rawaa reflect more on her cultural referents on the story constructed through self-created drawings in the Short Story Flow Chart (Figures 20, 21, 22, & 23). I wanted Rawaa to disclose her cultural identity by creating a robust piece of art revealing her cultural beliefs through her story. Rawaa chose the design of an Arabian castle during the Golden Age for her collage.



ten Ages where  
ultan.

Coloring was dominant in the collage. It reflected on Rawaa's cultural mind-set in revealing the role of women in her Arabic culture. Rawaa built on the drawing of the red curtains from her Short Story Flow Chart (Figure 21) and depicted it in her collage (Figure 25) again. Rawaa chose the pink color for her curtains this time. She further colored the castle from inside with the yellow color and selected the dark blue color with the drawing of the stars in the sky in her collage. Rawaa's choice of the pink color associated with her cultural beliefs of

stereotyping females in her society. The pink color is often culturally connected with females. Rawaa selected the pink color for the curtains representing the cultural belief of women entertaining a man as part of the Discourse of her culture. Rawaa also used the yellow color to reveal how the sun rose after each time Queen Shehrazad told a bedtime story to King Shahrayar and a new day started. Rawaa reflected on the cultural duty her female character had to perform every day and that is amusing the man by telling him a bed night story. The coloring of the blue starry night expanded on the cultural task a woman had to act at night to stay accepted.

Similar to the self-created drawing in her Short Story Flow Chart (Figure 20), the drawing of the high big walls surrounding the castle were also prevalent in Rawaa's collage. Rawaa clearly disclosed how women were besieged in the castle where male's supremacy ruled. The walls also symbolized the restrictions on women's freedom where obedience, subservience, and vulnerability were the survival means that often ensured women's social acceptance in the Arabic male dominant society. As mentioned in the subsection introducing participants in Chapter 3, Rawaa expressed her fear of male's authority represented in her father's role of determining her social acceptance as a conservative Yemeni female. Rawaa's drawing of the walls in the Short Story Flow Chart in Figure 20 showing how the queen was besieged in the castle and was obliged to live by the dictates of the king also revealed her beliefs of her subservient role as a female. Rawaa's use of contrast between the drawings of the queen within the physical confines of the castle in the second picture in Figure 20 and the queen's presence in the open space in the third picture in Figure 20 is also likely to suggest female's besieging versus her freedom in a conservative culture.

In her collage, Rawaa cut and pasted pictures of women looking like slave dancers kneeling and entertaining the kings. She also used the picture of king wearing turban like Calife

(Arabian Sultan) and enjoying the luxury of having females serving them and entertaining them at the same time. The image of a female wearing long dress, having long hair, and kneeling (picture in the left bottom corner) typically portrayed women's subordination to man's authority.

Rawaa built on her Short Story Flow Chart (Figures 20, 21, 22, & 23) and the creation of her collage (Figure 25) in writing her following piece on "A Thousand and One Nights" (Figure 26).

## Thousand And One Night

One upur time there was a big  
 Caserl and the clauded was blak color  
 and strong wends. In the biginning  
 there was a King lived in the caserl.  
 But the King is very rod. he b big girls  
 and the girl tall him story all the  
 night. When the done and the sun is  
 came he Kill the girl. The King do is  
 do long time. one day, he bring a  
 spactel and smart girl. she tell him a nice  
 storys not one day but thousand ~~and~~  
 one night to he liked the storys and  
 don't Kill her. Then , the King liked  
 the story for th a beteful queen and  
 don't Kill her. finally, shoraz ad and

Shaharazay will mary and they  
 will left happy togethir.

My favorite part when the queen  
 tells the King story to thousand  
 and one night. I learned you must  
 to do any thing to save your life  
 and protect your self. I like the  
 story because the queen is the smartest  
 one between the girls.

was blak [black]  
 ] lived in the  
 rl tall [tells] him  
 The king do [did  
 ]ll him a nice  
 storys [stories]  
 [ful] queen and  
 ill laft [live]  
 ; [stories] to [for  
 fe and protect  
 er [smartest] one



In her writing on “A Thousand and One Nights” in Figure 26, Rawaa revealed her Arabic cultural identity. Rawaa used the self-created drawings in the Short Story Flow Chart and the collage in generating ideas to her writing. She drew upon her visual representation of the castle and her collage design of a castle when she developed her ideas in writing. Rawaa specified how kings treated females as their property and how they sought to get special females for entertainment. She also relied on the drawing of King Shahrayar threatening the life of Queen Shahrazad in the Short Story Flow Chart by slaughtering her with his sword (Figure 20). Rawaa depicted the image of blue starry night and the yellow color representing sunshine from her Short Story Flow Chart and the collage in her writing (Figure 26). Rawaa’s illumination on the feeling of happiness experienced by the king and the queen at the end in her Short Story Flow Chart is closely revealed in her writing (Figure 26). The writing also captured why Rawaa drew the sad and scared face of Queen Shehrazad (Figure 20), the curtains in what looked like a theatre (Figure 21), in the illustration and the context of the story. The writing further lined up with the images of how women persevered to maintain their social acceptance as shown in the artistic collage (Figure 25).

Through her Short Story Flow Chart and the collage, Rawaa clearly disclosed her culturally embedded beliefs about women’s subservient role in her culture through the use of color. She also showed how women in her culture adapt to the existing status quo of male’s dominance by performing the social norms in an expected culturally conventional and appropriate way. Maha wrote, “I learned that you most [have] to do anything to save your life and protect your self [yourself]”. The drawing in the Short Story Flow Chart and the creation of the collage generated ideas to the writing piece (Figure 26).

### *Writing in Relation to the Construction of Meaning*

Drawing and writing in the Short Story Flow Chart in addition to the creation of the collage helped Rawaa to express herself better in the writing on “A Thousand and One Nights” (Figure 26) although the writing was not perfect. Like her classmates described previously, Rawaa made many miscues in spelling and grammatical usage of words but they did not impede the meaning making of her story (I give corrections of these miscues between brackets). Rawaa showed her good sense of depicting and writing her story in a linear way. Similar to Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, and Maha, Rawaa used signal words such as “In the beginning”, “Then”, and “Finally” [Finally] to make sense of the sequence of the events in her story. In her Short Story Flow Chart, Rawaa drew pictures representing sequential events in her story where she constructed a chronological written piece (Figure 26). Rawaa disclosed her cultural identity in constructing meaning in her writing when she used self-created drawings in the Short Story Flow Chart and created a collage as springboards.

Rawaa claimed she is “somewhat an artist” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). She identified with her cultural identity by reflecting on women’s subservience through the use of self- created drawings and collage as agents to her writing. Rawaa also stated she is “somewhat a visual learner” (Pre-Questionnaire, Appendix C). Rawaa used the images in her Short Story Flow Chart and the collage in addition to the ideas in her Short Story Flow Chart to construct meaning of her written story (Figure 26) while identifying with the perpetuation of female subordination status quo in her culture. Rawaa believed the use of visual representations helped her generate ideas in connection with her culture in her writing (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 20, 2011).

Teacher:       What did you think about the experience of using graphic organizers and drawings in writing?

Rawaa: It [meaning visual representations and drawings] helped me get ideas and make connections to the story, to the collage, to the culture... because my collage reminds me of my culture because the characters, because the characters in the story, it is Arabic characters.

Teacher: What story?

Rawaa: “A Thousand and One Night”. . . I color a queen and king, a queen, a king, and castle and the dress the queen wearing like Arabic queens (1<sup>st</sup> Interview, May 20, 2011).

Considering Rawaa’s English language barrier, I kept her language intact despite its grammatically inaccurate usage. My objective was to examine how the employment of visuals supported Rawaa in revealing her cultural identity while making meaning in writing. Rawaa reflected on how her use of visual representations assisted her in relating to her Arabic cultural heritage. In her interview, Rawaa did not convey her cultural beliefs of how females are subordinated in her culture. Yet, Rawaa articulated her view of the continuation of Yemeni female subordination through the use of self-created drawings in the Storyboard. Rawaa’s views on the use of visual representations and drawings as means of helping her connect to her culture were revealed through her second interview too.

Teacher: In what ways, if any, has the process of getting started in writing changed for you? What are the new things you did?

Rawaa: Imagine what I do, what I do in the Storyboard and the Flow Chart. I draw a picture. When I draw the picture, I imagine what will be happening in the story and make connections to our culture.

Teacher: What connection? What do you think about in your culture?

Rawaa: Eh... like the Eid El fitr and kings and queen like Shahrayar and Shehrazad in the story of “A Thousand Night” (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview, May 24, 2011).

