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Creating A Karen Culture And Language Toolkit

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CREATING A KAREN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE TOOLKIT

by

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To those who have helped me through this process with encouragement and guidance, I

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The face of Iowa is changing as more refugees come to settle in cities and towns across the state. One group in particular, Karen refugees from Thailand and Burma, have increased in number since 2008, with an estimated 4,000 refugees settling in Iowa (Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center, 2014). A portion of these refugees are enrolled in a language development program in their K-12 institutions. These students, while enhancing the cultural diversity of the state and its school systems, bring with them an air of the unknown as staff and teachers learn the basics about their language and culture. With continued unrest in Burma and population growth in refugee camps in Thailand, teachers will continue to see these immigrants entering their classrooms and schools in the years to come.

As an employee of a large public school district in the state of Iowa, I have had Karen students in my classroom and have experienced firsthand some of the issues that teachers face when trying to meet the diverse needs of this population of English language learners (herein referred to as ELLs). With a background in English as a second language and social studies, I have a passion for working with underserved populations. Since the area of my degree is English as a Second Language, I am in a position to better understand the struggles of ELL students. My coworkers are not in the same position. Most of my colleagues have had little or no additional training in best practices for teaching ELL students. As more and more of my teammates came to me seeking assistance in planning differentiation for their students I realized that I should be educating all my coworkers about these students and their needs. Rather than meeting casually one to one with those who came to me seeking help, I decided that a professional

development tool would be a more efficient way of helping them make better and more culturally relevant decisions in their own classrooms and in their teaching.   In this way an area of focus for me is professional development, and the need to present relevant and applicable information in an efficient way to maximize teachers' time and energy.

Background of the Researcher

I joined the staff of a public school district in Iowa in 2012 after completing my additional license program in ESL through Hamline University while also maintaining my initial license in social studies K-12. I worked for two years at a large high school teaching sheltered social studies courses, content area classes made up of only ELL students, and two levels of ELL before moving within the same district to work as an instructional coach in a smaller and more ethnically diverse high school that also housed a higher ELL population.

When I worked in the classroom, I was occasionally approached by content-area teachers for guidance on how to differentiate instruction to reach the English language learners or how to accommodate an assessment for ELLs. I led an hour-long professional development on ELLs that was offered to all staff in the building, but I felt the biggest difference I was making was in my classroom as I helped students make growth in their English skills while also helping them navigate the intricacies of American culture. I made the switch to an instructional coach position to have a broader influence in reaching the ELL population at my school by working with multiple teachers. Teachers approached me to provide similar help as I did when I was a classroom teacher, but in this position I am able to extend and observe instruction and give real-time feedback, which was something I was not able to do with a full-time classroom teaching position.

Role of the Researcher

My role in conducting this research was to gather information from Karen community members and students in order to gain a better understanding of their experiences coming to the United States, adapting to formal education, studying in American schools, and working toward the future. I used this information to create a resource for staff and teachers to learn about the Karen language and culture as well as to impact their relationships with these students and their teaching of their Karen ELLs. To accomplish these tasks, I used existing information and materials that detail the background of the Karen people and features of their language, along with anecdotal information from parent interviews and student surveys, and created the toolkit that will be provided to the teachers and staff in my building at a later date, due to time constraints this current school year.

Guiding Question

In this study I focus on one main question:

What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

My aim was to produce such a toolkit to deepen the knowledge of our staff and teachers based on the results of my capstone and, as a result, strengthen the home and school connection with this community and impact future relationships with the students and families that enter our district.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained the need for teachers and staff to receive training in best practices for English learners, specifically for Karen students, due to the increasing number of Karen refugees entering my district in Iowa. In this study, I will focus on how a Karen language and culture toolkit will impact the confidence, awareness, and teaching practices of mainstream teachers and staff. This topic is relevant to the climate and culture that is emerging in my school district as we continue to receive refugees from Burma and Thailand. By providing a toolkit, teachers and staff at my school will grow in their understanding of our Karen population and will have access to resources that can continue to support their growth in cultural proficiency and strategies for teaching ELLs.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I introduced my research question by establishing the purpose and need for further education of mainstream teachers on the Karen language and culture and the experiences of refugees in general. The context of the study was also introduced, as well as the role and background of the researcher. Chapter Two will include a review of the literature relevant to the Karen language and culture, existing resources, interviews and using an interpreter, teacher preparation and preparedness to work with ELLs, and teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding English language learners. Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology that guides this study, as well as the components of the Karen language and culture toolkit (See Appendix F: Culture and Language Toolkit). Chapter Four will report the findings of the study. And finally Chapter Five includes my reflection on the data collected, limitations of the study,

implications for further research and recommendations for providing a toolkit to staff and

teachers who work with Karen students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As trends in resettlement and immigration data show, the population of English

language learners will continue to rise nationwide, and staff and teachers will need tools

and strategies in order to best serve these students as they continue to enter mainstream

classes. In particular, the Karen refugee population in Iowa has increased in recent years

(Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center, 2014) and with this newer

influx of refugees, the staff and teachers' self-reported level of knowledge about these

students' language and culture is limited. Teachers need a resource and guide to use in

their instruction, and additionally, staff members can benefit from learning more about

the background of these students to make everyday interactions more culturally

responsive. The purpose of this literature review is to review research that will help

answer the question:

> What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high
>
> school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the
>
> needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

In Chapter Two, I will address who the Karen are and features of their language

and culture, existing resources that will help shape the toolkit, considerations when using

interviews in qualitative research, requirements for teacher preparation programs in a

sampling of states across the United States, and then continue with studies that report

teacher and staff attitudes and beliefs about ELLs in regard to their teaching. I will also

point out gaps in the research in regard to providing adequate and applicable professional

development training opportunities for teachers and staff focusing on Karen ELLs.

Who are the Karen?

The Karen (pronounced Kah-REN with an emphasis on the second syllable) are an ethnic group from Burma, also referred to as Myanmar. Many Karen have fled to and live in one of the nine refugee camps on the Eastern Thailand border after facing violence and persecution from the Burmese military regime (Oh and Stouwe, 2008). From my research I learned that many of the Karen in my school district can trace their family back to Burma, although other Karen may come from Bhutan. This struggle for safety and independence has been ongoing since the middle of the 20th century when Burma/Myanmar gained independence with resulting political unrest. While there are still tens of thousands of Karen refugees living in the camps, the number of immigrants in the United States and Iowa has been increasing in the last decade.

Karen language

The national language of Burma is Burmese, although many of the ethnic minority are not literate in that language, including a portion of the Karen, which is the second largest ethnic minority group (Karen Buddhist Dhamma Dhutta Foundation, 2010). The largest language group for the Karen is S'gaw with an estimated 4 million speakers, using the Burmese script as their method of written language. This language is tonal, using six different pitches to differentiate the meaning of the same set of morphemes, or the smallest unit of language with meaning. On the other hand, Standard American English uses tones and inflection to convey meaning or feeling behind statements and questions, such as the rising tone to signify the asking of a question. Karen speakers may experience language interference from this difference between tonal

and non-tonal languages. Implications for teachers include misunderstandings over conveyed meaning, missing question cues, and students from tonal language backgrounds speaking in a flat tone and not inflecting their speech when speaking in a non-toned language such as English. An example of the six different tones and the changes in word meaning is shown in Figure 1, and illustrates the significance of differentiating between the tones. A sentence could easily be misinterpreted if tone 5 is used, instead of tone 2, in the following sentence: "Have you seen my alligator?" The intended sentence was meant to say, "Have you seen my aunt?" However, when using tone 5, the noun aunt turns into the noun alligator.

Tone #	IPA	Orth.	Gloss
0	[mə]	ဃ	'entirely'
1	[ma˦]	ဃါ	'a wife'
2	[ma̤˥]	ဃၢ	'aunt'
3	[ma̤˩]	ဃာ	'son-in-law'
4	[ma̤˨]	ဃး	'observe'
5	[ma˩]	�95	'alligator'
6	[ma̤˦]	ဃၤ	'do, act'

Figure 1. S'gaw tone example. This figure illustrates the six different tones that change the meaning of a single morpheme in the S'gaw Karen language (West, 2015).

The S'gaw language also differs from English in that the verbs are not inflected, and phonemes are not added to nouns to indicate a numerical value such as the affixes –s and –es in English to indicate a plural noun. Language accounts for an important part of culture, and it does present a challenge for mainstream teachers in reaching and meeting

the needs of Karen learners in American schools. Teachers may need to provide

additional support and practice for Karen students in developing their proficiency in

English, while being flexible in the mistakes that these learners may make as they

navigate two different written and spoken language systems.

<u>Karen Culture</u>

　　　　While the last proper population count of Karen living in Burma is considered to

come from a 1931 census, the estimation is that there are more than 6 million Karen

making up around 12% of the population of Burma (Cusano, 2001). According to

Cusano, there is no single definition of what it means to be Karen. There are cultural,

economic, linguistic, and religious differences that cause great diversity within this group

of people, and general trends or dominant traits among the Karen people will be

considered. There are two major dialects, Pwo and S'gaw Karen, and a few major

religious beliefs including Buddhism, Christianity, and animism, or the belief that natural

objects, phenomena, and the universe itself possess souls (Animism, n.d.). The

geographic makeup of Burma divides the Karen into those living in the mountains and

highlands, and those living in the lowlands, and affects their ways of life and economic

activities. Those living in the highlands and mountains practice subsistence agriculture

and raise livestock. Jobs outside of agriculture may be held by the Karen living in the

lowlands as their proximity to larger cities and urban areas allows for more opportunities

outside of farming.

　　　　Traditionally, the Karen are very family oriented with the Western focus on

individualism a contrast to their collectivist culture. Romantic love is an ideal that Karen

people believe in very strongly, and they hold fast to the qualities of faithfulness and life-

long partnership (Karen Buddhist Dhamma Dhutta Foundation, 2010). Arranged marriages were traditionally held in central Burma but occur as well in Eastern Burma. Traditions in Karen naming do not match the Western convention of having the wife take on the last name of the husband, with subsequent children taking on the family name. Instead, Karen people traditionally have given names and not family names, and a wife would not change her name after marriage. In Thailand, however, authorities typically give Karen a first and last name, so educators may see a variety of naming conventions from their Karen students (Barron et al, 2007). For example, a Karen family may be comprised of a mother, Say Paw, a father, Lweh Htoo, and children named Ku Kpaw Than and Khin Moo. Naming might be done to signify place within a family, such as *Paw Moo Dar* which means 'youngest daughter' in Karen. Another popular naming tradition is naming a child, both sons and daughters, after flowers. For educators, learning more about a student's background and family members will be necessary to understand those relationships the student has at home, and naming traditions to further understand sibling relationships.

The Karen Caged-Bird Metaphor

To better understand the Karen culture and how they have been impacted in the last half-century, a metaphor was created by participants in a trauma healing workshop at the Mae La Camp held by Al Fuertes and written about in his 2010 research. The translated metaphor reads:

> Karen refugees are birds inside a cage that get fed on a regular basis but are not able to fly. When the owner comes and opens the cage and lets them go, chances are that most of the birds cannot fly anymore because they did not have the

opportunity to learn or practice how to fly for a very long time now. Many do not

even know what it means to fly. (p. 1)

Considering that the average length of time spent in Thai camps is fourteen years, the

metaphor and its implications are profound. For many students who arrive to the United

States, refugee camp life is all they know, but for their parents and other older relatives,

this metaphor contrasts with the life they lived in Burma before unrest and persecution,

and speaks to a time when they were free to fly (Fuertes, 2010).

