Investigating The Relationship Between Arabic-Speaking Iraqi Refugee Families And The Schools Their Children Attend

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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARABIC-SPEAKING IRAQI REFUGEE FAMILIES AND THE SCHOOLS THEIR CHILDREN ATTEND

by

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my beloved father who passed away when I was three years old and to my mother and brothers, Soliman, Fouad, and Faraj, wife, and children, Mohamed, Tasnim and Abdulmalik who have been a source of inspiration throughout my journey.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through the journey of my graduate experience, I have met different people from different cultures with different backgrounds. These people have enlightened my path and helped shape my study.

I would like to bestow my encomium and profuse thanks to my supervisor Dr. DeFord who lifted my morale through the crises of Libya, and encouraged me to achieve my goals. Her advice during my research and the dissertation process will be useful to me throughout my academic life.

I also would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Long, Dr. Stephens, and Dr. Johnson for their valuable feedback and guidance throughout my studies and through the completion of my research.

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I am grateful to the Iraqi refugee parents, their children’s teachers, as well as the refugee case manager, and district staff who provided me with permission and valuable information for conducting this research.

Finally, I offer my heartfelt thanks to the families who explained their issues openly with the hope their words will help schools provide better services to other families. A special thanks goes to my Ph.D. friends at the University of South Carolina,
especially Robert Walker and Mohammad Ghatani who consistently encouraged me
during the past 5 years.
ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships between Arabic speaking Iraqi refugees and teachers in the schools their children attended as perceived by parents and teachers. Specifically, this study explored the communication processes utilized by the Iraqi refugees, their children’s teachers, and their schools. Using a qualitative methods approach, this study also examined the multiple literacy forms and “funds of knowledge” that these families exhibited and utilized in support of their children’s learning. I also looked at the methods and practices that Arab refugee families living in the South used to preserve their heritage language and culture. I read and analyzed the data and identified patterns in the data. I found that parents were very supportive of their children despite the fact that many teachers in the U.S. feel that parents who are learning English cannot successfully support their children’s success in American schools. They used different methods to enhance their children’s learning of literacy, language, and cultural heritage. Based on the findings, I suggest actions that parents, teachers, and district offices and refugee resettlement agencies could take to improve home-school communication. This is the first study in the United Stated to investigate the relationships between Arabic-speaking Iraqi refugee families and their children’s teachers and ways that Iraqi families support their children at home and in American schools.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CT .......................................................................................................................... Critical theory
DSS .......................................................................................................................... Department of Social Services
ELL ......................................................................................................................... English Language Learners
ESEA ..................................................................................................................... Elementary And Secondary Education Act
ESL ......................................................................................................................... English As A Second Language
ITI .......................................................................................................................... Institute of Translation and Interpreting
L1 .......................................................................................................................... First language
L2 .......................................................................................................................... Second language
SCT ......................................................................................................................... Sociocultural theory
ZPD ......................................................................................................................... Zone of Proximal Development
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background Information

I was raised in Libya and cultural traditions meant that school and home were considered to be separate entities. When I was in school, my widowed mother rarely visited the school unless she was asked to come. In fact, most Libyan parents only visited the school if there was a school event, they wanted to get permission to take their sons for appointments, or they were travelling somewhere. Even today, the cultural traditions concerning home-school interactions in Libya are different than they are in the U.S. because parents usually only visit school when the principal asks them to come because their child has misbehaved. Consequently, parents help their children at home with their homework and emphasize good morals but do not regularly visit the school.

In August 2008, I came to the United States as a Ph.D. student to study language and literacy education. It quickly became clear that there were several important cultural differences between schooling in the U.S. and schooling in Libya. These differences had implications for my wife and me because we have children attending public schools. Like many Libyan citizens, as a parent, a teacher, and teacher educator with a background in teaching English as a second language, I had not known that in the United States, parents’ involvement with their children and schooling was considered a crucial element of students’ success and academic achievement. My wife and I were unaware that in the states many educators felt there was a relationship between home engagement
and literacy achievement. We thought that children’s learning was the schools’ full responsibility and that, as parents, we had no role in our children’s school-based education other than to emphasize the importance of homework and help our children with it. In fact, we did not consider it our responsibility to take our children to the library, read books aloud, or ask them to read as much as possible, or to share reading with us at home. It never occurred to us, either, that we should attend school events and parent conferences.