Rawaa agreed that the employment of visuals engaged her in writing and motivated her to show earnest endeavor in writing (Post-questionnaire Appendix D). She also agreed that being creative in using visuals and images while writing was important. Rawaa believed she is “somewhat a visual learner” and “somewhat an artist” (Pre-questionnaire, Appendix C). Yet, she started viewing herself as a writer who utilizes visuals and pictures to reflect on her own culture.

Teacher: How do you feel about yourself as a writer? Do you believe you can write now?

Rawaa: Ya because because I use the pictures and then imagine, imagine and draw the pictures and then I write (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview, May 24, 2011).

Rawaa could have intentionally given the above responses in regards to the use of visual representations and drawings as scaffolds to writing in her interviews to make me happy as a teacher. Yet, her colorful drawings and writing piece ascertained how she identified with the culturally rooted beliefs relating to women’s position in her culture. The use of self-created drawings refined Rawaa’s illustration of women’s vulnerability in her writing.

The analysis of Rawaa’s visual representations in the Short Story Flow Chart, the artistic collage, her writing piece on “A Thousand and One Nights” (Figure 26), and interviews, revealed the theme of **Perpetuation of Female Subordination**. Rawaa reflected on the female submission in her culture to identify with the Discourse of her cultural identity in the new culture. Rawaa disclosed her cultural beliefs about female’s subordination when visuals were integrated as catalysts to writing. When English is very limited, Rawaa’s use of visuals and

drawings became an indispensable resource in revealing her larger cultural referents within the new culture. Visual representations and drawings provided Rawaa the opportunity to reveal her cultural identity by constructing meanings in her writing through the employment of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artifacts as agents to writing. Rawaa articulated her hidden cultural beliefs in relation to female subordination in the American schooling system once she engaged in meaningful learning experiences that connected to her life. When I acknowledged Rawaa's cultural resources through the use of visual representations as catalysts to writing, the challenge to overcome silence occurred.

### **Summary of Results**

#### **Theme 1: Cultural Identity Ties with Religious Rituals**

When Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, and Ayat reflected on their religious rituals through the use of self-created drawings as catalysts to writing, they revealed their Arabic Muslim cultural identity. They expressed who they are in the new culture by relying on religious rituals as indispensable cultural factors in articulating their personal ideas, their religious beliefs, and cultural values. The Discourses used in school often conflict with these culturally rooted and practiced by students in their home environment, or these cultural ideas they have received from their home country before arriving in America. The integration of self-created drawings as agents to writing helped Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, and Maha in disclosing their cultural identity in the American mainstream setting. Using visual representations inspired these participants to take the risk and overcome the challenge of being silent in interacting within the new socio-cultural learning environment. When individuals adopt the Discourse of their own cultural heritage, they feel empowered to articulate who they are and express the cultural and religious beliefs that distinguish them as unique individuals from others. The development of socially situated-

sensitive pedagogical approaches of integrating visuals and drawings and acknowledging diverse ways of conversing helped the participants to disclose their cultural identity by relying on religion as a significant cultural factor. When these participants expressed who they were through the use of visual representations, they were able to connect to the new culture and its Discourse. They felt their cultural reservoirs are valued.

It is clear that Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, and Maha, benefited from culturally responsive and engaging instructional practices that built on their own personal referents. When these learners made personal connections, they communicated their ideas and expressed who they are regardless of their different cultural backgrounds, unique religious affiliations, and limited English proficiency. The cultural clash between the Primary Discourse of the origin culture and the Secondary Discourse of the American culture ceased to exist when these learners were offered meaningful pedagogical practices. These instructional practices invited these learners to relate to their Discourse as means of accessing the mainstream Discourse. The integration of visual representations as springboards to writing thus acted as a communicating tool to gain entry to the Discourse of the American culture.

### **Theme 2: Perpetuation of Female Subordination**

Hadi, Sael, and Rawaa identified with the Discourse of their origin culture in relation to female subordination as part of their cultural identity. They reflected on how culturally rooted perceptions revealing female vulnerability maintain the Discourse of the existing status quo within their conservative culture. These culturally embedded beliefs were demonstrated in the use of visuals, self-created drawings, artistic collages, and writing pieces. When I offered Hadi, Sael, and Rawaa the chance to integrate visual representations as catalysts to writing, they voiced

their perceptions and their views as individuals with unique cultural beliefs pertaining to female position in the new culture.

It is important to reflect on how implementing interactive and learning experiences that linked to students' personal and cultural background experiences helped Hadi, Sael, and Rawaa. In the absence of proficiency in English language as the means of communication, the employment of visual representations and drawing as catalysts to writing empowered Hadi, Sael, and Rawaa to voice who they are in the new Discourse and what culturally rooted conceptions they bring. These learners capitalized on their cultural reservoirs regardless of the cultural clash between the social norms in their Discourse and those in the American Discourse. They also expanded on culturally sensitive topics relating to their lives and reflected on them in writing through the use of visual representations and drawings.

Overall, the analysis supports how Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, Sael and Rawaa revealed their cultural identity and constructed meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and how they employed them to spring board writing. These participants demonstrated preparedness and motivation to reflect on their cultural referents and unique funds of knowledge in connection with meaningful learning experiences relating to their lives. They were also provided with the opportunity to express who they are in the new culture regardless of their English limited proficiency, different religious beliefs, and distinctive cultural values. Chapter 5 expands the discussion of the findings followed by implications. The recommendations for future research are discussed as well.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to examine how Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) were able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them in disclosing their cultural identity to spring board writing. I chose six Arabic high school ELLs from Phoenicia High School for conducting this qualitative study that took place after school dismissal time. The data were collected from pre-questionnaire, direct observations, field notes, audio-taping, reflective journals, post-questionnaires, interviews, and students' artifacts. Merriam's (1988; 1998), Schensul's and Le Compte's (1999), Spradley's (1980), and Stake's (2006) guidelines were used to sort, organize, code and analyze the data. Data presented capitalized on the employment of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creations as instructional catalysts to help Arabic high school ELLs reveal their cultural identity to launch into writing. The findings also sustained the conclusion that visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creations need to be integrated into ELLs' curriculum to meet their various cultural, academic, and social needs. Chapter 4 highlighted the themes which addressed the following two research questions:

1. How do the Arabic high schools English language learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?
2. In what ways do the Arabic high schools English language learners (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?



Two themes came out of analysis of the data from these questions: *Cultural Identity Ties to Religious Rituals* and *Perpetuation of Female Subordination*. In a total of five subcategories, I presented and analyzed the findings (See Chapter 4). This chapter explores the results of this case study and discusses how Arabic high school ELLs disclose their cultural identity and construct meaning from their visual representations and use their cultural identity to spring board into writing making clear links between the research findings and their connection to literature. In particular, the focus delves into the ways cultural factors and other findings from the visuals and drawings created by the six ELLs can contribute to the education field. The first part of the discussion relates to the two research questions framing this study. A discussion on the expansion of the study's findings on existing literature review discussed in Chapter 2 follows. Subsequently, I present the implications. I also discuss the limitations of the study. The conclusion of the chapter offers recommendations for future research with ELLs.

### **A Discussion of Results Pertaining to Research Questions**

**Question1: How do the Arabic high school (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations?**

Through the use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations, participants showed their ability in articulating who they are in the new Discourse and demonstrated proficiency in revealing their unique cultural identity in constructing meaning from their visual images. The participants acknowledged that the use of visuals helped them to make connections to their culture (Interviews) and encouraged them to be creative (Post-Questionnaire). Through the use of the Visual Discovery Strategy (Appendix H), Hadi and Sael revealed their culturally deep-rooted perceptions relating to the perpetuation of female

subordination in their culture. Specifically, they demonstrated how a female femininity is defined by having long hair. Hadi and Sael capitalized on the significance of positioning women in subservient way to maintain the existing status quo of their Yemeni conservative culture. They voiced their culturally rooted beliefs of how they view male female relationship in their culture by relying on their cultural reservoirs.

The employment of the Short Story Flow Chart Strategy (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008) and the creation of collages too encouraged participants like Rawaa to construct meaning in her self-created drawings and artistic production while unveiling her cultural identity. In particular, Rawaa's use of the Short Story Flow Chart (Figures 20, 21, 22, & 23 in Chapter 4) and her making of the collage (Figure 25 in Chapter 4) empowered her to show how women are considered to be vulnerable in her conservative culture. Rawaa's self-created drawings in the Short Story Flow Chart exposed how women are threatened to be killed if they fail to adapt to the Discourse of the culture. The pictures in Rawaa's collage conveyed her social awareness of how women are forced to perform what is culturally expected to be the norm to ensure their social acceptance.