The physical structure of the gates to the Mae La Camp are foreboding, with

military or security guards and barbed wire fencing, promoting the feeling of

confinement as represented in the caged bird metaphor (Fuertes, 2010). Karen refugees

do not experience the same freedoms they had before being displaced. Due to regulations

in the camps, refugees are not able to work to earn money and are not able to move freely

between the camp and the neighboring areas. Another implication noted in the metaphor

as getting fed on a regular basis but not being able to fly represents the refugees' limited

opportunities to develop and utilize skills and abilities as they did before moving to the

camps. Life in the camps feels stagnant.

For children who were born in the refugee camp, that is the life they know. They

may not fully understand the history of their people, nor how the Karen state functioned

with local government and communities. They would not know what it means to fly

(Fuertes, 2010), and would likely be learning what this means in their new country.

Having an understanding of the history of a young Karen refugee can help mediate any

problems that arise from the adjustment to a life with more freedom and opportunities. In

our Western educational system, the value of the individual and self-motivation is

important to succeed in traditional educational settings. Karen students may need additional support to develop this skill set in order to navigate through their new school system while holding on to traditional values and skills at home.

Educators of Karen refugees can learn a lot from this metaphor. It represents a loss of freedom, codependency and reliance on non-governmental organizations (NGO) support, the feeling of being forgotten, and uncertainty for the future. Teachers may need to emphasize soft-skills like communicating with teachers and staff when needing support, adhering to deadlines, in addition to emphasizing the importance of rules and procedures for classroom activities that involve working with others. Teachers can provide opportunities for added responsibility and encourage Karen students to make decisions.

Existing Resources

The district where I work has a link (Data and Demographics, 2017) on their English Language Learners page with cultural and demographic information provided as a document or PowerPoint presentation about a variety of the students we have in our program, but the information is limited to only eight groups, not including the Karen. There exists a need for providing relevant and updated information about this culture group that is continuing to enter our district. This led me to consider what should be included in the culture and language toolkit for staff and teachers, and what information would not be as helpful for them to put to use. Finding that information will ensure that the toolkit is developed to fit the needs of the teachers and staff.

Different organizations from medical to human services provide publications or guides for their employees or the general public through their websites. For example,

Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services collaborated with The National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness to provide a four-page guide on Karen refugees. This guide includes general cultural information including background, culture and religion, family and community, child-rearing and development, guidance and discipline, school and education, health and mental health, and community leadership (*Refugee Families from Burma*, 2013). There are also practice tips for most sections to give additional information or specific examples.

Another similar publication is provided by Emergency Community Health Outreach (ECHO) Minnesota, and includes information on gender, personal space and social gestures, familial structure, communication styles, and religion (*Karen Culture in MN – At a Glance,* 2015).

These two publications provide an outline of general cultural information that would be useful for staff and teachers, but additional information on second language acquisition, Karen language features, and specific teaching strategies or models would be an additional help in the secondary school setting.

Interviews in Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, interview protocols and conduct play an important role in gathering relevant and beneficial data from participants. While the informal needs assessment helped guide creation of some of the interview questions for parents, guardians, and students, research on best-practices for writing interview protocols was also taken into consideration. Jacob and Ferguson (2012) created a list of criteria for writing successful interview protocols that included using a script to begin and end an interview, starting with basic background data questions to build trust with your

interviewee, progressing from easier to answer questions to more complex questions, and writing expansive questions to allow for the unexpected response that can enrich the data collected. This guidance was followed to plan for and set up the interviews with parents and guardians.

Structured and Semi-Structured Interviews

Two methods of interviews were used to gather information from the students, parents and guardians. Students were administered an online structured interview in the form of a questionnaire. According to Gill et al. (2008), this type of research interview is quick and easy to administer, but does not allow for follow-up questions or further elaboration. This method was chosen to allow for students to share their story of coming to the United States and their experiences in school while considering time constraints of their daily schedule. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the immigration process and life in Thailand and Burma, the parents and guardians went through a semi-structured interview in person. Gill et al. (2008) describe this process as having some guidance on what to talk about, while allowing for elaboration of information that may not have been considered in the initial interview design. The semi-structured interview will take a longer period of time to complete, and therefore just three were scheduled. By utilizing both interview types a range of information was collected and analyzed to provide insight into the experiences of members of the school and community.

Using an Interpreter

Another aspect of qualitative research to consider for this capstone is the use of an interpreter for the interview process. Although the Karen parents and guardians who participate in the interviews may have a command of the English language, an interpreter

was present in order to provide language support as needed. Our district employs two Karen language interpreters, one at the elementary level and another at the secondary level. Their daily responsibilities include assisting teachers in classes, contacting parents, setting up intake meetings, translating documents, interpreting at IEP and other meetings, and acting as a community liaison. They are assigned to specific buildings within the district but are available for language support to all teachers and staff, and work to the best of their ability to support all the present needs of staff and students. The elementary outreach worker was present during the parent and guardian interviews.

In order to best prepare for an interview with an interpreter present, guidance from Freed's (1988) research was followed. This included an explicit understanding of the role of the interpreter from verbatim interpreting to a less rigid form of independent interpreting where the interpreter dominates the interview. A balance between these two forms would allow for the material of the interview to be adhered to and covered, with flexibility, in leading the questioning and follow-up elaborative questions.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Research has shown that pre-service training and professional development opportunities do not provide enough training and information for mainstream teachers in successfully meeting the needs of ELLs. A study by de Jong and Harper (2005) considered if qualities of good teaching were enough for preparing mainstream teachers for ELLs, and found that fewer than one in six higher educational institutions required any preparation regarding ELLs. This created a gap in teacher preparedness to reach these learners once teachers began their career in education. Another study by Karabenick and Noda (2004) looked at a large Midwestern school district and

implications of professional development on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards

ELLs. They found a majority of teachers expressing the need for training in not only

content knowledge but instructional skills to teach ELLs. Teachers express the need for

tools and strategies that they can immediately take back to their classroom and

implement, as well as a purposeful planned learning opportunity in the areas of second

language acquisition and instructional techniques to implement in mainstream classrooms

when serving ELLs. But is that enough? Research done by Buxton, Lee, and Santau,

(2008) highlight a misconception that by providing teachers with tools and skills, they

will effectively be able to meet the needs of their diverse learners, but what about

creating the mind-shift and cultural competency needed to truly create change from the

inside-out? They note that "professional development tends to be 'strategy-focused' and

rarely attempts to conceptualize or implement systemic ways to address the multiple

challenges of promoting classroom practices that are both equitable and rigorous" (p.

509). This presents another dilemma of planning for and delivering professional

development that can not only provide teachers with strategies to take back and

implement, but also engage them in growth on the spectrum of cultural competency in

multiple ways.

　　　　The average mainstream elementary or secondary teacher will complete their

higher education program without any instruction regarding the education of ELLs,

according to an AACTE survey of 417 institutes of higher education, where only one in

six required any preparation in the teaching of ELLs (Menken & Antunez, 2001). A

report from the Center for American Progress noted that in 2012, five states required

specific coursework, seventeen states made a general reference to the needs of ELLs in

teacher preparation programs, and an additional fifteen states had no requirement

whatsoever (Samson and Collins, 2012). A 2014 report from the Education Commission

of the States noted that over 30 states do not require ELL training for general classroom

teachers beyond the federal requirements. These requirements detail that researched-

based professional development must be provided by school districts and that the training

must focus on methods for working with ELLs and be of a duration and frequency that

has a positive impact on teachers, administrators, and staff. (What ELL Training, 2014)

These reports represent unbalanced percentages in regards to preparing teachers to serve

the growing population of ELLs in American schools. Teachers are shown to be

inadequately prepared to meet the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of their students.

Another set of data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics during the

2011-2012 school year reports that 99% of all public school teachers participated in some

type of professional development, while only 26.8% of teachers participated in a

professional development opportunity on teaching Limited-English Proficient (LEP) or

English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-2012, Table 8).

What we find is that while some teachers complete a preparation program that included a

focus on ELLs, the average mainstream teacher in a public high school has not received

training in their teacher preparation program in dealing with ELLs, and the likelihood that

a teacher has attended a professional development in the past year on the same topic is

unlikely.

  According to the Iowa Department of Education, the state has seen a doubling of

ELL student enrollment from 2003-2013, and continues to see steady growth on a yearly

basis (Iowa Department of Education, 2017). Consequently, there is an increasing and

urgent need for teachers and staff to receive quality, targeted information that they can immediately use to influence their planning, teaching, and other interactions with refugee and immigrant students. The implications for teachers to receive the support and training they need to meet the needs of their ELLs are staggering. In Iowa, ELLs are challenged to meet high standards set by the Iowa Assessments in the areas of reading, math, and science, in addition to meeting proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening as assessed by the former I-ELDA (Iowa English Language and Development Assessment) and current Iowa ELPA21 (English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st century) assessments. Students who are not proficient in these areas may struggle academically in content classes and electives alike, and may not succeed in the job market.

Teacher Preparedness and Attitudes towards ELLs

Research has shown that the majority of teacher preparation programs do not include a course on working with English Language Learners (de Jong and Harper, 2005) although states such as Arizona and New York require all teachers in license programs to receive training and education on working with ELLs, with Minnesota requiring educators who are renewing their license to show evidence of growth in meeting the needs of English learners. The number of higher educational institutions and state departments of education that require some emphasis on working with English Language Learners in a teacher preparation program has grown, but there is still a gap between prior learning and confidence when working with these students. Other studies involving teachers with varying years of experience have looked at confidence levels and preparedness to work with ELLs and the findings have shown that many teachers feel

unprepared and under-skilled in meeting the needs of the language learners they have in their mainstream content classrooms, regardless of how many years they have been teaching.

Researchers Youngs and Youngs Jr. (2001) proposed six categories of predictors to explain mainstream teachers' attitudes toward ELLs. One of the categories included ESL training, reiterating the lack of preparedness teachers face after leaving their post-secondary institutions. An interesting aspect of this dilemma is that most mainstream teachers do not find in-service training very helpful (Clair, 1995). Teachers and staff may have professional development opportunities relating to ELLs offered in their district or building but with minimal time and resources teachers may opt out of these trainings to focus on classroom planning, collaboration, and grading, especially if they have experienced low quality training of servicing ELLs in the past. Although there may be the need for information and strategies that teachers can take back with them to their classroom and immediately implement, there is a gap in the research that provides a guide to what type of professional development will best meet staff and teacher's needs when focusing on Karen ELLs in the mainstream classroom. To summarize, there is a need for teachers and staff to receive quality information and strategies in how to best work with and meet the needs of the ELLs enrolled in their school, in particular those coming from relatively less known or less studied language backgrounds such as the Karen.

Attitudes and Beliefs about English Language Learners

Misconceptions can arise when teachers have inadequate training and coaching in working with English language learners. According to a study by Reeves (2006),

secondary mainstream teachers in general expressed concern about course modification

for ELLs, felt untrained and had mixed feelings about receiving training in working with

ELLs, and had misconceptions about second language acquisition. Harper and de Jong

(2004) also researched misconceptions about teaching ELLs and had similar findings.

