

## ***Funds of Knowledge in Storytelling and Recipes***

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*Glocalization*, or the relationship between the global and the local, identifies cultural and linguistic inequities that may be addressed through bilingual, multilingual, and multicultural education programs, including the use of *translanguaging* as a resource for students (Joseph & Ramani, 2012). To support our *glocal* societies and classrooms, it is increasingly important for institutions of teacher education to prepare teacher candidates to recognize, value, and draw upon students' *funds of knowledge* as resources for learning in the classroom. This article describes an autobiographical assignment inviting elementary ELL teacher candidates to reflect on and share *funds of knowledge* through a digital story and focuses on one candidate's journey in connecting this process to valuing her ELL students' *funds of knowledge* to meet TESOL standards for supporting ELLs in their sociocultural contexts.

### ***Funds of Knowledge***

*Funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) refers to the knowledge, skills, and “complex functions of households within their sociocultural context” (p. 132) and can include home language use, family values and traditions, caregiving practices, occupations, scientific knowledge, among other factors (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenburg (1992) encourage teachers to partner with families to invite the “strategic and cultural resources” (p. 313) that ELLs bring from their home environments into the classroom. In this work, teachers are encouraged to take a learning approach toward ELL families and household practices, to build trust in the classroom, and to support students through meaningful activities.

Home visits are a valuable approach for teachers to engage with and learn from ELL *funds of knowledge*. If home visits are not possible for new teachers or candidates with limited agency in initiating innovative practices not yet established, class assignments can engage with ELL *funds of knowledge*. Alvarez (2018) invited her bilingual first-grade students to compose stories and draw pictures of their experiences in a bilingual school

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This is the authors' version of the work published as:

Liu, L.B., & Brodey, S. (2021, March 23). Funds of Knowledge in Storytelling and Recipes. *MOSAIC: The Newsletter of the New York State Teacher Association*, 51(1), 3-7.

in a town close to the Mexican-American border. Student work documented ways students contributed to family well-being. By merging artistic expression with autobiographical reflection, ELL *funds of knowledge* were engaged.

### **Assignment for Teacher Candidates**

A digital storytelling assignment is embedded in Introduction to Bilingual Education, a course taken by elementary teacher candidates working toward their English as a New Language (ENL) licensure. The assignment particularly supports candidates in meeting TESOL (2019) standards focused on supporting ELLs in the Sociocultural Context, specifically TESOL 2e, 2d, and 2a. By first identifying, exploring, and reflecting on their own *funds of knowledge*, candidates in the course made progress toward meeting TESOL 2e. Candidates interviewed a parent or other family or community member to learn more about a selected aspect of their own *funds of knowledge*. They then developed an autobiographical story using a digital tool (e.g., storyjumper.com) as a model to share with the class and with future students.

*TESOL 2e: Candidates identify and describe the impact of his/her identity, role, cultural understandings, and personal biases and conscious knowledge of U.S. culture on his/her interpretation of the educational strengths and needs of individual ELLs and ELLs in general.*

In developing and sharing the story, candidates considered how their own sociocultural backgrounds, beliefs, biases, and positionalities may shape – positively or negatively – their understandings of ELL backgrounds, strengths, and learning needs. Candidates articulated greater appreciation for the cultural diversity of ELL students, as they also came to identify with cultural diversity by recognizing uniqueness in their own cultural stories. Candidates also came to see and appreciate ELL strengths and learning needs more clearly after considering unique challenges faced by their own family members on how their own backgrounds shape their views.

### **Application in Teaching ELLs**

After completing this assignment, the teacher candidate or co-author of this article developed her own unit plan outline for engaging elementary ELLs in developing and sharing stories about their own *funds of knowledge*. This unit plan regarded and supported ELLs in their sociopolitical contexts of learning by inviting ELLs to interview a family or community member to learn about the ingredients, nutritional benefits, and historical traditions of a family recipe. In the first stage of the unit, the teacher would

share examples of cultural foods from around the world and then describes one's own family recipe, including ingredients, nutritional and traditional values. If the teacher is bilingual or multilingual, use of additional languages would be modeled in class. In the second stage of the unit, ELL students work with a family or community member to develop written descriptions for their own family recipe, including ingredients, nutritional and traditional values. Mixed English language ability groups peer edit one another's recipes. In the third stage of the unit, student work is compiled into a class recipe book to share with ELL families and community members, who may be invited to class for an optional presentation of the book.

### **Reflections & Significance**

This candidate's assignment models one approach for how an ENL teacher candidate might apply insights gained through the digital story assignment in also meeting TESOL Standard 2d.

*TESOL 2d: Candidates devise and implement methods to learn about personal characteristics of the individual ELL (e.g., interests, motivations, strengths, needs) and their family (e.g., language use, literacy practices, circumstances) to develop effective instructional practices.*

By regarding family recipes as learning resources, teachers can communicate to ELL students and families that their family culture and knowledge are valuable. This assignment invited ELL students to share the recipe in their family's first language and in English, a *translanguaging* strategy affirming that ELL students' home languages are valued in the classroom. This message can be vital for ELL students navigating sociopolitical contexts that may minimize their home culture and language. Teacher recognition and value of ELL *funds of knowledge* are significant for alleviating stress that ELLs may experience in bridging home-school gaps and for enabling ELLs to focus more effectively on curricula and instruction presented in class.

The candidate reflected on how her completion of the digital story assignment, followed by her development of the recipe unit plan, supported her in meeting TESOL Standard 2a, particularly in the context of ELL families trying to navigate digital instruction amidst COVID-19.

*TESOL 2a: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of how dynamic academic, personal, familial, cultural, and social contexts, including sociopolitical factors, impact the education of ELLs.*

**Reflection:** The word “dynamic” in this standard stands out to me because this word reminds the teacher that effective instruction is dynamic and always changing or adapting to the students’ needs. Teachers validate the uniqueness of students each time their lessons can acknowledge and utilize the present conditions the students are experiencing. For example, since the outbreak of Covid-19, my ELL students have been at home taking my class online. I designed a unit plan turning the present situation into a strength. They have been asked to share a family recipe and its taste, nutritional, and/or tradition-based values. Some ELL students may already be taking on leadership roles in their homes by helping to cook during the Covid-19 crisis to help relieve potential job-related stress on ELL parents. This unit plan supports students in this role and capitalizes on the situation by teaching grade-level content and English language skills related to measurement (math), nutrition (science), and writing (ELA).

By considering ELL students’ sociopolitical contexts, this candidate was able to take on a challenge for ELL families (sudden online instruction at home) and turn it into a strength by inviting ELLs to dialogue with their families about home recipes and their cultural value to share in class.

## **Conclusion**

This assignment sought to enhance a teacher candidate’s understanding and appreciation of ELL students’ multicultural, multilingual realities by first recognizing and reflecting on their own *funds of knowledge* (TESOL 2e) to engage ELL *funds of knowledge* more effectively in the classroom (2d), and thus better support ELLs facing daily sociopolitical challenges and complexities (2a).

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