Through the use of the Storyboard (Essley, Rief, & Rocci, 2008), Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, and Ayat constructed meaning in their visuals and disclosed their Arabic Muslim cultural identity. They shared who they are in the new culture by relying on religious rituals as indispensable cultural factors in expressing their personal ideas, their religious beliefs, and cultural values. Particularly, Hadi and Maha viewed religious rituals culturally associated with Eid as supplementary reservoirs for revealing their unique cultural identities. Hadi and Maha reflected on the importance of adopting the social norms of the Discourse of their culture to maintain the existing status quo of preserving the practice of religious rituals. Through his

Storyboard (See Figure 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5 in Chapter 4), Hadi evidently disclosed his feelings in the drawings about the religious holiday where the self-created drawings captured his religious identity and belief in the cultural norms of celebrating the Eid. Maha's use of vivid colorful illustration in her drawings revealed her Muslim identity of enjoying the rituals of Eid. Yet, Hikmat capitalized on how embracing religious rituals in his Discourse enabled him to access the Discourse of the American culture.

As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2, Gee (1990, 1999, 2001b) believes social interactions in various Discourses are a way of acquiring new ways of being socially recognized. Students who have a better knowledge of the employment of language, props, and behavior to communicate in Primary and Secondary Discourses are usually able to exchange between discourses and get accepted in the new context. The capability to code switch is beneficial, as students can reflect on their own personal lives to make sense of the new social environment and reveal who they are. They make cultural connections and start being critically aware of the differences between the two competing Discourses. Through the use of self-created drawings in the Storyboard (See Figure 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11 in Chapter 4) as catalyst to writing, Hikmat demonstrated his competence in switching between the Discourse of his Yemeni culture and the Discourse of the American culture. Hikmat still valued the religious rituals of celebrating his religious holiday of the Eid; yet, he showed willingness to gain social acceptance in the new culture by performing what is also considered to be culturally appropriate (having a girlfriend).

The use of visuals encouraged participants to reflect on their culturally rooted beliefs and identify with the social norms related to their cultural identity as means of maintaining the existing status quo of their culture. When students build on their cultural beliefs as complementary reservoirs to express who they are in the new culture, they become empowered

to proclaim themselves in the learning environment. In the lack of English oral language proficiency, visual representations acted as a supplementary sign system for expressing the self and conveying ideas. Through visual representations, self-created drawings, and collages, Ayat Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, Rawaa, and Sael constructed meaning in painting their portraits by relying on their personal experiences and cultural referents without encountering the challenge of language frustration. As discussed in Chapter 2, Smagorinsky (2001) argues that learners' makings of meaning are usually culturally constructed based on the learners, the text, and the social context of the learning process itself. When Ayat, Hadi, Hikmat, Maha, Rawaa, and Sael engaged in meaningful learning experiences, mainly the employment of visual representations and self-created drawings, they were able to communicate their ideas in symbolic and non-verbal ways prior to writing. These ideas were easily expressed since they were based on real personal and social background experiences. Recall in Chapter 2, semiotics where individuals construct their world through their use of various sign systems, also capitalized on how the participants formed meaning in revealing their cultural identity through their use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic creations. Berghoff et al., (2003); Cowan & Albers (2006); Dyson (1993); Eisner (2002); Graves (1994); Olshansky (2003), Siegel (1995; 2006); Smagorinsky (2001); Zoss et al. (2007); and Whitin (2002, 2005) reflected on the effectiveness of integrating metaphorical representations into writing and how their integration into writing process acknowledged learners' unique cultural referents.

**Question 2: In what ways do the Arabic high school (ELLs) use their cultural identity to spring board into writing?**

The employment of non-linguistic representations of visuals, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations as catalysts to writing supported the participants in conveying their

cultural identity in writing. The participants agreed and reflected on how the use of visuals assisted them in making connections to their culture in writing (Post Questionnaire and Interviews in Chapter 4). Through the use of the Storyboard, Short Story Flow Chart, and collages as springboards, the participants revealed their religious rituals and culturally rooted beliefs relating to the perpetuation of female subordination in their writing pieces. Specifically, Ayat's, Hadi's, Hikmat's, and Maha's self-created drawings in their Storyboards (See Chapter 4) generated ideas to writing about how the religious holiday of Eid is celebrated in their culture. The self-created drawings in the Short Story Flow Chart (Figures 20, 21, 22, & 23) also encouraged participants like Rawaa to be creative in developing ideas relating to women's subordination in her Yemeni conformist culture. Rawaa's writing piece (Figure 26 in Chapter 4) associated with the female position in her culture.

Drawings in the Storyboards and Short Story Flow Chart and the production of collages assisted the participants in expressing themselves in writing although the writing did not meet the proficiency level. Each of the participants made many miscues in spelling and grammatical usage of words but their miscues did not interfere with the meaning making of their stories. As mentioned in Chapter 4, analysis of the miscues could have offered a better understanding of the ways these participants constructed meaning while using the English language; yet, the discussion of this topic was not addressed in the research purposes of this study. The participants demonstrated their good sense of depicting and writing their stories in a chronological way. They used signal words to make sense of the sequence of the events in their stories. In their Storyboards and Short Story Flow Charts, participants drew pictures representing sequential events in their stories, which were ultimately shown in their composed written pieces.

As I stated in the literature review, Rosenblatt's transactional theory (1938, 1976), which discusses how meaning of a literary text is personally and culturally constructed, highlighted on how interpretations of the literary texts were generated and how meaning was created in composing personalized pieces. Based on the reading of the mandated literary texts, "The Gift of the Magi" (2004) and "The Midas Touch" (2006), the participants built on their own personal and cultural reservoirs in identifying with the texts. They came up with their own synchronized and unconventional literary interpretations in composing their writing pieces.

### **Conclusions to the Discussion**

Visual representations, self-created drawings, and creation of artistic artifacts helped the six Arabic high school ELL participants develop their "voice." Students relied upon significant cultural factors such as religion and female subservience to write about the receiving end of religion as means of preserving religious rituals, the giving extremity of religion as an entrée to the American Discourse, and about male dominance as a perpetuation of the existing status quo of the conservative culture. When students write about their cultural identity as it is experienced, they ultimately continue the social norms. This perpetuates the cultural status quo of their Discourse. Therefore, visual representations, self-created drawing, and other artistic creations are important tools because they create the initial experience for expressing ideas. They are the springboard for enriching or deepening the participants' critical analysis especially as seen through their understanding of their cultural identity in their visual representations and writing. When I provided these students the opportunity to reflect on their unique cultural identities, they articulated their suppressed voices in the new Discourse and this promoted their critical literacy skills.

Paulo Freire (1971) argues for critical literacy grounded on the basis of problem-posing education where students are taught to be critical thinkers. Problem-posing education allows learners to reflect on their own cultural background experiences to connect to the new social context and get their voices heard (Shor, 1987). According to Wallerstein (1987), problem-posing education is mainly indispensable for ELLs newcomers whose limited English proficiency, cultural clashes between Primary and secondary Discourses, and their restricted entrée to the new school setting often result in taking the role of subservient rather than active participant in the learning environment. Problem-posing education offers these ELLs immigrants the opportunity to build on their own cultural referents to reflect on their own reality, and experiences of social injustices and struggles in preserving their distinct identity in the new culture. Contrary to the traditional approach of teaching where the teacher is the mere source of providing content and structure of learning, in problem-posing education knowledge is constructed from these learners' personal experiences.

Problem-posing education allows ELL newcomers to become critical learners while still acquiring language skills through social interaction and dialogue. These learners come with silenced voices because of their limited language proficiency and emotional distress due to cultural shock (Wallerstein, 1987). ELLs need to be involved in meaningful learning experiences where content of learning is drawn from their daily lives. By employing the technique of Freires' "codification" (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 37), the use of codes for particular discussion topics, ELLs can build on their own personal and funds of knowledge to shed light on hidden cultural beliefs and reveal unique religious rituals associated with their cultural identity. When these learners engage in multimodal practices including use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations like collage, they are given a safe space for

expressing embedded values in their culture. Only then ELLs' metaphorical representations serve as catalysts in promoting critical thinking.

Vygotsky (1978) argues drawing is a graphic representation of speech that takes place in the early stages in the natural development of written language. Writing is a skill that should be connected to personal experiences. Vygotsky (1978) believes by using symbolism, mainly drawing, children can express themselves and experience development in writing. Visual representations, self-created drawing, and creation of collages helped the participants in expressing their thoughts and cultural mind-sets in their writing. They created a safe room for these learners to voice out their social practices and culturally rooted beliefs. In the absence of English language proficiency, Ayat's, Hadi's, Hikmat's, Maha's, Rawaa's, and Sael's use of visuals as means of communication became an indispensable resource in disclosing their embedded cultural beliefs, religious affiliations, and social identities within the new American culture (Kress, 2000). Kress (2000) shows how embracing multimodality through creating visual representations helps an individual to create meaning, transmit it, or transform it without depending on language mode for conveying information. When I provided the participants in my study with instructional practices involving the use of multimodality through visuals, they demonstrated their ability in creating meaning in their visual representations and in their writing pieces regardless of their English language barrier.