Teachers did not understand the intricacies of language learning and instead held the

belief that exposure and interaction were the necessary and sufficient conditions for

learning a language, and also believed that ELLs learn in the same way at the same pace.

Many defaulted on the belief that good teaching is enough, missing the depth and

demands of language learning and culture.

In another study by Williams et. al. (2002), it was stated that there is an increased

likelihood that the attitudes mainstream teachers hold towards their ELLs will continue to

deteriorate. The reasoning for this includes the increase in language-minority speakers

not just in educational settings but in the United States in general, teachers lacking

training regarding how to serve their ELLs, the locations that immigrants settle including

rural or low instance areas where teachers have little to no experience with those

populations, and the implications of high state standards and rigorous testing of ELLs

with the expectation of high performance. One of these reasons is within a teacher's

control: seeking training to be better prepared and informed about ELLs in the area. The

others, demographic changes and assessment requirements, are outside of an individual's

control which may cause frustration and despondency. A teacher can be coached on

something within their control to change their attitude and grow in their cultural

competency, but a teacher can also be encouraged to look beyond influences that are

outside of their direct control in order to foster a growth-mindset about ELLs.

From research reviewed here, it is apparent that the attitudes teachers hold regarding their ELLs come from societal factors as well as the educational settings in which the mainstream teacher interacts with ELLs. While these influences are outside of one's control, it's important to understand and learn from a teacher's background to better understand their frame of reference. These same researchers speak to that effect, and suggest an open mind when analyzing how mainstream teachers' attitudes have been shaped and formed. Once a cause or basis for the teachers' attitude is discovered, a proactive approach can be taken to resolve the gap in thinking or turn the teacher toward a growth-mindset within this area of discomfort and possible misunderstanding. This is the purpose of the toolkit I have developed.

From these studies, one can conclude that there is a pointed need for relevant and specific guidance provided to teachers in regard to keeping the content rigorous and demanding while differentiating instruction to provide the scaffolds and support ELLs need in order to succeed.

Gaps

As this chapter indicates, there are a majority of teachers who graduate from their teacher preparation programs with limited training in meeting the needs of English language learners, and those teachers who have been serving in the field have limited attendance to professional development trainings in working with English language learners. This represents a need for providing relevant and applicable professional development to support teachers and staff in attending to the needs of ELLs, and specifically for staff and teachers in my school, our Karen students. A current gap exists in the field of teaching ESL regarding what type of professional development would best

meet the needs of teachers in regard to supporting their Karen English language learners in their mainstream classes, moreover, specific tools are needed to provide this support and education to teachers. My goal in this research is to provide a relevant and applicable toolkit that the staff and teachers at my high school can implement and reference throughout the school year to increase their confidence in working with Karen students and impact their teaching.

Research Question

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used in answering the following research question:

What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

This research utilized a self-reported needs assessment (See Appendix E – Self Reported Needs Assessment Questions) from sheltered content area teachers and administrators, with interviews and a questionnaire for Karen parents and students, to develop a comprehensive toolkit on the language and culture of the Karen people, to be presented to the teachers and staff the following fall.

Summary

In this chapter more detailed information on the Karen language and culture was presented, along with a metaphor comparing the Karen people in refugee camps to caged birds. I also reviewed teacher preparation programs and the disproportionate number of higher education institutions and states that require training in working with English language learners, and the attitudes and beliefs mainstream teachers and staff have when

considering their population of English language learners. I also discussed the gaps in research when it comes to targeting the type of professional development that can best impact teachers in regard to their Karen ELLs.

In the next chapter, I present the methods to my research, details of participants, location, data collection techniques, procedure, Karen language and culture toolkit, and components of analyzing the data.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This study is designed to investigate the background of developing a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream teachers and staff in a large public high school in Iowa. This chapter describes the methodology and research instruments that were used to collect data, and the description and rationale of the chosen qualitative research design. In this study, I want to know the components of a quality toolkit and later find the impact of providing a specific professional development opportunity about our Karen refugee population to the teachers and staff. My research question is:

> What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high
>
> school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the
>
> needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

For this research, I began with an informal self-reported needs assessment targeted at the sheltered content-area teachers and additional staff and elective teachers to gauge in what areas they are lacking information on our Karen students. I then invited a Karen parent and three community members to meet with me, with an interpreter present when needed, to ask a series of interview questions to gain insights into the parents' and Karen community's views on education, expectations for teachers and their students, their experiences in the refugee camps, and any additional information they would like to share about their culture that could benefit our staff and teachers. I additionally created a questionnaire and invited two current students to participate, with parental permission, to learn their personal experiences at our school as an English language learner, their expectations and aspirations, and experiences as a young person emigrating from a

refugee camp. From these responses I was able to add to the Karen language and culture

toolkit to address their specific needs and areas of interest.

This study is designed to provide not only factual information regarding the Karen

culture and language, but also personal insights into the experience that our Karen parents

and students have as refugees from Thailand camps.

Overview

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, the rationale

and description of the research design are presented along with a description of

qualitative research. Second, the data collection protocols are presented, including

descriptions of the participants, location, and collection techniques. Third, the procedure

is outlined in detail including the participants, materials, including all interview questions

and the questionnaire distributed to the selected students, and copies of the survey

administered to attending staff and teachers in the pop-up professional development.

Next, the data is analyzed with a look at the validity of the information, and

considerations for ethics of the study will also be detailed.

Qualitative Research

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the personal experiences of Karen

community members and students, a qualitative research design was followed.

Qualitative research allows for real-life contextual understandings and cultural influences

noted by Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith (2011). To gather this data, individual

interviews and a student survey was administered and analyzed. The structured and

semi-structured interview questions were crafted and an interview protocol was designed

with guidance from the research of Jacob and Ferguson (2012), Gill et al. (2008), and

Freed (1998). This includes starting with general data collection questions to build trust with the interviewee, progressing from easier-to-answer questions to deeper questions, and allowing for follow up or elaborative questions if needed. An initial conversation was held with the interpreter to go over the structured questions and format of the interview, so that their role in the process, as a cultural liaison, was clear and agreed upon before conducting the interviews.

Using this method is appropriate for my topic because I want to gain knowledge and insights into the lives of the Karen refugees we have in our school, and to add a personal touch to the information that will be presented to the staff. Facts are important to support the teaching of new information, but adding personal anecdotes and stories adds a layer of depth to the understanding of the human experience. An important characteristic of qualitative research relevant to this study is that it helps readers gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives, rather than the researcher's perspectives.

Data Collection

Participants

To gain insight into the lives of our Karen refugee population, three parents of students currently or recently graduated from our high school were invited for an interview at the school site, with two parents accepting the offer and one parent attending the scheduled interview. A local Karen non-profit was also contacted and three community members offered to be interviewed. An effort was made to include both men and women of different ages who arrived in the United States within the last ten years, but only the Karen mothers were able to attend an interview during the school day, and the three members of the non-profit were also women. The Karen interpreter was present

for the parent interview and followed the agreed upon protocol, following a semi-structured format where the questions were interpreted as written but then conversation flowed more freely with clarifications if needed.

For our Karen students, referrals from our ELL teachers in the building were made for two current students. These participants were a 17-year-old female and 20-year-old male. Their proficiency level was from high-beginning to proficient. The selected students received a link to complete an online questionnaire (See Appendix D – Student Survey Questions). They did not have access to an interpreter when completing the questionnaire. The confidentiality of the survey was communicated to students and parents through a letter of consent that was provided in both English and Karen.

The teachers and staff that were asked to informally self-report their needs included sheltered content teachers in the areas of social studies, science, and math. They were contacted via email and received a link to complete a Google Form with questions about the Karen culture and language (See Appendix E - Self-Reported Needs Assessment Questions).

Location/Setting

The location of the study is an urban public high school in Iowa. The school has an enrollment of 1300 students, with an ELL population of 14% according to the 2015-2016 school data. The Karen population continues to grow. The parent interview was held at the school site, in a closed office space to allow for confidentiality and comfort during the interview. I met with the Karen non-profit community members at their location, and an interpreter was not needed for that interview. Student questionnaires

were completed electronically through a Google Form either on-site or at the student's home.

Data Collection Technique 1

The parent data collection was completed in a semi-structured interview format. This qualitative method allowed for in-depth and personal experience to come through for a small number of participants.

Because the focus is on Karen parents and students at one school, the results cannot be generalized to include all Karen parents and students, a point noted in Mackey and Gass (2016). An attempt at an emic perspective was made by framing questions and research to understand more about the depth of the Karen culture and experience, but due to the nature of completing research in the dominant culture, this approach was not truly attained.

One parent was interviewed individually with an interpreter present. The interview was recorded on a password-protected laptop computer while I took additional notes on paper. All answers were anonymous and pseudonyms were created for each participant. Parent and community members were asked to answer a series of questions with the flexibility of clarification or elaborative questioning on the topics of Karen culture, personal history and resettlement experience, expectations for high school, aspirations for their children in the school, and any additional information they would like to include after an open-ended question prompt.

Sample questions that were asked to the parent and community member participants included:

- ☐ Tell me about yourself. Where were you born?

☐ What was life like in the refugee camp? Tell me about the schooling in the camps. What was the educational experience like for your children?

☐ What do you value most for your children's future? What do you hope for your child(ren) to accomplish in the next few years after they graduate from our school?

☐ What are your thoughts on participation in sports or other activities after school?

☐ What do you think about the home-school connection? When should teachers contact you? How often do you plan on visiting the school?

(See Appendix A – Parent/Guardian Interview Questions)

During the interview, participants did not appear uncomfortable although sensitive subjects were discussed, such as their refugee experience or resettlement in America. It was stated before the interview began that all responses were voluntary, and they could refuse to answer part or complete questions at their discretion. This information was also stated on the consent letter the parents received which is in both English and Karen (See Appendix B – Parent Consent Letter and Appendix C – Student Consent Letter). If a participant was becoming visually distressed, the interview would have stopped, but fortunately this did not occur. They were reminded that their participation was voluntary and there are no ramifications from participation or refusal to answer any or all questions. Data was stored on the password protected computer until compilation was complete, and was deleted after the research was completed. Any paper copies of notes were stored in a locked desk drawer and were put into the confidential recycling bin in the school office after the study was completed.

<u>Data Collection Technique #2</u>

The student and recent graduate data from two participants were collected from an online questionnaire that they completed on their own time after receiving the link to access the questions. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at the school building, if possible, or at home. Data was collected and stored on a password protected Google forms account, and accessed on a password protected laptop. Questions were open-ended and space was allowed for participants to type in their responses. Sample questions for the students included:

☐ What was life like in the refugee camp? Tell me about the schooling in the camps.

☐ What has your school experience been like in the United States?

☐ What do you hope to accomplish in the next few years after you graduate from our school?

☐ What do you think about the home-school connection? How often do you think your teachers should contact home? How often do you think your parent/guardian should visit the school?

(See Appendix D – Student Interview Questions)

Students had permission from their parent or guardian to participate if and when needed due to age, and on the permission form it was stated that their identifying information would not be disclosed and that pseudonyms were used to protect their identity. It was stated that they were voluntarily participating and could withdraw at any time without repercussions. Data was securely stored, and the Google form and responses were deleted after data was compiled. Any paper notes from the responses

were stored in a locked desk drawer and were put in the confidential recycling bin in the school office once the research was completed.