Arabic high school ELLs' writing programs need to be relevant to the students' diverse cultural experiences. These learners enter the new culture with a variety of cultural funds of knowledge including religion, social norms, and cultural rituals that need to be recognized in the classroom. Acknowledging Arabic high school ELLs' cultural identities may enhance their feeling ownership in the new learning setting. It provides them with the feeling that every



learner has something to share and capitalize on in the new culture regardless of language differences and cultural variations. The challenge over silence in the new learning environment will then cease to exist.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory validated how learning emerged from participants' interactions with each other and materials' resources where acknowledging their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) became valuable. Taking the socio-cultural perspective as a theoretical background for this research study helped in understanding the impact social interactions can have on acquiring language proficiency for ELLs. When participants engaged in culturally responsive learning experiences of using visuals, they extensively talked, visually represented and interpreted pictures that showed growth of their English literacy skills beyond writing. Through interactions, the participants also developed critical awareness in discovering and making sense of their new social environment while still preserving their cultural identity. The following section discusses the contributions and expansion of the study on the current literature review.

### **Contributions and Expansion on Existing Literature Review**

#### **Contribution 1: Expanding the notion of accessing funds of knowledge to multimodal access of funds of knowledge**

The above discussion showed how the findings of this study confirmed the existing literature review discussed in Chapter 2. The findings also extended the previous work in literature. The main purpose of the study was to investigate how Arabic high school ELLs were able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and use their cultural identity to spring board writing. As I delved into the findings based on the participants' visual stories and written pieces,

a new contribution to the existing literature review discussed in Chapter 2 emerged. This study opened multimodal avenues to access cultural funds of knowledge, mainly for Arabic speaking immigrant high school students and to use them as a gateway to the Discourse of the American schooling. Throughout the analysis and discussion on findings, I highlighted on the cultural connections produced by the participants. However, these cultural associations were shown not only through visual representations, self-created drawings, and collages, but also through talking and writing. The findings of this study expanded the concept of accessing funds of knowledge to multimodal access of funds of knowledge where orchestration of multimodal forms of expression to develop English Language proficiency also occurred.

When I offered participants the opportunity to integrate visuals and drawings as catalysts into writing, they considerably conversed, metaphorically expressed their ideas, and extensively explained the pictures and that showed growth of English literacy skills beyond writing. Shifting away from using language, the student made use of a visual representation to articulate their understanding of their stories in addition to constructing new meaning. Thus, through use of multimodal resources, ELLs were able to discover non-redundant potential of the generative power of transmediation, the transformation of meaning-making from one mode of communication to another (Whitin, 2002; 2005). The use of multimodal resources provided these Arabic high school ELLs the opportunity to discover how other means of communication, other than language, become indispensable tools of expression, continuously regenerated by them in their endeavor to reveal their cultural identity in the new American Discourse. The contribution of this study is all-encompassing than writing alone.

## **Contribution 2: Adapting district-mandated materials in ways to be more culturally responsive**

Another dimension of this study that possibly could be beneficial is the way I adapted district-mandated materials in ways that were culturally responsive for the participants. In my literature review, I stressed the importance of engaging ELLs in materials that are culturally aligned with their cultural background experiences. The use of visual representations as agents to reveal cultural identity in visual representations and in writing allowed the participants to build on their own cultural referents and reflect on their cultural identity. Although “The Gift of the Magi” (2004) was a canonical text, I still provided my participants viable ways to make cultural connection to this text through interactive, multimodal instructional pedagogies. They interacted, conversed, and extensively elaborated on their ideas through the use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations.

As I stated in Chapter 2, Dyson (1993) reflects on the significance of creating a "permeable curriculum" (pp. 28-34) that acknowledges learners' social context and cultural resources and allows them to connect writing to their lives. Through the use of drawing as means of expression and social intermediation, learners were able to relate to their cultural background experiences and articulate their personal connections. Providing Arabic high school ELLs the opportunity to be engaged in creating symbolic representations within the writing process in this study empowered them in expanding on their own cultural materials and personal experiences.

## **Implications**

### **Introduction**

The findings from this study yielded three implications that I will thoroughly discuss in this section. These implications reflect on the necessity of integrating visual representations and drawings into ELLs' writing learning experiences. ELLs encounter struggles in their attempt to acquire literacy in English, to express themselves, and to reflect on their own cultural heritage. The former sections in the literature review (Chapter 2) discussed how socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), where social interaction and scaffolding form the basis of learning; Rosenblatt's (1938, 1976) transactional theory, where meaning of a literary text is personally and culturally constructed; notion of funds of knowledge (Moll's, Amanti's, Neff's, & Gonzalez's, 1992), where cultural background experiences become acknowledged; semiotics, where individuals construct their world through their use of various sign systems; and multimodality, where use of different modes of various sign systems (language, dance, music, visuals) (Kress, 2000) enhances literacy development. The findings were grounded in these theoretical perspectives, which established the confines of this study.

Through the incorporation of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations as agents to writing, I provided my ELLs with a safe socio-cultural context where revealing cultural referents and meaning making in visuals occurred. In the absence of verbal communication in English, use of visuals and self-created pictorial depictions offered these learners an alternative avenue to reveal their cultural identity in visuals and writing. These learners felt empowered when their unique personal and cultural reservoirs were heard and accepted in their writing. They constructed their own meaning, generated ideas, and produced cultural connections. The use of some of Visual Discovery Strategy, Storyboard, Short Story

Flow Chart, and the creation of collages encouraged ELLs to become risk-takers in opening up while expressing on their own cultural traditions relating to beliefs about women subordination and religious beliefs as part of their cultural identity.

The results of the study generated three implications. The first one pertains to the responsibility of teachers who work with ELLs and this is introduced in the section, **Teachers Embracing Multimodality**. In this section, the emphasis is on the role of teachers as effective educators in integrating visuals and drawing into writing. The second implication presented in the section, **Offering Professional Developments for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents**, argues for the importance of providing a support structure that will enable schools to meet the various social, emotional, and academic needs of their ELLs. This section also calls for creating a triad where an intricate relationship among students, teachers, and parents create open spaces of communication. The third implication, **Teacher Educators: Becoming Qualified in Meeting ELLs' Needs**, is a claim for involving student teachers in internships, in in-service of modeling effective strategies, in coursework with theoretical and practical expectations in multimodality, and in conducting teacher-research studies. Student teachers need to be provided with the opportunities that will enable them to become qualified in teaching ELLs. The overall implications emphasize literacy development when working with ELL learners.

### **Teachers Embracing Multimodality**

**Implication# 1: ELLs' teachers need to embrace multimodal approach (Kress, 2000) where infusion of visuals and drawings into writing curriculum takes place.**

As discussed in Chapter 2, multimodality involves use of various modes of sign systems (music, art, drama, language, technology, and media) as tools of communication, depictions, and interpretations. Visuals have the possibility to enhance ELLs' potential in learning how to take

risks in disclosing their unique cultural identity in writing. Through the infusion of visual representations and drawings, ELLs' learning will be optimized where generating ideas, constructing meaning, and making cultural connections will result in personalizing writing. Teachers need to encourage their ELLs to take initiatives in using visuals to reflect on who they are and generate ideas where they can find their own voices, articulate their thoughts, and reflect on their own cultural identity. Providing ELLs with ample opportunities of using visuals and drawings helps them in building on their own understanding, constructing meaning, and coming up with individual interpretations of texts prior to producing ideas for their writing.

ELLs often feel hesitant in expressing their ideas because of their limited English proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. They cease being reluctant writers once their teachers acknowledge their cultural heritage as a supplementary reservoir in producing ideas via the integration of visuals and drawings. Visual images and drawings need to be used in helping ELLs overcome the encounter of voicing their ideas orally and create symbolic representations, which reflect on their distinguished personal and cultural background experiences. Infusion of visuals and drawings as catalysts to writing helps ELLs to generate ideas based on cultural beliefs, values, and traditions and this encourages them in developing ideas to launch into writing.

ELLs' teachers also need to commit the time in designing meaningful learning experiences, which consider the infusion of visual representations, and self-created drawings into writing. These teachers need to adopt multimodal teaching practices to make the integration of visuals and writing an indispensable part of their writing instruction. Offering modeling, scaffolding, and acknowledging ELLs' funds of knowledge will encourage them to sense who they are through the creations of their own symbolic depictions and take risks in communicating

their ideas. ELLs feel motivated to learn, write, and express their suppressed voices when the use of visuals and drawings allows in reflecting on cultural beliefs, traditions, and social norms. Incorporating multimodality through visual instruction will enable ELLs' teachers to meet their students' various cultural and language needs and provide social and emotional support needed to perform proficiency in acquiring literacy skills in English. Visual methodology will allow ELLs the opportunity to experience authenticity in employing writing as a means of expressing self and voicing out ideas where language frustration in using only English ceases to exist.

As discussed in the literature review, planning for literacy strategies that engage Arabic high school ELLs in expressing themselves through extended use of visual representations and prolonged discussions shows the potential for opening up avenues of communication that allow for active construction of meaning. Building upon Arabic high school ELLs' prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural referents may support them and their teachers as they bring modes of multi-layered interpretations into the classroom. ELLs' teachers also need to provide learning opportunities that make use of visual representations followed by discussions to motivate their Arabic high school students experience the possibility of making connections. Thus, designing learning experiences that promote multiple opportunities of meaning-making should become the norm of a student-centered classroom practice (Whitin, 2005).

### **Offering Professional Developments for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents**

**Implication #2: School districts need to offer a support structure by offering professional developments to school administrators, teachers, and parents' workshops. This will help everyone keep current with research on ELLs' learning to align research-based practices on visual literacy with the writing curriculum.**

Providing funding and support to offer district professional developments on recent effective pedagogies of instructing ELLs should become quite indispensable. The widespread of multimodality in texts requires integrating visuals into ELLs' curriculum, mainly in writing area.

### ***Offering Professional Developments for Administrators and Curriculum Specialists***

School administrators, including principals, assistant principals, and curriculum coordinators need to be offered workshops on the integration of visuals and drawing into ELLs' writing curriculum. Those individuals are the decision makers in making change happen within the learning environment. Administrators supporting the infusion of visual literacy should encourage teachers to embrace multimodal teaching practices where integration of visual representations and drawings occur. When integration of visual representations and drawing becomes a district wide initiative, consistency and uniformity in approaching writing instruction prevails. Teaching with visual methodology should become interrelated with the instructional practices offered and modeled during professional developments. School administrators', including principals', assistant principals', and curriculum coordinators' goal should be creating professional opportunities that explore possible ways of helping their ELLs achieve success.

### ***Professional Development for Teachers***

School administrators should provide their teachers with professional developments that address the integration of visual depictions and drawings into writing curriculum. These professional developments should be offered to all teachers at all levels: elementary, middle, and high school. Visual strategies for teachers should become part of district professional developments. These strategies may include Picture Sorting Strategy, 4- Square Personalized Word (Vogt, Echevarria, & Short, 2010), Visual Discovery Strategy from Teacher's Curriculum Institute (n.d.), Storyboard (Essley, Rief, & Rocci, 2008), and Short Story Flow Chart (Vogt &



Echevarria, 2008). Teachers need to become advocates of learning strategies integrating visuals and pictorial representations in their teaching practices. They should make use of technology available in their classrooms and use it as a tool to model and support the infusion of visuals and drawings into their students' writing experiences.

### ***Offering Parent Workshops***

School administrators need to support parent workshops designed to develop awareness in regards to integrating visual literacy into ELLs' writing curriculum. Displayed demonstrations of ELLs' writings along with visual representations and drawings will give their parents insights about the valuable experience of incorporating visual literacy. Sharing with parents the effectiveness of integrating visuals and drawings into writing experiences will motivate them to encourage their children to view the use of visuals as a catalyst of empowering their unique voices. Infusing visuals and drawings into writing allows ELLs' parents to recognize how their children are able to reflect on their unique personal and cultural background experiences. ELLs' parents need to feel their children are provided with the opportunity to convey their ideas and express their voices through the use of various means of symbolic representations regardless of the English language barrier. When ELLs' cultural referents are acknowledged, cultural discontinuity between home and school community will cease to exist. This will help in establishing a supportive structure of a triad where an intricate relationship among students, teachers, and parents create open spaces of communication.

### **Teacher Educators: Becoming Qualified in Meeting ELLs' Needs**

**Implication #3: Educational programs should be offered to involve student-teachers in internships, in in-service of modeling effective strategies, in coursework with theoretical and practical expectations in multimodality, and in conducting teacher-research studies.**

Reforming the educational programs of teacher educators will enable the prospective and novice teachers to become qualified in meeting their various ELLs' needs. Providing ongoing support to student teachers' educational programs makes it possible in reaching their ELLs and helping them achieve proficiency in acquiring literacy skills in English.

### ***Internships***

General education prospective and novice secondary teachers need to be provided with internships in an ELL population classroom. This will offer them the opportunity to gain insights into effective teaching practices for ELLs from the inside lens of a classroom teacher. Internships give a whole picture of how authentic learning experiences take place. When these teacher educators visit ELLs' classrooms, they can relate the theories advocating teaching ELLs to practical classroom implications. Examining ELLs' behavior within the actual social setting, the classroom, mirrors what usually occurs during the implementation of effective teaching practices designed to help ELLs achieve. These prospective teacher educators need to consider adopting current multimodal approaches into teaching their ELLs' population.

### ***Strategies***

Student-teachers need to be offered in-service in modeling strategies that integrate visuals and drawings into writing instruction. Professional in-service opportunities should require student teachers' commitment in adopting and implementing effective strategies. Student teachers need to get engaged in designing authentic writing experiences across the curriculum. Effective teaching pedagogies, which consider the infusion of visuals and drawings into writing instruction, help ELLs express themselves and convey ideas regardless of limited language proficiency and cultural barriers. The same visual techniques as mentioned above should be

offered for pre-service teachers because it may help student teachers to be cognizant of the potency of these strategies in helping ELLs embark upon writing.

### ***Coursework with Theoretical and Practical Expectations in Multimodality***

Universities and colleges need to offer courses that consider multimodality, mainly integration of visuals as a sign system in helping ELLs empower their voices. Providing student teachers with courses in language arts and other subject areas should transcend the mere teaching of the fundamentals of writing process to adopt strategies that address infusion of visual representations and drawings. Visuals and drawings need to be viewed as catalysts to help ELLs make meaning, reflect on cultural background experiences, and springboard to academic writing. This is one way to make certain prospective teachers presented with effective writing instructional practices designed to meet various needs of ELLs.

### ***Teacher-research***

Educational programs need to prepare student teachers in conducting their own teacher research. The integration of visual representations and drawings into ELLs' writing instruction requires expanding on current research aligning to visual integration into writing. ELLs' teachers need to infuse visuals and drawings into their writing instruction on consistent basis. This will help in gaining insights into teacher's visions of effective pedagogical practices. Cochran –Smith and Lytle (1990) believe teachers' contributions to research on teaching should be acknowledged in the educational field. Conducting a teacher research enhances examining the experience of using visual representations and drawings from the inside lens of the teacher that an outsider (administrator, policy maker, curriculum designer) does not have. Teachers need to commit time and exert effort in conducting research based on authentic learning experiences. They need to carry out research established on the social, academic, and emotional needs of their

ELLs and look into gaps in research studies disregarding ELLs' population. Teachers' research findings founded on classroom instruction, observations, students' records and artifacts, and teachers' reflective journals will validate the instructional practices used to meet ELLs' various needs in the classroom.

### **Limitations**

One factor that may have impacted the findings of the study is the limited observation period and this created time constraint in conducting the study. I carried out the study within a limited period of six successive weeks where observations took place for only 16 hours (2 consecutive hours per session) in the spring of the school year (Tooley, 2009). Conducting the study for a longer period of time would have enabled me to examine males' views on women subordination in their writing. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, it would have been quite interesting to know whether Hadi and Sael would have shared their culturally rooted beliefs pertaining to a female's subservience if I had given them the opportunity to elaborate on them in writing. However, the pressed time in following the pacing schedule of conducting the study restricted the opportunity of discovering whether Hadi and Sael would have taken the risk in disclosing their culturally embedded beliefs in regards to women's subservience in their writing.

Another limitation consisted of the sampling. I purposively selected six participants only from one particular population of students, being Arabic high school ELLs. The study included only one site, being the Phoenician High School, where majority of student body came from Arabic ethnic background. This limited the possibility of generalizing the findings of the research to ELLs' population.

One last limitation to the study was the six students' self-evaluation on the integration of visuals into writing. The participants assessed themselves on their use of visuals through the

post-questionnaire. Subjectivity in their responses created a flaw in the study (Tooley, 2009). Designing and applying objective kinds of measurements to evaluate participants' attitudes towards use of visuals would have provided more accurate picture about the effectiveness of visual representations.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

### **Collaboration in Teacher Research**

This study made a claim for preparing student teachers to conduct their own teacher research in their future profession. I recommended that student teachers devote time and seek perseverance in carrying out research based on authentic learning experiences to support the learning of their ELLs. This study revealed how I conducted my own qualitative research based on rigorous procedures, using multiple sources of data collection. In future research, more collaboration from teacher researchers is needed to carry out action research studies to offer insights on the potency of integrating visual representations and drawings into ELLs' writing instruction. When teachers conduct their own research, they provide detailed and thick descriptions of what they observed, recorded, implemented, and reflected on. Offering adequate anecdotal descriptions of data collected and providing thorough analysis on findings allows in replicating these studies conducted by a group of teacher researchers.