<u>Data Collection Technique 3</u>

The informal self-reported needs assessment that a small group of sheltered content area teachers and administrators responded to was sent with a link via email to a Google form that they voluntarily completed. The questions revolved around our Karen population and any questions or areas of interest these teachers might have. Data was collected on a password protected email account, and the survey and responses were deleted after research was completed. The teachers and administrators were asked:

- What questions or areas of interest do you have in regard to the Karen culture? This could include religion and beliefs, expectations, reservations, parenting styles, communication styles, or other areas.

- What questions or areas of interest do you have in regard to the Karen language? This could include history/origins of the language, writing systems, syntax, phonology, and contrasts with English.

- What other information would be helpful to know? Please mark any or all of the following:
  - o Basics of Second Language Acquisition
  - o Common sayings in Karen
  - o Web resources for learning more
  - o One-on-one help with working with Karen students
  - o Additional PD on ELL Strategies
  - o Other

(See Appendix E – Teacher Survey Questions)

Procedure

For this research, I informally questioned the two ESL teachers in our building, as well as the eight sheltered content teachers and an administrator to get a self-reported needs assessment on where they believe they lack knowledge in regard to our Karen students and parents. This information helped guide the creation of interview questions for the parents and students, in addition to what advice is given from research on interviewing. I invited three Karen parents to come to the school building with an interpreter and talk about their background, experience, and expectations for their students. I asked two students to complete the online questionnaire that included similar questions about experience at a public school in America, background, and hopes for the future.

After the interviews and questionnaires were completed I added the anecdotal information to the Karen culture and language toolkit that will be distributed to staff and teachers who attend a professional development opportunity in the fall of the upcoming school year. It has been made available as a free download on the Karen resources website that I created (Karen Toolkit, 2017) to accompany the print resource. One of the Karen parents will be invited to speak to our staff and teachers after school as part of the professional development session, in order to give a more personal feel to the information that is presented, and to allow for attendees to ask questions.

Data Analysis

Once the data was fully collected from all the Karen participants, all responses were fully read and recordings were listened to and transcribed. Any common themes

present in the parent and guardian interviews were noted, and themes in the student responses were also compared. This allowed for a focus for the Karen language and culture toolkit and the professional development presentation.

Karen Culture and Language Toolkit

The toolkit includes background information on second language acquisition, facts about the Karen people including a brief history, a description of life in a refugee camp in Thailand, language features and differences between Karen and English, common mistakes Karen speakers may make when learning English, and important cultural traditions and celebrations. This information is presented as a booklet as well as a website resource that contains digital copies of the material. The information will be presented to teachers and staff in a 30-minute pop-up professional development opportunity after school but during contract time. Teachers will be notified a week before the event with a reminder sent the morning of, with the opportunity to attend or receive the information after school. It will be a voluntary professional development session that will be held in the fall and spring. An effort will be made to invite a Karen parent and interpreter or a recent Karen graduate to attend and share their story and experience with the public school system in Iowa. There is also be the opportunity to present and distribute this information at language and culture conferences in the Midwest.

Verification of Data

In order to provide data that is reliable and accurate for the population at our school, the following steps were taken. First, an effort was made to ensure that the participants for both the parent/guardian interview and student questionnaire were

selected to represent both genders and a variety of age ranges, with one male participant and four female participants of varying ages. Second, an interpreter was present to help facilitate the interview and accurately communicate the questions and responses. In order to understand the impact on both staff and teachers, the professional development opportunity will be open to anyone in the building; our associates, bilingual outreach workers, office staff, athletic coaches, behavior and academic interventionists, lunchroom workers, counselors, and custodians.

Ethics

Permission to complete this research at this location and with these participants was granted by the Iowa school district and the Human Subjects Committee of Hamline University. A letter of consent was sent to the participants in both English and translated into Karen with an attached permission form and parent signature page included for students (See Appendix B - Parent Consent Letter and Appendix C - Informed Consent Signature Sheet). The letter of informed consent states that participation is voluntary and withdrawal from the process at any time would be allowed without question. It also highlights that the data was collected anonymously and pseudonyms were used to protect the identify of all participants. All digital documents were stored on a password protected computer and were deleted once the research was completed. Any paper surveys or notes pages were stored in a locked desk drawer and were confidentially recycled once the research was completed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a qualitative research study that used parent interviews and student questionnaires to help build the Karen language and culture

toolkit. I have given rationale in regard to the types of questions I used in the interviews,

questionnaire, and survey, and why this instrument is an appropriate tool for collecting

data for the purpose of compiling a toolkit for staff and teachers. In this chapter I have

also described the conditions for research, including the location, participants, and

manner in which data was collected. This data helped answer the research question:

> What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high
>
> school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the
>
> needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

Chapter Four of this capstone presents the analysis and interpretation of the resulting

data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter will explain the results of the qualitative research and how these findings relate to my research question:

What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

The location of the study was at an urban public high school in Iowa with an ELL population of 14% of 1300 students grades 9-12 at the time of research. At the beginning of the school year I administered an informal needs assessment survey through Google form (See Appendix E – Self-reported needs assessment questions). I asked eight staff and an administrator to respond in order to get an idea of where the areas of need were in the building. After gathering research, I organized my parent and community member interviews. I interviewed two Karen parents, Hser Moo and Khin Da Eh, who have students currently enrolled at our school, Say Htoo, a Karen community member, and Thla Sui, a Chin community member. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Two current students, Laway Moo and Pa Eh completed the online survey with their responses saved as a digital file. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants in this study.

After sending out the Google form, I received seven responses. Most responded that they knew very little about the Karen and had an interest in learning some of the basics of their culture. When considering the language, three people requested pleasantries in Karen that they could use to communicate with students and parents. Two requested any and all information that could be made available on the Karen language. Respondents also requested additional information on Second Language Acquisition, and over half said they would like additional professional development as to working with

ELLs. This informal needs assessment gave me a starting point as to where to take my research and how to craft the interview questions for the Karen parents and community members.

For the interview, the questions were framed around the individual's experience in their home country, the educational experiences in their home country and the United States, as well as their own future or the future of their children in the United States (see Appendix A – Parent/Guardian Interview Questions and Appendix D – Student Survey Questions). Participants were also allowed to provide any additional information they wanted to share about their culture or life experience.

The participants who spent time in the refugee camps spent an average of 20 years there, and have been in the United States for an average of 7 years. Say Htoo was born in a camp and left as a young adult. Khin Da Eh was not born in a camp but her family fled to a camp when she was younger. She lived in two different camps in her youth and after finishing school in a camp was hired on to teach primary and middle school in the Ma Lae camp. Thla Sui, a Chin community member, was born in Burma but fled to Malaysia with her family as an undocumented immigrant. She worked there as an interpreter before immigrating to the United States to join her husband. All of the participants shared stories of their journey from their home countries to the United States and specifically Iowa.

This chapter is organized according to the interview and survey question responses combining both the parent and community member responses, and student responses. Section two will connect the research to the literature review. For section

three, I present ideas for the culture and language toolkit based on the responses and research.

Interview Responses

The interviews were held on two different occasions, the first with a parent and interpreter at my school setting, and the second with another Karen parent, a Karen community member and Chin community member, held in a round-table interview style at a local non-profit where these individuals worked or volunteered. The second interview did not require the use of an interpreter. With guidance from Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, (2008) interview questions were crafted to begin with easier to answer questions that focused on facts about the respondents such as where they were from and their family makeup to build rapport and help put the respondents at ease. Questions progressed to more sensitive and complicated topics, with an option at the end to provide any additional information. No follow-up interviews were held.

The parents who were interviewed had spent at least a quarter of their lives in a refugee camp. Hser Moo moved to a refugee camp with her parents when she was approximately 9 years old. She spent the next 26 years in first one, then another, camp in Thailand. Khin Da Eh lived for 14 years in a camp, getting married and having children in the camp. Say Htoo was born in Ma Lae camp in Thailand and lived there through young adulthood. The parents noted that while living in the refugee camps they were provided basic food like rice and fish paste, but also continued to farm if space allowed.

Both students were born in the camps and moved to the United States as school-aged children. All but one of the participants moved directly to Iowa, where one spent two months in Tennessee before making the move to Iowa where they currently reside.

Life before the camps was difficult and dangerous, according to Hser Moo. She grew up with uncertainty about the possible attacks from the Burmese army.

> "When the Burmese army came to the camp or village we need to escape, and especially men, they used them as forced labor to carry the weapons for the military. My dad sometimes he didn't even have time to eat, during your eating if they came you just need to run away and escape, so it's so difficult." (H. Moo, March 6, 2017)

Say Htoo also recalls the uncertainty of living in a war-torn country and the necessity of being able to run away at any moment.

> "Every summer we had to pack because we don't know when the Burmese military is going to attack, we have to pack clothes for everyone in the family" (Htoo, March 8, 2017).

The civil war in Burma also made life difficult for Khin Da Eh. She describes her life growing up as "really poor" (Eh, March 8, 2017). At that time there were no forms of birth control for her mother to use, so Khin Da Eh grew up helping take care of her six younger siblings. Her family practiced subsistence farming and she helped with the family work in addition to attending school.

The educational experiences in refugee camps varied between the parents. School in the camps these families lived in was available but not compulsory, so some families preferred that their children sell vegetables or work other jobs to earn money to support the family. The experience for Say Htoo was different however, as she began school at a young age in her camp. She attended private missionary school available in the Mae La camp as a 4-year-old. Her mother worked as a midwife and was able to afford the tuition

to send her to a private school, where class sizes were comparable to that of the United States.

Khin Da Eh began school at the second grade level because of her size and age after moving to the refugee camp, even though she hadn't had any formal education previously in Burma. She attended public school in the camp, where "we don't have enough materials in the schools, TV, newspapers, computers. Sometimes we don't have enough space, students are on the ground working…more than 82 students in one class" (Eh, March 8, 2017). She graduated at the age of 21 and began teaching at a Karen Bible school in the same camp, earning 500 Baht which at that time translated to around $30 a month. She estimated that of the students that start kindergarten in a camp school, only 10-15% continue through and finish high school. This may be because of the mobility of the families, necessity for an earned income, or amount of work to be done at home with chores or sibling care.

Life changed drastically once these women and their families arrived to the United States. They were forced to navigate a new language, culture, and climate. Parents with school-aged children experienced additional challenges with compulsory education expectations and a complicated and unfamiliar educational system. All the respondents noted that they valued education for their children very much and hoped that their children would continue their education after graduating high school. Hser Moo is glad to have her children continuing their education and study of English in the United States.

> "My kids get good education in the camp and the teacher also good too, try their
> best to help the kids. But for English they just teach you only one period a day,

not a lot of time…but when they come to the US they get more, they get to speak

more English, and get to learn more English so they get improve.” (H. Moo,

March 6, 2017)

Laway Moo and Pah Eh shared how they felt thankful to be in the United States. Laway

Moo specifically feels thankful for the opportunity to improve his English in American

schools. “Education in United States was a huge experience for me because I get to learn

English and expand further of my education and there is more opportunity” (L. Moo,

March 9, 2017). Even with the stark contrasts between school systems of their home

country, if the students had any formal education, and the United States, the overall

attitude towards American schooling is positive.

When the questions focused more on our American educational system and the

home-school connection, the parents had similar requests of teachers and staff. Thla Sui

suggested that teachers speak honestly and directly when giving feedback about how a

child is doing, and shared her belief that parents will listen and follow what a teacher

says, therefore if a teacher is trying to be polite by only highlighting the accomplishments

of a student and not suggesting any areas for improvement, the parents may leave with a

false sense of how their child is really doing in that school. She also suggested that

teachers give advice or information to parents on how they can support their child at

home. If a child is struggling with certain letter sounds, she said that the teacher could

provide additional practice sheets or recommend books for the child to take home to get

more practice in their English. The other parents also believed in building a working

relationship with the teachers. Parents also expressed the desire and or need for a

bilingual outreach worker or interpreter when possible.

In regard to students participating in extracurricular activities and after school sports, Say Htoo shared that the Karen community values education over sports and other activities after school. This may be because of the challenge of having limited transportation available. She also shared insight that it is difficult for some kids to join an after school program or group because they may be the only refugee with American students, and that pressure can be too much for the student to handle. Laway Moo believes that completing his secondary schooling in the United States was "a huge experience" for him because his English improved and he was awarded more opportunities than he would have had back in his home country (L. Moo, March 9, 2017). Laway Moo also participated in soccer after school and enjoyed the additional language practice and budding friendships he made.

Some common threads between the interviews emerged, such as the struggle of staying safe during the Burmese army raids of villages, the difficulty of quality education in Burma and in the refugee camp, and the hopes and realization of a better life in America. These commonalities were noted in the culture and language toolkit in order to provide a generalization of the real-life experiences many Karen face as they leave the refugee camp and move to the United States.

The stories told and experiences shared by the parent and student volunteers build a rich and somewhat complicated bank of information on the Karen population in my school district. There are many conclusions that can impact the relationships between the school staff and teachers and these families. One important factor is the necessity for teachers to ask: ask the student about their home country, ask them what their school was like and what activities they did, what was the best experience, what was the worst.

Invite parents or family members to attend events at the school or to come see the classroom for a visit. It may be the first time they have been asked or have entered the building. The parents who were interviewed were eager to share and seemed appreciative that they were being asked to tell about their past experiences. Encouraging parents to share their experiences will build rapport with school staff. Another important factor is building empathy and cultural competency within the school itself. Civil war can devastate villages and families, and all of the Karen refugees who are resettling in Iowa have been impacted in some way by the war, either directly or indirectly, and those effects can last for decades. It is imperative that schools work together with these immigrant families to support the transition to the American educational system.

Staff and teachers must also reflect on their practices to prepare for parent teacher conferences or other school visits by Karen families. It would be beneficial for staff and teachers to have training in how to work with an interpreter for such occasions. It is very important to remember the amount of formal education the student and parents had before entering the American educational system. This may be the parents first ever experience meeting with an American teacher. They may not know what to expect or what is expected of them. They will probably be as nervous about the situation as the teacher may be.

When using an interpreter, the staff member should speak and direct their attention to the parent(s) or family member(s) and not the interpreter. Our culture emphasizes maintaining eye contact during a conversation, and by keeping attention on the interviewee and not the interpreter it shows respect and validation for their responses.

Feedback given should include specific information about areas in which the student is progressing and what areas need support. It would also be helpful for the teacher to prepare any additional materials that could be used by the parent or family member to help the child improve.

When newcomers or students who have been in the United States less than a year enter the school, extra consideration should go into teaching and practicing the routines and procedures of the building and classroom. Based on the responses from the interviewees, students may enter middle or high school with interrupted or very little formal education for various reasons and will need that extra support to learn how to navigate and perform in the American educational system. In effect, they need to be taught how to "do school."

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Connections to the Literature Review

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In Chapter Three, the Karen Caged-Bird metaphor was presented. It described a bird who was dependent on its owner for all aspects of life, and when freed, the bird is unable to thrive, having not had practice or opportunities to learn how to survive. After speaking with Karen parents and community members, this metaphor as a whole does not seem appropriate, but pieces can be extrapolated and applied as a generalization of the Karen in my district. The parents have great hope for their children, and believe that their children are learning the skills they need to be successful and take advantage of all the opportunities here in America. The Karen mothers I spoke with are a mix of homemakers and working women, supporting their households, just like so many other American women.

An aspect of the metaphor that does fit this group is the uncertainty of their new life once they arrive to Iowa. They are like the newly freed bird, completely unable to understand their new surroundings and expectations. They shared their struggle with learning English and understanding the unwritten rules of American schools and society, down to how the public transportation system works. However, these families persevered and have begun to feel comfortable with their new life in Iowa learning to navigate super markets, utilities and paying rent on time.

Teachers experience struggles and concerns as well when working with diverse populations including ELLs. Reeves (2006) noted that secondary mainstream teachers in general expressed concern about course modification for ELLs, felt untrained, had mixed feelings about receiving training in working with ELLs, and had misconceptions about second language acquisition. Research from Harper and De Jong (2004) had similar conclusions. As the Karen population in Iowa continues to increase, these trends in teacher's attitudes and preparedness will prevail. Williams et al. (2002) stated that there is an increased likelihood that the attitudes mainstream teachers hold towards their ELLs will continue to deteriorate due to the increase in language-minority speakers not just in educational settings but in the United States in general. Teachers will continue to lack training regarding how to serve their ELLs and the implications of high state standards and rigorous testing of ELLs with the expectation of high performance. These findings and current trends in resettlement reinforce the necessity for providing professional development and resources for teachers. The gaps in knowledge and general lack of training in working with ELLs helped shape some of the core components of the culture and language toolkit.

The research behind interviewing and using an interpreter was helpful in structuring the interviews and survey questions. I used strategies based on Freed's (1988) research to prepare for the interview, including contacting the interpreter and outlining the procedure we would use, detailing the expectations for her as the interpreter, providing the questions I would be asking, and expressing my desire for verbatim use of the questions but independent interpreting for the responses and elaborations to allow her more of a role in the interview. From these strategies, I was able to execute smooth interview sessions that gathered rich and deep anecdotal information from members of the local Karen community.

Anecdotal information from the interviews was used for the culture and language toolkit, but the literature review on professional development opportunities and teacher preparedness shaped how the culture and language toolkit was created.   The informal needs assessment completed before the research began also reinforced the data that the majority of teacher preparation programs do not include coursework in working with ELLs (de Jong and Harper, 2005), and the responses I received reflected those gaps of knowledge in instruction of ELLs and the Karen.   Knowing that statistically not all the teachers in the building would have had instruction on diverse learners in their undergraduate program led me to focus my research on some of the basics of the Karen language and culture to begin to build teachers' competencies in understanding these students and their families.

Components of the Culture and Language Toolkit

The idea for the toolkit is based upon the need for professional development resources for staff and teachers to utilize that will increase their capacities in

understanding of and working with our Karen population, and ELL population in a broader sense with Second Language Acquisition. A brochure (See Appendix F – Culture and Language Toolkit) was created as a printed resource that can be distributed and referenced easily, and an accompanying website (Karen Toolkit, 2017) that can be updated with current events and any revised or additional information was also created. The brochure and website will be introduced at a building-wide professional development, and submitted to the ELL department at the district level as a resource in the fall.

The brochure for the toolkit contains background information on who the Karen are including where they are from, their recent history involving the civil war and unrest in Burma, and basic geographic and economic facts. The brochure also explains some basic information on Second Language Acquisition and details the contrast between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), a theory from Cummins' research in the 1980s. To connect to our Karen community in Iowa and in our educational settings, anecdotal information from the interviews and surveys is provided along with advice for working with an interpreter. Finally, links to additional resources are listed. (See Appendix F – Culture and Language Toolkit)

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the results from my qualitative interviews and research of the Karen language and culture. Interview and survey responses were discussed, and common themes that emerged were described. To answer my research question, this data along with other research was combined and organized to develop a

Karen culture and language toolkit for staff and teachers. In Chapter Five, I will connect

the major findings from this research, revisit the literature review as it relates to current

study, discuss the implications for teaching practice, and provide recommendations for

future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The overarching question guiding my research was:

What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high

school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the

needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

This focus provided me the opportunity to explore the culture and language of students I

have taught. In this chapter, I begin by discussing and summarizing what I learned

through the course of my research. The literature review will also be revisited.

Implications and recommendations for further research will also be discussed. I conclude

with a plan for presenting this information and the toolkit to staff and teachers at the

school where I am currently employed.

Before beginning my research. I completed an informal needs assessment with a

group of teachers and an administrator to see where their areas of interest and gaps of

knowledge were regarding our Karen students. The majority of responses reflected a

need for organized information about our Karen students and their culture and language.

From this survey I framed interview questions and research around cultural background

and traditions of the Karen, Karen language structure, and what the Karen community

that we serve believe and wish for in regard to the American educational system.

The research into the Karen and their culture and language played a significant

role in how the toolkit was developed. The Karen are a diverse people who have a

lengthy and complicated history in Burma. There are generalizations that can be made

about Karen refugees, including the reasons for fleeing to a refugee camp and a typical

educational experience in a public school in the camp, and that information was included

in the toolkit to help teachers and staff get a glimpse at the struggle many Karen students face before arriving to the United States. While the Karen may speak a local dialect, only the two main branches of the Karen language were considered to again find generalizations that could be presented to teachers and staff wanting to learn more about the Karen.

Major Findings

In beginning my research, I found that many teachers completing preparation or licensure programs were not required to receive instruction on ELLs and teaching strategies for diverse learners. Research also suggested that teachers may feel unprepared to teach ELLs in their content classroom. These notions were confirmed as I completed an informal needs assessment and found that all respondents had some type of gap in their knowledge about our Karen students and how to work with language learners. This reinforced my desire to provide a professional development resource on our Karen students, detailing aspects of their language and culture.

From the interviews and surveys, I found that the Karen refugees who have settled in Iowa and have children attending the high school where I am currently employed had similar experiences in their home country and in the various refugee camps where they lived, but also bring unique details and viewpoints on American education and life in the United States. The parents and community members that I spoke with had all been affected by the civil war in Burma and were motivated to flee based on the decreasing safety in their villages. They shared their hopes of a better life in America and for their children who are enrolled in our school district. This information was collected and used to enhance the culture and language toolkit.

Literature Review Revisited

The most impactful part of research that highlighted the need for a professional development resource was the lack of preparation and training that staff receive, either in their undergraduate or licensure program, and then as a professional in the field of education. Research completed by de Jong and Harper (2005) considered if qualities of good teaching were enough for preparing mainstream teachers for ELLs, and found that fewer than one in six higher educational institutions required any preparation regarding ELLs. Karabenick and Noda (2004) looked at a large Midwestern school district and implications of professional development on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards ELLs. They found a majority of teachers expressing the need for training in not only content knowledge but instructional skills to teach ELLs. The research highlights the need for tools and strategies that teachers can immediately take back to their classroom and implement, as well as a purposeful planned learning opportunity in the areas of second language acquisition and instructional techniques to implement in mainstream classrooms when serving ELLs. The Karen culture and language toolkit will help meet the needs of teachers and students by providing facts and anecdotal information to understand the Karen population better with support in second language acquisition and teaching strategies as well.