### **Assessing Professional Developments within School Districts**

I argued that school districts need to adopt a support structure to ensure ongoing communication among school administrators, teachers, and parents in keeping current with research on ELLs' learning. Providing professional developments and parent workshops were the suggestions offered. Further research is recommended where technology will be incorporated to assess effectiveness of professional developments. Conducting online surveys in

forms of questionnaires to reflect on administrators', teachers', and parents' input in the efficacy of professional developments is important. Surveys provide the opportunities to gather and analyze data collected from the respondents and use it as tools to examine various perspectives' towards implementing visual teaching pedagogies. Designing and incorporating online assessments will offer more educational support into incorporating visuals into school curricula.

### **Reforming Educational Programs for Student Teachers**

Reforming educational programs for student teachers was one of the implications generated in the study. I called for engaging student teachers in authentic coursework experiences where theoretical foundations align with practical implications examined during internships. Future research is recommended to conduct studies to examine the possible potent magnitude integrating visual literacy can have on improving literacy skills for ELLs across the curriculum.

### **CONCLUSION**

I conducted this study to investigate how Arabic high school ELLs were able to reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them in disclosing their cultural identity to spring board into writing. I discussed the impact of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations as catalysts in reflecting on cultural identity to launch into writing by highlighting on the alignment between the research findings and their connection to literature review.

Although writing provides an avenue of communication within the socio-cultural context individuals are interacting in, it is still considered a complex learning process for Arabic high school ELLs. These ELLs face the challenge of expressing themselves in words. Policy makers,

universities, colleges, school administrators, teachers, and parents each has a role in meeting the diverse needs of ELLs and helping them achieve proficiency in their literacy skills. The above stated three implications revealed the significance of integrating visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations into ELLs' curriculum. ELLs can reveal their cultural identity when they build on their own prior knowledge and cultural background experiences when visual representations and drawings are integrated as indispensable means of communication. ELLs' teachers need to frame instruction within the multimodal pedagogical context and provide authentic learning experiences where visuals become means of communicating ideas. This case study affirmed how the use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and artistic artifacts can help Arabic high school ELLs take initiatives in revealing their cultural identity to embark upon writing. The use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations helps ELLs develop their literacy skills, become empowered in expressing who they are, and accomplish success in becoming socially recognized in the new American culture.

## APPENDIX A

### Consent Letter

#### [School] Parental Permission/Research Informed Consent

Title of Study: Use of Visual Images and Drawing in Academic Writing for Arabic High School English Language Learners

#### **Purpose:**

You are being asked to allow your child to be in a research study at their school that is being conducted by Iman Ismail in the Department of Reading, Language, and Literature in School of Education at Wayne State University to look at how Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) may use pictures and drawing to develop their English writing skills. The study also shows the ways pictures and drawing may help Arabic high school English Language Learners (ELLs) relate to their culture in their writing and get interested to write. Your child has been chosen because he/she meets the selection criteria which are the following: being a student in English as a Second Language class (ESL2), literacy level in the native language, and being immigrant to the United States for less than two years before the time of conducting the study.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, your child will be asked to do the following tasks during the six week period of conducting the study:

Fill out a pre-questionnaire translated into Arabic in the principal investigator's classroom after dismissal time on the second day of the first week of the study. The pre-questionnaire consists of six multiple choice questions. It will take your child 15-20 minutes to answer the questions. Your child will have the option of not answering some of the questions. Question topics include: participant's age, gender, grade level, views of themselves as visual learners and artists, frequency of their use of pictures and drawing, and different kinds of pictures used in their content area classrooms.

Be observed through field notes and audiotapes during his/her interactions with reading texts and the activities during writing time for 16 hours (2 hours per each session of observation) after dismissal time in the principal investigator's class.

Be asked to use and draw pictures and make posters during writing times while he/she is being observed/audio-taped.

Fill out a post-questionnaire translated into Arabic too in the principal investigator's classroom after dismissal time on the third day of the fifth week of the study. There are four statements in the questionnaire. Your child must show how his/her opinion matches a statement on a rating scale by filling in the number that shows how he/she feels about each of the statements given. It will take your child 15-20 minutes to answer the questions. Your child will have the option of not answering some of the questions.



Orally answer questions about his/her experiences and feelings about writing during two interviews. Interviews will be conducted in Arabic, audio-taped, and transcribed. The first interview will be conducted in the principal's investigator's class after dismissal time on the last three school days of the fifth week of the study. The second interview will be conducted in the same place after dismissal time once again for your child in the six week of the study. The principal investigator will conduct each interview individually with your child for 30-45 minutes. There will be the same eleven questions in each of the interviews. Your child will be also informed that it is fine if he/she wants to give more details on answers and it will be quite important that he/she asks questions and asks for explanations if directions or questions are unclear. Your child will have the option of not being interviewed if he/she does not feel comfortable during the interview and remains in the study.

Copies of the materials (pre-questionnaires, post-questionnaire, and interview questions) will be in the counseling office with the bilingual counselor for you to review.

**Benefits:**

The possible benefits to your child for taking part in this study are progress in writing skills and having more interest in writing when using pictures and drawing during writing. Additionally, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Benefits for the teacher include:

- \* develop knowledge of how Arabic high school English Language Learners use pictures and drawing as ways to improve writing.
- \* increase knowledge of useful ways to build up writing with this particular student population

Benefits to educators in the teaching profession:

- \*increase understanding of how pictures and drawing can be used to help Arabic high school English Language Learners develop their English writing abilities, relate to their culture , and become interested while writing and using pictures even if they are beginner writers.

**Risks:**

There are no known risks at this time to your child for participation in this study. However, possible psychological risk can occur based on conducting interviews and asking your child to produce artifact collections. Your child will not take part in the interviews if he/she appears to be at risk during the interview.

**Costs**

There are no costs to you or your child to participate in this study.

**Compensation:**

Compensation in form of gift card payments will be given to your child at intervals throughout the study. Compensation will not be based on your child's completion of the study. Your child will be given a gift card payment of \$ 20/ week for five weeks and \$ 15 in the last week of the study. See attached compensation schedule and the pacing of payment.

**Confidentiality:**

All information collected about your child during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Your child will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies your child personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor (if applicable), the Human Investigation Committee (HIC) at Wayne State University or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], Office of Civil Rights [OCR], etc.), may review your child's records.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child at any time. Your decision about enrolling your child in the study will not change any present or future relationships with Wayne State University or its affiliates, your child's school, your child's teacher, your child's grades or other services you or your child are entitled to receive.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Iman Ismail at the following phone number (313)300-1737. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study:**

To voluntarily agree to have your child take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to have your child take part in this study, you may withdraw them at any time. You are not giving up any of your or your child's legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/ Legally Authorized Guardian

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent Authorized Guardian

Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*\*Signature of Witness (When applicable)

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Witness

Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Time

\*\* Use when parent/guardian has had consent form read to them (i.e., illiterate, legally blind, translated into foreign language).

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, positioned to the right of the explanatory text. It is intended for recording the name of the person obtaining consent and the time taken.

**APPENDIX B****Assent Letter****[Behavioral]Documentation of Adolescent Assent Form**

(ages 13-17)

Title: Use of Visual Images and Drawing in Academic Writing for Arabic High School English Language Learners

**Study Investigator: Iman Ismail****Why am I here?**

This is a research study. Only people who choose to take part are included in research studies. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an Arabic high school English Language Learner who meets the following criteria: being a student in English as a Second Language class (ESL2), your level in Arabic language, and being in the United States for less than two years.

Please take time to make your decision. Talk to your family about it and be sure to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

**Why are they doing this study?**

This study is being done to find out whether use of pictures and drawing may help you develop your English writing abilities, reflect on your culture, and motivate you to write.

**What will happen to me?**

You will participate in an after school program which may help you develop your English writing abilities for a total of 18 ½ hours over a period of six weeks. The program will take place in Mrs. Ismail's classroom Room # A202.

In the first week of the program, you will answer six questions. It will take about 15-20 minutes. You will have the option of not answering some of the questions.

You will be asked to read texts, use pictures, make posters, and draw pictures as ways to help you develop your English writing abilities for eight sessions. Each session will last for two hours. You will be audio-taped during that time.

At the end of the program, you will answer 4 questions in the sixth week. It will take about 15-20 minutes. You will have the option of not answering some of the questions.