Implications

Results from this research highlight a number of potential findings for communities with Karen refugees, especially when considering an educational setting like an urban public high school. Teachers and staff members may not have the formal training to accommodate Karen ELLs in the classroom, and may not have a strong

understanding of the Karen culture and language. The nation as a whole is being exposed to rhetoric, often negative, regarding immigrants, and during this time education is important to a better understanding. Cultural competency can strengthen the relationships between the school and the community, and an investment into formal training through professional development opportunities or additional college coursework can help build the capacity of teachers for these diverse learners.

From an individual's standpoint, taking time to learn about Karen students, or other ELLs that may be in the building, can greatly affect the climate of a classroom. There are many great print and video resources that can increase understanding of the Karen culture and language, and I recommend any teacher who works with these people to take time and work on their individual professional development in this manner.

In addition to personal research about the Karen, inviting community members into the building to learn more about their experiences was very beneficial to not only my research but to strengthening the home-school connection for those families. All participants expressed gratitude at being able to share their story and for my interest in learning more about their children and viewpoints on the American educational system. For some, it was the first time they were asked those types of questions and they shared their feeling of appreciation for being able to discuss these topics.

I plan to provide and present this resource to my building in the fall of 2017, and also provide my district with this resource as something they can include in the ELL portion of the website. If the interest is high from the staff and teachers at my school, I will plan additional professional development opportunities and resources that deepen the information provided and can target more of where their needs point, to classroom

teaching strategies, or more historical or cultural information regarding the Karen. There are many different opportunities to continue providing support on the Karen students, and this research will be the jumping off point of that learning for my school.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Challenges and Limitations of the Study**</p>

There were a few challenges that arose in the current study that would need to be considered in further research in the area of creating and providing a culture and language toolkit to staff and teachers. One of the major challenges was in translating experiences from Karen to English in a way that captured what the speaker intended to share, but still held on to the connotation without losing cultural meanings. Our interpreter worked hard to understand what the interviewee wanted to share and then relate that to me in English, but there may have been information that could not be directly translated and was possibly omitted from the interpretation. I could have brought the interpreter back in with me to listen and transcribe the interview to ensure that the majority of information shared was captured in the interpretation, but due to time constraints that was not arranged, but with more time and an additional language support position it could have been scheduled.

Second, it was challenging to create questions that would render the information I was hoping to gather from the participants while being sensitive to their background as a refugee without upsetting them or feeling like they could not trust me as the researcher. Knowing that I was speaking with refugees who had been directly impacted by the civil war in Burma made me take extra precaution to establish trust in the interview, and then allow participants to elaborate on their experiences if they felt comfortable. I found that

structuring the interview based on the research of qualitative interviewing helped build that trust and comfort level before the deeper questions were asked.

It was also challenging to get participants for the study who were able to come to the school during the hours that the interpreter was available and with their own transportation. The interviews were held during the day, and I found that Karen fathers were working during that time and only the mothers were available to come during school hours. There were a few parents who expressed interest but in the end only one was able to attend. I was fortunate to be able to meet with three Karen community members during one interview session, which helped fill out the information I received from the interviews. It may have worked better to align the interviews with a school event such as conferences or scheduling night, when both the parents and interpreter would have already been in the building.

With time constraints and a tight deadline for completion, I was able to gather a small group of participants and create the culture and language toolkit. This study could have been expanded to include a larger sampling of parents across the district, and an effort could have been made to schedule interviews with Karen fathers to gain insight into their experiences and how it may differ from that of the Karen mothers. It would be interesting to see how rich the responses would be to include both parents of the children enrolled in our district.

This study could have also included the professional development opportunity but due to the timing, the end of spring semester, it was delayed to allow for teachers to implement their learning immediately.

In addition to these challenges, there are factors that limit the scope and validity of the study. First, the number of participants in the current study is too small to make generalizations about the entire Karen culture and language, which is why additional research was gathered and the interviews were used as anecdotal information to gain insight into the local Karen community and make more broad generalizations about the Karen as a whole. Secondly, as mentioned before, the use of interpreter and nature of working between two languages may have accounted for some discrepancies in what was shared by the parent and what was then stated by the interpreter, and what could not be directly translated from Karen into English. Also, while the interview questions were crafted to gather information about the experiences of Karen community members and children coming to the United States, adapting to formal education, studying in American schools, and working toward the future, my presence in the interview as a staff member of the school may have influenced the way the respondents answered the questions that relate most to their views and student's experiences in the American educational system.

Future Research

This research gathered information from a few members of the local Karen community and their views on education, expectations for teachers and their students, their experiences in the refugee camps, and any additional information they would like to share about their culture. I am curious how their experiences would compare to other qualitative studies done in larger urban educational settings, and how those responses would shape professional development for those staff and teachers. Research would suggest that the needs of teachers would be similar based on their career preparation

program and training, but there may be districts that focus heavily on building their staff and teachers' cultural competency for the diverse students they have in the building.

The professional development and toolkit can serve as a model for training teachers and staff about other immigrant groups that are enrolled in the district. To measure the impact of the culture and language toolkit, a pre and post survey will be administered to the attendees of a professional development opportunity where this information would be presented, with an immediate survey after the event rating the impact, and a delayed survey to assess whether the toolkit had a lasting impact on those who attended the session. This data will be analyzed to measure the effectiveness of the professional development and culture and language toolkit.

Conclusion

The current trend of Karen refugees to Iowa suggests an urgent need for teachers and staff to be aware of the experiences and background of their students who have arrived from refugee camps. This qualitative research gathered information from survey and interviews with students and parent and community members to build a Karen culture and language toolkit and to impact the staff and teachers in my school. Important findings include the gaps in knowledge that research shows and an informal needs assessment confirmed for teachers in my building, and common experiences shared between the Karen refugees in relation to their experiences in the camp and views on life and educational opportunities in America. These pieces together indicated the need and I then developed the resource to meet the need for staff and teachers in my building and answered my research question:

What components of a Karen language and culture toolkit for mainstream high

school teachers and staff could impact their confidence and awareness of the

needs of Karen students and improve teaching practices?

My hope is that this resource will indeed increase the confidence and awareness of the

teachers and staff, and in turn improve their teaching practice.

APPENDIX A – Parent/Guardian Interview Questions

☐ Tell me about yourself. When and where were you born? How many siblings do
you have? How many children do you have? Where have you lived? How long
have you been in the United States? Have you been to our school before? For
what purpose(s)?

☐ What was life like growing up? What jobs or responsibilities have you had?

☐ What is your experience with the refugee camps? Tell me about the schooling in
the camps.

☐ What was the educational experience like for your children?

☐ What are your thoughts on participation in sports or other activities after school?

☐ What do you think about the home-school connection? When should teachers
contact you? How often do you plan on visiting the school?

☐ What do you value most for your children's future? What do you hope for your
child(ren) to accomplish in the next few years after they graduate from our
school?

☐ Any other information you would like to share in regard to life in your home
country, education in the United States, or our school?

APPENDIX B – Parent Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am an instructional coach at North High School and a graduate student working on an advanced degree in education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research from February 14th through March 30th. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for you or your child to take part in this research. This research is public scholarship, and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository, and it may be published or used in other ways.

I want to study how a resource on Karen language and culture can impact the staff and teachers at North High School. I plan to collect information from books and website resources, and will also include information from parent interviews and student surveys. Parent interviews will be held at North High School with an interpreter present at a time that is convenient for the participant. The interviews will consist of less than 10 questions and last approximately 30 minutes. Audio will be recorded on the computer and deleted after the completion of the research. Student surveys will be sent by email and will include less than 10 questions and take around 20 minutes to complete. The information gathered from the interviews and surveys will help our teachers and staff understand you or your student's opinions and expectations about schools in the United States, experience in the refugee camps, and aspirations and goals for the future.

There is little to no risk for you or your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. Exact names of the school, district, or participants will not be used. I will not include information about individual students or parents/guardians, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that the survey or interview answers not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the principal of North High School, Michael Vukovich. The capstone will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. My results might also be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a report at a professional conference. In all cases, you or your child's identities and participation in this study will be confidential.

If you agree that you or your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by mail no later than March 30th, 2017.

If you have any questions, please email or call.

Sincerely,

Kate Courtney

North High School

501 Holcomb Ave North

Des Moines, Iowa 50313

515-242-8259

Kate.Courtney@dmschools.org

ဆု ကွိဖိမ်ၢ်ပၢ် မၢ့တမၢ့် ပှၤကွၢ်ထွဲကွိဖိအိၣ်,

ယမၢ့ယဲပှၤလၢအသိၣ်လိကွိသရၣ်မၟၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ဖဲ North တီၤထိကွိ ဒီးယမၢ့်စံၣ်ကီးယဲကွိဖိလၢအဖျိထိၣ်လံၣ်ဖိၢ်စိမ်ၤ ဒီးဟံၣ်ဆိၣ်ယဲတီၤဒၣ်သိးယက မၤထိထိၣ်ယဲယပတီၢ်လၢတၢ်ကူၣ်ဘၣ်ကူၣ်သ့အပူၤ ဖဲ Hamline ယူၣ်နံၣ်ဘၢၣ်စထံၣ်, ဖဲဖ့ St. Paul, မ့ၣ်နံၣ်စိထၣ်ကီၢ်ဆၣ်နူၣ်လီၤ. ဖဲတၢ်မၤလၢ ယကဘၣ်မၤဒ်သိးယကဖျိထိၣ်ကွိအဂီၢ်တခါအကျါ, ယကဘၣ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ် စးထိၣ်လါစဲၤပထံဘၢၣ် ၁၉သိ တုၤ လါမၤဂုၤ အသိ ၃၀နူၣ်လီၤ. လံၢ်ပ ရၢတဘ့ၣ်အံၤအတၢ်တိၢ်ဟ်နူၢ်မ့ၢ်ဝံၣ်သိးအကယ့ဝဲအခွဲးလၢနၤဒီးနဖိနူၣ်တၢ်ကသံကွၢ်နၤတၢ်သံကွၢ်တနိၤလၢတၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတခါအံၤအဂီၢ်လီၤ. တၢ်ယု သ့ၣ်ညါတခါအံၤမ့ၢ်ဝဲပှၤကမျၢ်အတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤ, ဒီ တၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတခါအံၤတၢ်ကကွဲးဖှိၣ်ဖုၣ်လီၤအီၤတပူၤယိ ဒီးတၢ်ကွဲးဘၣ်ထိၣ်အီၤအလီၢ်ခံကတၢၢ် တခါနူၣ် တၢ်ကဆိဘၣ်ထိၣ်အီၤဝံၤဟ်အီၤဖဲ Hamline's Bush အလံၣ်ရိဒၢး ႜႜႝ်အမၢ့်လံ်လၢတၢ်ကွဲးထုးထိၣ်အီၤ ဒီးလၢခိၣ်ဖှူၩထၢပူၤနူၣ်လီၤ. လၢ တၢ်ထၢနုၥ်အီၤ လၢခိၣ်ဖှူၩထၢၣ်အပူၤတခါနူၣ် ပှၤကမျၢ်ကွၢ်အီၤသ့ဖဲ ဒီးဘၣ်သ့ၣ်သ့ၣ်တၢ်ကထုးထိၣ်အီၤလၢကျဲႜအႜသ့ဝဲလီၤ.

ယအဲၣ်ဒီးမၤလိယဲ မ့ၢ်ကညီကျိၥ်ဒီးကညီတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၤနူၣ်ကထိးဘၣ် ကမၤဘၣ်ထွဲဝဲသၢရၣ်မ့ၢ်ဖဲ North တီၤထိကွိလၢကျဲႜႝ်လဲၣ်နူၣ်လီၤ. ယကျဲ႒ လီၤယဲလၢယကထၢဖိုၣ်ဝဲတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လၢ လံၥ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ် ဒီ ဝဲးဘ်စးသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်အပူၤ, ဒီးယကထၢနုၥ်စံၣ်ကီးတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤလၢယဒီးခွၢ် ဘၣ်လၢမိၢ်ပၢ်အအိၣ်ဖဲယယသံကွၢ်မၤနိၣ်အီၤဝံၤ ဒီးကွိဖိအတၢ်စံးဆၢသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်နူၣ်လီၤ. မိၢ်ပၢ်တၢ်သံကွၢ်မၤနိၣ်နူၣ်ကအိၣ်ဖဲ North တီၤထိကွိ ဖဲမိၢ်ပၢ် တၢ်ဆၢကတိၢ်လၢအချုးအခါ ကအိၣ်စ့ၢ်ကီးဝဲဒီးပှၤကျိၥ်ထံတၢ်ဖိနူၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်သံကွၢ်မၤနိၣ်အံၤကဂ့ၤန့ၢ်ႜ်းအဖျၢၣ် ၁၀ ဒီး ကယံၥ်ဝဲအမံၤနံၤ ၃၀ ယၣ် ယၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်ကဖိၣ်နူၣ်ယၥ်ဝဲတၢ်သံကွၢ်မၤနိၣ်အံၤအကလုၢ်ဝံၤ တၢ်ကထုးသံကွၢ်ဝဲဒီးတၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတခါအံၤဝံၤအခါလီၤ. ကွိဖိအဂီၢ်တၢ်သံကွၢ်သ့ၣ်တ ဖၣ်နူၣ် တၢ်ကဆၢႝ်ၢ်အစဲၣ်သ့လၢအံၤမ့ၢ်လၢအပူၤ ဒီးကယံၣ်ဝဲ ၂၀မံၤနံၤ ယၣ်ယၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤ လၢတၢ်ထၢဖိုၣ်အီၤလၢ တၢ်သံကွၢ်မၤနိၣ် ဒီး ကွိဖိ တၢ်စံးဆၢနူၣ်ကမၤစၢၤပၤဃသရၣ်မ့ၢ်ဖဲသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လၢအကနၢ်ပၢၢ်ဝဲနၤဒီးနကွိဖိတၢ်ထိၣ်တၢ်ဆိမိၣ်ဒီးတၢ်ဘၣ်သး ဘၣ်ဃးကွိတဖၣ်လၢကၢ်အမဲရကၣ်အပူၤ , နၤတၢ်လဲႝ်ခီဖျိလၢဒိၣ်ခံသဲၤစ်မံ်အပူၤ, ဒီ တၢ်မၤနုၤလၢနုကမၤဆူၣ်ထိၣ်နႜ်သ ဒီးနတၢ်ပညိၣ်လၢတခါဆူ့ညါအဂီၢ်နူၣ်လီၤ.

နၤဒီးနဖိကစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်အံၤအဂီၢ်တၢ်ဘၣ်ယိၣ်တအိၣ်နီ်တမံၤဘၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်စံးဆၢခဲလၢၥ်နူၣ်တၢ်ကဟ်အီၤဒ်တၢ်ခူသ့ၣ်လီၤ. ကွိ, ကီၢ်ရ့ၣ်, ဒီးပှၤလၢ အစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ် အမံၤအသၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်နူၣ် တၢ်တဟ်ဖျါထိၣ်အီၤဘၣ်. ယတထၢနုၥ်ဝဲ မိၢ်ပၢ် ဒီးကွိဖိတၢဂၤစ့ၥ်စ့ၥ်အတၢဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤဘၣ် ဒီးယတတိၣ် ဖျါထိၣ်ယဲတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်နီတမံၤဘၣ်. တၢ်ကစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်အံၤတၢ်တမၢနူၢ်ဆူၣ်နၤဘၣ် ဒီး နဆၢတဲၥ်ယုထၢခဲ့တၢကတိၢ်ဂုၤကတိၢ်ဂုၤသ့ဝဲ ဒီးနမ့ၢ်တအဲၣ်ဒီးထၢ နုၥ်ဝဲနတၢ်စံးဆၢနူၣ်သ့ဝဲ ဒီးတၢ်တဘၣ်နၤတၢ်ကမၣ်နီတမံၤဘၣ်.

Hamline ယူၣ်နံၣ်ဘၢၣ်စထံၣ်တၢ်ကူၣ်ဘၣ်ကူၣ်သ့အကွိ ဒီ North တီၤထိကွိ အကွိခိၣ် Michael Vukovich နူၣ်ဟ့ၣ်ယၤအခွဲးလၢယကယု သ့ၣ်ညါဝဲတၢ်အံၤလီၤ. တၢ်အံၤအလၢ်ထူၣ်နူၣ် တၢ်ကကွဲးနုၥ်လီၤအမံၤလၢလံၥ်နဲၣ်ရိအပူၤလၢ Hamline's Bush အလံၣ်ရိဒၢးတၢ်ဟ်တၢ်လၢခိၣ်ဖှူ ထၢၣ်အပူၤ, တၢ်လၢပှၤယုကွၢ်အီၤလၢခိၣ်ဖှူ့ထၢၣ်အပူၤသ့တခါနူၣ်လီၤ. ယတၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်တခါအံၤဘၣ်သ့ၣ်သ့ၥ်တၢ်ကထၢနုၥ်အီၤ ဆူ့တၢ်ကစိၣ်အ ပူၤသ့ဝဲ မ့တမ့ၢ် တၢ်ကဟ်ဖျါထိၣ်အီၤလၢတၢ်အိၣ်ဖိုၣ်လၢအပတီၢ်ထိတခါ ခါလီၤ. လၢတၢ်ခဲလၢၥ်တခါစ့ၥ်စ့ၥ်အပူၤ, နၤဒီးနဖိအတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤနူၣ်တၢ် ကဟ်အီၤလၢတၢ်ခူသ့ၣ်အပူၤလီၤ.

နမ့ၢ်သးလီၤပလိၥ်လၢနၤဒီးနဖိကစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်နူၣ်, ဟ်ဃၣ်လံ်တၢကဘျုးအံၤတက့ၢ်. မၤပှဲၤထိၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်သးလီၤပလိၥ်အလံ်ကွဲးဒိလၢကဘျးဟ်ႜ ၂ ဒီးဆှၢႜ်က့ၤဆူ့ယအိၣ်တဘၣ်စဲခံနူ်ႝ် လၢအိၣ်ကထိဘၢၣ် ၇သိ ၂၀၁၆ တက့ၢ်.

နတၢ်သံကွၢ်မ့ၢ်အိၣ်နူၣ်, ဝံသးစူၤဆှၢန့ၢ်ယၤအံၤမ့ၤလ် မ့တမ့ၢ် ဆဲးကျၢလီတဲစိတက့.

ပှၤဒီးတၢ်သညူႜသပှၢ်,

Kate Courtney

North တီၤထိကွိ
501 Holcomb Ave North
Des Moines, Iowa 50313

Kate.Courtney@dmschools.org

APPENDIX C – Informed Consent Signature Sheet
Informed Consent Signature Sheet - Researcher Copy

Date:

I _____ agree to participate/for my child to participate in research regarding Kate Courtney's study on how a Karen language and culture toolkit impacts mainstream teachers and staff. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the impact this toolkit can have on the teachers and staff at North High School. My/my child's participation will involve either a 30-minute interview or a 20-minute survey. My/my child's confidentiality will be strictly protected by providing a pseudonym in addition to creating pseudonyms for the school district, school name, legal name, and student names. Interviews will be recorded and transcriber by the researcher. I understand that I shall not receive any compensation for participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time, for any reason.

Please write your initials in the space provided:
_____ Parent interview   _____ Student Survey

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date
_____   _____
Parent/Guardian Signature for student   Date

Informed Consent Signature Sheet - Participant Copy

Date:

I _____ agree to participate/for my child to participate in research regarding Kate Courtney's study on how a Karen language and culture toolkit impacts mainstream teachers and staff. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the impact this toolkit can have on the teachers and staff at North High School. My/my child's participation will involve either a 30-minute interview or a 20-minute survey. My/my child's confidentiality will be strictly protected by providing a pseudonym in addition to creating pseudonyms for the school district, school name, legal name, and student names. Interviews will be recorded and transcriber by the researcher. I understand that I shall not receive any compensation for participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time, for any reason.

Please write your initials in the space provided:

_____ Parent interview   _____ Student Survey

_____   _____

Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian Signature for student   Date

တၢ်ဒုးသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်အၢၣ်လီၤ ဟ့ၣ်အခွဲးတၢ်ဆဲးလီၤမံၤအလံာ်ကု–ပှၤယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်ဖိအလံာ်ကွဲးဒိ

မှၢ်နံၤ :

ယၤ စီၤ/နီၢ် _____ သးလီၤပလိာ်လၢ ယၤဒီးယဖိနူၣ်ကစံးဆၢဝဲတၢ်သံကွၢ်လၢအဘၣ်ယးဒီး Kate Courtney's အတၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါဘၣ်ယးကညီကျိာ်ဒီးအတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢနူၣ်မၤဘၣ်ထွဲဝဲကွိသရၣ်မှာ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ဒ်လဲၣ်နူၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတခါ အံၤအတၢ်ပညိၣ်မှၢ်ဝဲဒ်သိးတၢ်ကနၢ်ပၢၢ်အခါထီၣ်ဝဲကညီကျိာ်ဒီးတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢအံၤမၤဘၣ်လိာ်ဝဲကွိသရၣ်မှာ်ဒီးပှၤမၤတၢ်ဖိသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လၢကျဲၣ်လဲၣ်ပဲ North တီၤထီၣ်ကွိနူၣ်လီၤ. ယၤဒီးယဖိကစံးဆၢဝဲတၢ်သံကွၢ်တခါအံၤကယာ်ဝဲ အမံၤနံၤ ၃၀ တၢ်သံကွၢ်မၤနီၣ် မှတမှၢ် အမံၤနံၤ ၂၀တၢ်စံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ် နူၣ်လီၤ. ယၤဒီးယဖိအတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိုးနူၣ် တၢ်တဒုးသ့ၣ်ညါပှၤနီတဂၤ တၢ်ကဟ်အီၤဘံၣ်ဘံၣ်ဘၢဘၢ ဒီးတၢ်ကသူတၢ်အမံၤလၢအဂၤတခါလၢ ကွိကီၢ် ရှၣ်, ကွိမံၤ, နမံၤ, ဒီးကွိဖိအမံၤအဂီၢ်လီၤ. တၢ်သံကွၢ်ကွဲးနီၣ်အံၤတၢ်ကဖီၣ်ယာ်ဝဲနကလုၢ်ဝံၤပှၤယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်ဖိတဂၤနူၣ်ကကွၢ်ကွဲးလီၤဝဲလၢလံာ်အ ပူၤအလိၣ်ဘၣ်ဝဲအသိးနူၣ်လီၤ. ယနၢ်ပၢၢ်လၢယတဟ့ၣ်ဒီးနူၢ်ဘၣ်ကျိၣ်စ့လၢယစံးဆၢတၢ်အံၤအယိဘၣ်. တၢ်စံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်ဝဲအံၤမှာ်သးမၤကလီဒီး တၢ်ဟးထီၣ်ကွံာ်လၢတၢ်အဝဲအံၤအပူၤသ့ဝဲတဘျီဂ့ၤတဘျီဂ့ၤလီၤ.