You will be interviewed twice. The first interview will take place in the principal's investigator's class in the fifth week of the study. The second interview will take place in the same place and in the sixth week. The interview will last for 30-45 minutes and you will be

audio-taped. You will also have the option of not being interviewed if you do not feel comfortable being interviewed and remain in the study.

**How long will I be in the study?**

You will be in the study for six consecutive weeks.

**Will the study help me?**

“You may benefit from being in this study by experiencing possible progress in writing skills and more interest to write when using pictures and drawing. “Information gained from this study may help other people in the future use pictures and drawing as ways to help them develop writing.

**Will anything bad happen to me?**

There are no risks to your participation in this study.

**Will I get paid to be in the study?**

For taking part in this research study, you will receive gift card payments given at intervals throughout the study. You will be given a gift card payment of \$ 20/ week for five weeks and \$ 15 in the last week after all study activities are completed. See the attached schedule of compensation.

**Do my parents or guardians know about this?**

This study information has been given to your parents/guardian. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

**What about confidentiality?**

Every reasonable effort will be made to keep your medical records or your information confidential. But we do have to let some people look at your study records and maybe your hospital records.

We will keep your records private unless we are required by law to share any information. The law says we have to tell someone if you might hurt yourself or someone else.

**What if I have any questions?**

For questions about the study please call Iman Ismail at (313)300-1737. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628.

**Do I have to be in the study?**

You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to or you can stop being in the study at any time. Please discuss your decision with your parents and researcher. No one will be angry if you decide to stop being in the study.

**AGREEMENT TO BE IN THE STUDY**

Your signature below means that you have read the above information about the study and have had a chance to ask questions to help you understand what you will do in this study.

Your signature also means that you have been told that you can change your mind later and withdraw if you want to. By signing this assent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights. You will be given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant (13 yrs & older)

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of Participant (13 yrs & older)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*\*Signature of Witness (When applicable)

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person who explained this form

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person who explained form



\*\* Use when participant has had consent form read to them (i.e., illiterate, legally blind, translated into foreign language).

**APPENDIX C****Pre- Questionnaire on Use of Visual Images and Writing for Arabic High School****English Language Learners**

1. What grade are you in? (Circle one)

9th grade    10th grade    11th grade    12th grade

2. What is your gender? (Circle one)

Male            Female

3. Visual learners like seeing and using visual images (charts, diagrams, graphs, graphic organizers, and drawing) to brainstorm and organize ideas in writing.

Do you see yourself a visual learner? (Choose one)

I am always a visual learner

Somewhat a visual learner

I am not at all a visual learner

4. Artists are those who make artistic work (pictures-drawing). Do you see yourself as an artist? (Choose one)

I am always an artist

Somewhat an artist

I am not at all an artist

5. Have you seen use of visual images (such as charts, graphs, posters, drawings, diagrams, pictures, or graphic organizers) in your lessons (any subject area like math, science, social studies, English)?

Yes

No

a. If **yes**, how often did you see visual images, such as charts, graphs, posters, drawings, diagrams, pictures, or graphic organizers, in your lessons (any subject area)? (Choose one)

- Most of the times
- Weekly
- Daily
- Multiple times per day

b. In what subject area do you see visuals the MOST? (Choose one)

- Reading
- Writing
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

c. In what subject area do you see visuals the LEAST? (Choose one)

- Reading
- Writing
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you used visual images (such as charts, graphs, posters, drawings, diagrams, pictures, or graphic organizers) in your lessons (any subject area like math, science, social studies, English)?



Yes

No

a. If **yes**, how often have you used visual images, such as charts, graphs, posters, drawings, diagrams, pictures, or graphic organizers, in your lessons (any subject area)?

(Choose one)

Most of the times

Weekly

Daily

Multiple times per day

b. In what subject area have you used visuals the MOST? (Choose one)

Reading

Writing

Math

Science

Social Studies

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

c. In what subject area have you used visuals the LEAST? (Choose one)

Reading

Writing

Math

Science

Social Studies

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

d. What kinds of visual projects did you do during the school year? (Check all that apply)

- Diagrams: \_\_\_\_\_
- Maps: \_\_\_\_\_
- Graphs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tables: \_\_\_\_\_
- Timelines: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sketches/paintings/drawings/illustrations: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other visual products (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire was adopted from:

**Reference:**

Tooley, S., H. (2009). *The art in teaching writing. Masters theses & specialist projects.*

Graduate Studies and Research, Western Kentucky University

Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/83>

## APPENDIX D

### Post-Questionnaire

#### **Arabic High School English Language Learners' Motivation and Use of Visual Images and Drawing Questionnaire**

Please fill in the number that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements below

1. I was engaged throughout the time when we used visual images and drawing in writing.

Strongly Agree    Agree        Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)                    (5)

2. I gave my best endeavor on writing when we used visual images and drawing.

Strongly Agree    Agree        Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)                    (5)

3. It's entertaining to use visual images and drawing in writing.

Strongly Agree    Agree        Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)                    (5)

4. It was important for me to be creative in using visual images and drawing while writing.

Strongly Agree    Agree        Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)                    (5)

(Some of the questions were adopted from Sundre's "Student Opinion scale" (1999).

#### **Reference:**

Sundre, D.L. (1999). Does examinee motivation moderate the relationship between test

consequences and test performance? Paper presented at AERA annual conference.

Montreal, Canada: April.

**APPENDIX E****Interview Questions**

1. Tell me what has helped you start writing this semester?
2. Describe the process you go through in responding to a writing topic, mainly getting started.
3. What did you think about the experience of using graphic organizers and drawing in writing?
  - a. What did you like MOSTLY about it?
  - b. What did you like LEAST about it?
4. Tell me how have you used visual elements (drawings, images, diagrams, charts, timelines, etc.) in your writing?
  - a. How have you used visual images in the pre-writing stage?
  - b. How have you used them during writing?
5. Describe your most important and/or motivating writing experience this semester.
  - a. Why was it so successful and/or motivating?
  - b. Compare it to your least successful and/or motivating writing experience.
  - c. Why was it unsuccessful or non-motivating?
6. Tell me what do you use writing for?
7. Tell me how do you see yourself as a beginner writer?
  - a. What are the attributes of a good writer?
  - c. In what ways, if any, has the process of getting started in writing changed for you?
8. What kinds of writing (pre-writing and during) activities did you do this semester?
  - a. How do you feel about the pre-writing experiences and activities you have been exposed to?

b. How do you feel about yourself as a writer?

9. How well prepared did you feel for the pre-writing activities you have been asked to do in your class?

a. What might have worked better for you?

10. How does the use of visual representations and drawings help in reflecting on your own culture, traditions, and beliefs?

11. Is there anything else you want to talk about regarding writing?

*Questions adopted from Stanford University of Writing Interview Questions*

**Reference:**

Stanford University of Writing Interview Questions.

Retrieved from [ssw.stanford.edu/materials/SSWInterviewProtocol.pdf](http://ssw.stanford.edu/materials/SSWInterviewProtocol.pdf)

## APPENDIX F

### Procedure of Using Picture Sorts

1. **Collect a set of pictures** from various sources: old books, magazines, textbook illustrations, posters, etc. Assemble based on topics and interests, etc. Choose about 8-10 pictures per team.
2. **Modeling:** Closed Sort—Teacher models arranging pictures under 3 categories—Plants, Animals, People, Food
3. **Open Sort: In teams of 4-5**, students look through pictures, talk, and arrange according to characteristics, topic, content, etc. Each category must have at least 2 pictures. Pictures are classified into 2-3 or 4 columns. Students consent on category name.
4. **Connect 2:** Each pair of students chooses 2 pictures to relate to and writes a sentence that starts with:  
  
This \_\_\_\_\_ and this \_\_\_\_\_ go together because...
5. **Connect again:** Each pair of students picks one or both of their pictures and connects it to another team's picture and discusses the connection. This can be recurrent.

## APPENDIX G

### 4-Square Word Personalized

<b>What it is not: Picture</b>	<b>My personal visual illustration:</b>
--------------------------------	---

<b>What it is not: Picture</b>	<b>My personal visual illustration:</b>
--------------------------------	---

<b>Word:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
--------------	-----------------

<b>Word:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
--------------	-----------------

<b>What it is not: Picture</b>	<b>My personal visual illustration:</b>
--------------------------------	---

<b>What it is not: Picture</b>	<b>My personal visual illustration:</b>
--------------------------------	---

**Reference:**

Vogt, M.E., Echevarria, J., & Short, D. (2010). *The SIOP model for teaching English-Language Arts to English Learners*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.