ဝံသးစူၤကွဲးလီၤနဲနမံၤဖှ့ကိာ်ဖဲတၢ်ဖီလာ်နူၣ်တက့ၢ်.

_____ မိၢ်ပၢ်တၢ်သံကွၢ်ကွဲးနီၣ်   _____ ကွိဖိစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်

_____   _____

မိၢ်ပၢ်ဆဲးလီၤမံၤ   မှၢ်နံၤ

_____   _____

မိၢ်ပၢ်/ပှၤကွၢ်ထွဲးတၢ်ဖိဆဲးလီၤမံၤလၢကွိဖိဂီၢ်   မှၢ်နံၤ

တၢ်ဒုးသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်အၢၣ်လီၤ ဟ့ၣ်အခွဲးတၢ်ဆဲးလီၤမံၤအလံၢ်ကွ့–ပှၤယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်ဖိအလံၢ်ကွဲးဒီ

မ့ၢ်နံၤ :

ယၤ စီၤ/နီၢ် _____ သးလီၤပလိာ်လၢ ယၤဒီးယဖိန့ၣ်ကစံးဆၢဝဲတၢ်သံကွၢ်လၢအဘၣ်ယၤဒီး Kate Courtney's အတၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါဘၣ်ယၤကညီကျိၣ်ဒီးအတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢန့ၣ်မၤဘၣ်ထွဲဝဲကွိသရၣ်မ့ၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လဲၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ. တၢ်ယုသ့ၣ်ညါတခါ အံၤအတၢ်ပညိၣ်မ့ၢ်ဝဲဒ်သိးတၢ်ကနၢ်ပၢၢ်အါထီၣ်ဝဲကကညီကျိၣ်ဒီးတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢအံၤမၤဘၣ်လိာ်ဝဲကွိသရၣ်မ့ၣ်ဒီးပှၤမၤတၢ်ဖိသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လၢကျဲၣ်လဲၣ်ဖဲ North တီၤထီကွိန့ၣ်လီၤ. ယၤဒီးယဖိအတၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိုန့ၣ် တၢ်တဒုးသ့ၣ်ညါပှၤနီတဂၤ တၢ်ကဟ်အီၤဘံၣ်ဘံၣ်ဘၢဘၢ ဒီးတၢ်ကသူတၢ်အမံၤလၢအဂၤတဖါလၢ ကွိကၢ် ရှၣ်, ကွိမံၤ, နမံၤ, ဒီးကွိဖိအမံၤအဂီၢ်လီၤ. တၢ်သံကွၢ်ကွဲးနီၣ်အံၤတၢ်ကဖီၣ်ဃာ်ဝဲနကလုၢ်စံၤပှၤယုသ့ၣ်ညါတၢ်ဖိတဂၤန့ၣ်ကကွဲးလီၤဝဲလၢလံာ်အပူၤအလိာ်ဘၣ်ဝဲအသိးန့ၣ်လီၤ. ယနၢ်ပၢၢ်လၢယတကြၢးဒီးန့ၢ်ဘၣ်ကျိၣ်စ့လၢယစံးဆၢတၢ်အံၤအယိဘၣ်. တၢ်စံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်ဝဲအံၤမ့ၢ်သးမၤလီဒီး တၢ်ဟးထီၣ်ကွံာ်လၢတၢ်အဝဲအံၤအပူၤသ့ဝဲတဘျီဂ့ၤတဘျီဂ့ၤလီၤ.

ဝံသးစူၤကွဲးလီၤနဲၤနမံၤဖုၣ်ကိာ်ဖဲတၢ်ဖီလာ်န့ၣ်တက့ၢ်.

_____ မ်ိၢ်ပၢ်တၢ်သံကွၢ်ကွဲးနီၣ်   _____ ကွိဖိစံးဆၢတၢ်သံကွၢ်

_____   _____
မ်ိၢ်ပၢ်ဆဲးလီၤမံၤ   မ့ၢ်နံၤ

_____   _____
မ်ိၢ်ပၢ်/ပှၤကွၢ်ထွဲးတၢ်ဖိဆဲးလီၤမံၤလၢကွိဖိဂီၢ်   မ့ၢ်နံၤ

APPENDIX D – Student Survey Questions

- What is your name and age?

- How long have you lived in the United States?

- What activities or sports do you or would you like to participate in at our school?

- What was life like growing up? What is your experience with the refugee camps? Tell me about the schooling in the camps.

- What has your school experience been like in the United States?

- What do you think about the home-school connection? How often do you think your teachers should contact home? How often do you think your parent/guardian should visit the school?

- What do you hope to accomplish in the next few years after you graduate from our school?

- Any other information you would like to share in regard to life in your home country, education in the United States, or our school?

APPENDIX E – Self-reported needs assessment questions

☐ What questions or areas of interest do you have in regard to the Karen culture? This could include religion and beliefs, expectations, reservations, parenting styles, communication styles, etc...

☐ What questions or areas of interest do you have in regard to the Karen language? This could include history/origins of the language, writing systems, syntax, phonology, etc...

☐ What other information would be helpful to know? Please mark any or all of the following:

- o Basics of Second Language Acquisition

- o Common sayings in Karen

- o Web resources for learning more

- o One-on-one help with working with Karen students

- o Additional PD on ELL Strategies

- o Other (please describe)

APPENDIX F – Culture and Language Toolkit

Karen Language and Culture Toolkit

What's Inside

Who are the Karen?

The Five Stages of SLA

BICS vs. CALP

Working with an interpreter

Insights

Features of the language

Additional Resources

Did you know?

There are over 500 Karen students in our district!

Created by:

Kate Courtney 2017

http://karentoolkit.weebly.com/

WHO ARE THE KAREN?

The Karen (pronounced Kah-REN with an emphasis on the second syllable) are an ethnic group from Burma/Myanmar.

Many Karen have fled to and live in one of the nine refugee camps on the Eastern Thailand border after facing violence and persecution from the Burmese military regime (Oh and Stouwe, 2008).

This struggle for safety and independence has been ongoing since the middle of the 20th century when Burma/Myanmar gained independence with resulting political unrest.

While there are still tens of thousands of Karen refugees living in the camps, the number of immigrants in the United States and Iowa has been increasing in the last decade.

There is no single definition of what it means to be Karen. There are cultural, economic, linguistic, and religious differences that cause great diversity within this group of people, and general trends or dominant traits among the Karen people will be considered.

The geographic makeup of Burma divides the Karen into those living in the mountains and highlands, and those living in the lowlands, and affects their ways of life and economic activities.

Those living in the highlands and mountains practice subsistence agriculture and raise livestock.

Jobs outside of agriculture may be held by the Karen living in the lowlands as their proximity to larger cities and urban areas allows for more opportunities outside of farming.

As part of a Hamline School of Education Capstone, this researched and anecdotal information gathered through interviews and surveys has been compiled to create a resource for staff and teachers.

This information provided is by no means exhaustive, but is meant to be a starting point and reference for learning about one of our many growing English learner groups in our district.

THE FIVE STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language learners progress through five predictable stages: Preproduction, Early Production, Speech Emergence, Intermediate Fluency, and Advanced Fluency.

The chart below details each stage based on research by Krashen & Terrell (1983).

Name	Time frame	Characteristics
Preproduction	0-6 months	May experience a silent period, uses non-verbals like nodding or shaking head, can point or draw, minimal comprehension
Early Production	6 months - 1 year	Increasing but limited comprehension, uses key words and phrases, uses one or two-word responses, uses present tense verbs
Speech Emergence	1 year - 3 years	Good level of comprehension, uses simple sentences, wider range of grammar usage but with mistakes
Intermediate Fluency	3 years - 5 years	Excellent level of comprehension, uses more complex sentences, makes fewer grammar mistakes
Advanced Fluency	5 years - 7 years	Near-native level of proficiency

Insights from our Karen community

"Sometimes we didn't even have time to eat, during our eating if they (Burmese military) came you just need to run away and escape. So it's so difficult." -Karen parent

"At first it was tough because it hard for me to learn and speak English but as I learn and work harder, it getting a bit easier for me." -High School Student

"They (parents) are scared when they see the school phone number. I think we need to increase the contact so that the parents think it's not only about my kid in trouble, they might be doing something great." -Bilingual worker

BICS VS. CALP

Developed by Cummins (1984) and stands for basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)

Examples of BICS:

* Context-embedded
* Social and conversational language
* Used for oral communication

Examples of CALP:

* Context-reduced language in a classroom
* Textbook readings
* Expository writing
* Cognitively demanding tasks and discussions

Developing strong academic language proficiency takes many years.

WHEN WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER

Using an interpreter may be necessary to allow for clear and meaningful communication with our Karen families. Consider these tips from researcher Anne Freed before scheduling a parent meeting with an interpreter:

* Use a neutral interpreter if possible, someone who is not a relative or family friend.
* Consider the physical layout of the area to make interactions as comfortable as possible.
    * Where will the interpreter sit? Will you be across a desk facing the parent or guardian?
* Discuss your expectations with the interpreter before the meeting; should they interpret verbatim, or could the meeting flow more naturally allowing the interpreter flexibility to add information or context to the conversation?
* Keep your focus on the parent or guardian, and speak directly to them and not the interpreter.
* After the meeting when the parent or guardian has left, review the content of the meeting with the interpreter to allow for clarifications, deeper understandings, and discussion of any cultural dictates that came up during the meeting.

FEATURES OF THE S'GAW KAREN LANGUAGE

- ▸ Features six tones that change the meaning of words that have the same consonant and vowel order.
- ▸ Follows a Subject-Verb-Object order like English, but places adjectives after nouns.
- ▸ To express the voice, mood, tense, person and number in Karen, particles are connected with the verb, or are left to be inferred from the subject.   They are not conjugated like in English.
- ▸ Karen nouns themselves do not convey a meaning of number like some in English, e.g. ox - oxen. The number would be gathered from context or from the addition of a numerical adjective like two or many, or from the affix like our English -s or -es.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Please visit these websites for more information on the Karen language and culture.

Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center

www.embarciowa.org/

Karen Organization of Minnesota

www.mnkaren.org/

Karen Refugees from Burma - MN Department of Health (PDF)

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee/karenref09.pdf

Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation

www.cmef.ca/karen.html

Karen American Communities Foundation

https://karenamerican.org/

Karen News

www.karennews.org

Refugee Center: How to Teach Karen Students In the Classroom

https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-karen-students-in-your-classroom/

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