## APPENDIX H

## Visual Discovery

## Strategy: Visual Discovery

**Step 1:** Interactive presentation set up—**large screen (optimal 8' x 8')**.

**Dim** room so images will be clear

**Step 2:** Carefully choose a **few (1-5 transparencies) significant memorable images to embody lesson's main concepts—**

- clearly convey the key concepts you want to teach
- Focus on emotion, drama, or human interaction—
- have sufficient details that are related to the reading—discuss then read about it
- select different images—photos, illustrations, paintings, maps, cartoons.

**Step 3:** Pose sequenced questions that lead to discovery.

**Generate questions for each image—simple to complex**

Ask “What do you see?”—have students show details. Have students stand around image and touch or “**magic paper**” a detail—put a white paper 20 inches in front of image—detail is “magically” enlarged on the paper.

- Give students the chance to **discuss and examine scene**. Ask student a question and allow pairs of students to discuss for one minute and share out.
- Encourage students to make predictions
- . Change images every 5-7 minutes.

**Step 4:** Allow students to interact with images: students look at an image and represent scenes. Do “talking statues”, interview characters.

**Step 5:** Do varied writing activities—lists, notes, letters to characters, questions, reflections, T-list comparing image to written text, etc.

Adapted from Teacher's Curriculum Institute— (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.teachtci.com>

**APPENDIX I**  
**Storyboard Template**

<b>Title:</b>	<small>Scene</small>		<small>Seq.</small>	
	<small>Dir.</small>		<small>DP</small>	

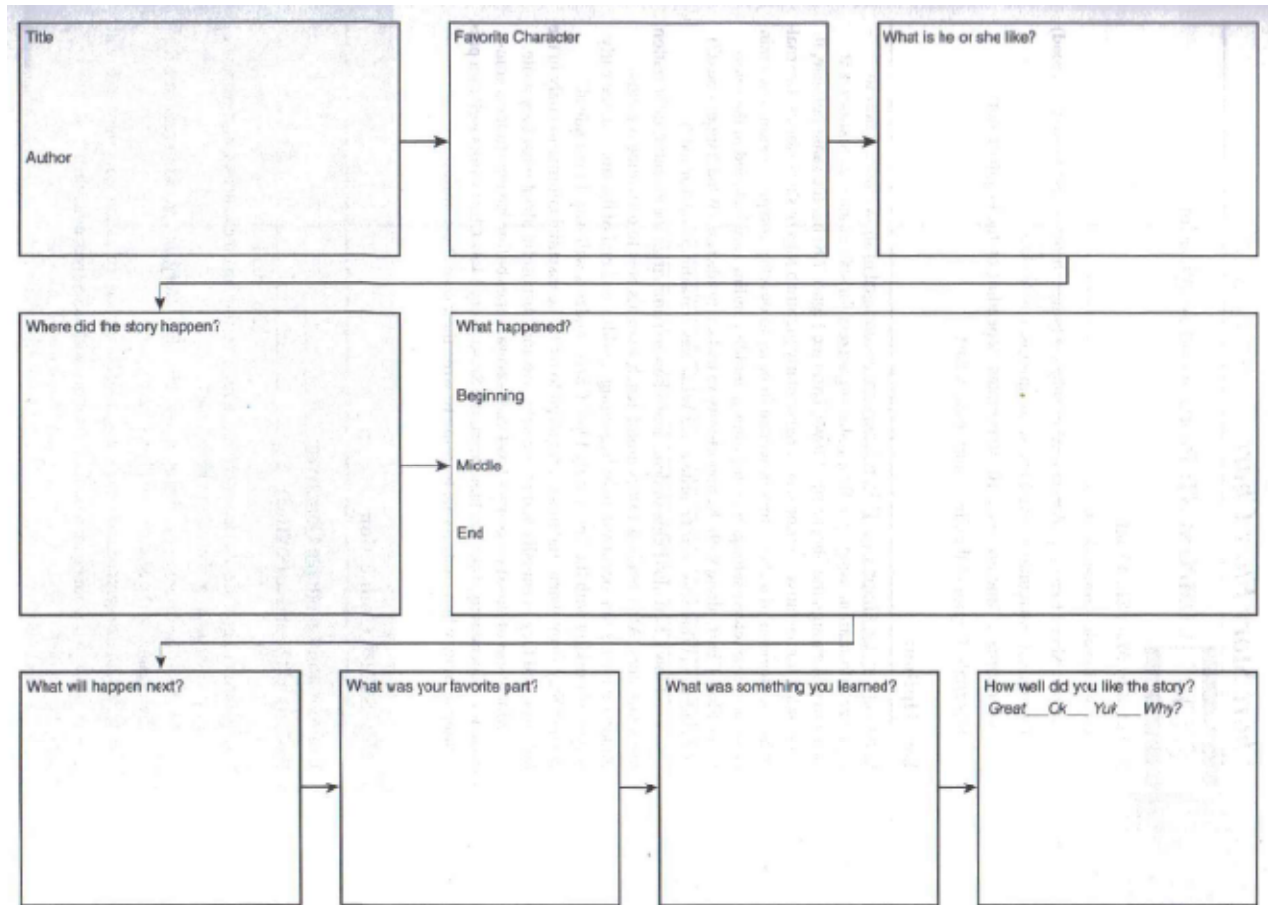
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 90%; height: 100%; margin: 0 auto; position: relative;"><div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 0; right: 0; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px;"></div></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"><hr/><hr/><hr/></div>

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## APPENDIX J

## Storyboard in the form of a Short Story Flow Chart

FIGURE 7.8 *Short Story Flow Chart*

Source: MaryElles Vogt.

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**ABSTRACT****USE OF VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND DRAWINGS IN WRITING FOR  
ARABIC HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

by

**IMAN ISMAIL**

May 2012

**Advisor:** Dr. Kathleen Crawford-McKinney**Major:** Reading, Language, and Literature**Degree:** Doctor of Education

The purpose of this study was to examine how Arabic high schools English Language Learners (ELLs) reveal their cultural identity and construct meaning from visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them to spring board writing. Written language can be viewed as the language of power within any system because it helps individuals express their voices and proclaim their ideas. However, the struggle between social influences and academic demands make writing for newly immigrated Arabic ELLs to the United States an intricate task. These English Language Learners who have experienced a past filled with ravages of war, interruptions in schooling, and a move to a new country face academic and social unrest that can impact their achievement in today's schools.

The methodology used for this research was a qualitative case study to investigate how Arabic high schools ELLs disclose their cultural identity and construct meaning through the use of visual representations, self-created drawings, and other artistic creations and employ them to launch into writing. A purposive sampling of six students was selected for conducting this study. Through direct observations, field notes, audio-taping, reflective journals, a pre-questionnaire,

two semi-structured interviews, a post-questionnaire, and students' artifacts, data were examined and analyzed and findings presented in rich and thick descriptions.

The findings from this study yielded three implications which revealed the necessity of integrating visual representations and drawings into ELLs' writing learning experiences. The following were the three implications:

- Implication# 1: ELLs' teachers need to embrace multimodal approach (Kress, 2000) where infusion of visuals and drawings into writing curriculum takes place.
- Implication #2: School districts need to offer a support structure by offering professional developments to school administrators, teachers, and parents' workshops. This will help everyone keep current with research on ELLs' learning to align research-based practices on visual literacy with writing curriculum.
- Implication #3: Educational programs should be offered to involve student-teachers in internships, in in-service of modeling effective strategies, in coursework with theoretical and practical expectations in multimodality, and in conducting teacher-research studies. Reforming the educational programs of teacher educators will enable the prospective and novice teachers to become qualified in meeting their various ELLs' needs.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

### **Iman Ismail**

My goal is to reach my highest potential to experience success and help others accomplish to their potential too. I believe education is the big rock of my life and is the key to success for everyone. Realizing how important education is in the preparation of young people to attain success in all endeavors set before them, I have dedicated time and effort in focusing my studies and career pursuits on education.

As a veteran teacher, I aim to provide a challenging, stimulating, and fun learning environment that encourages my English Language Learners (ELLs) to believe in their full potential and motivate them to discover what truly inspires them. For this reason, my expectations of my students are usually high and challenging. I seek to motivate my students in developing the skills and knowledge necessary in becoming socially recognized members of our community.

Through my teaching experience so far, I have developed competence in becoming:

- Self-motivated, creative, and professional with a strong passion for providing rewarding learning experiences for my ELLs
- Actively involved in improving educational opportunities for my ELLs, mainly in curriculum development.
- Capable in building quality relationship with students and collaborating with all staff members
- Skilled in developing meaningful leaning experiences that meet the diverse needs and learning interests of ELLs
- Professionally developed in offering workshops in Sheltered Instruction observational Protocol (SIOP®)

I have learned that learning happens when students are given the opportunity to become active participants in the construction of the learning process and when their funds of knowledge are acknowledged. I love working with my English learners and I will continue to strive to be a positive influence in their lives.