A second cultural difference is that, in my experience, in Libya, neither teachers nor parents expect home cultures to be an important part of classroom planning and instruction particularly if those home cultures did not reflect those of the dominant groups. In fact, Libyan textbooks use formal Arabic in their materials, while in the classroom there are non-Libyan students who speak different dialects of Arabic such as Egyptian, Sudanese, Iraqi, Syrian and many other dialects. Some of these students struggle with standard Arabic. In addition, some racial/ethnic groups including Egyptians, Sudanese, Pakistanis, and Indians were often portrayed by members of dominant groups by negative stereotypes about literacy and lifestyle and tribal or ethnic networks outside the dominant ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups have historically been marginalized in terms of curriculum development. Teachers do not invite people from cultural and linguistic groups outside the dominant group to share their cultural traditions, languages, heritage and histories in class, nor do they make curricular decisions based on a student’s cultural or linguistic background.

In my doctoral program, as I learned more about language learning and literacy development, and in particular, about culturally relevant practices I reflected more
critically on the state of language and literacy education in my home country. Libyan teachers used the standard Libyan dialect for classroom instruction in spite of the wide range of other languages that were used regularly in our country and seemed to be unaware of multicultural education and its relevance to language and literacy learning for all students. Educational achievement of some children from under-represented cultures might have been seriously affected by school-based barriers, which could have had implications for children’s learning and led to the disintegration of their own language and culture, and for all students’ appreciation of our multicultural society. Attitudes of students from dominant cultural groups about students from other cultural groups can be affected. For any student, underachievement can result when their language and experiences are not honored within the classroom. For example, I realized that many educators and administrators in Libya blamed some Libyan and non-Libyan students and their families for low academic achievement in Libyan schools because those families could not afford school supplies and educational materials. The attitudes that I witnessed among Libyan educators reminded me of biased comments in America such as the mother who said: “No wonder these kids cannot read—look at this note from Keisha’s mother. What do you expect when the mother cannot spell?” (Compton-Lilly, 2004, p. 5). The philosophy captured by Compton-Lilly about teaching and learning in the U.S.A., and written about extensively by other American scholars (Gay, 2010; Kinloch, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Nieto, 2002) is similar to that in Libya and some other Arab countries such as Egypt and Iraq. From my experience, sometimes teachers criticize other ethnic groups or language varieties within Libya because they believe that formal Arabic is better than the languages/dialects spoken by other ethnic groups.
As a result of my graduate studies at the University of South Carolina, my perspective widened and changed about language and literacy. I now believe learning is a social phenomenon and students’ home experiences and culture can play a significant and positive role in children’s learning and that bias against cultural and linguistic ways of being outside the dominant norm can limit learning possibilities for all children. I have come to understand that students’ language and culture are important in terms of furthering their education and the education of all students. In order for teachers to better understand their students’ culture and language background, the teachers and schools need to build strong connections with parents and communicate with them. This means that teachers need to appreciate ways of being outside the dominant norm and both parents and teachers need to realize that building strong relationships with each other based on mutual respect and recognizing and eliminating bias, benefits all parties - the parents, their children, the teachers, and the school. With this as a foundation, the goal of equal educational opportunities for all can be realized.

In the U.S., the issue of parent-school relations has similarities and differences to schooling in Libya. In U.S. schools as in Libya, the notion of respect for all cultural and linguistic backgrounds is certainly not yet the norm in schools. Middle class European American students continue to benefit from a curriculum for them and there is widespread lack of teacher understanding about diverse ways of academically supporting children across cultural and linguistic groups in homes and communities (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Nieto, 2010). In the U.S., while there is generally the expectation from teachers that parents have a particular role to play in their children’s education (support at home, attending school events, volunteering in classrooms, etc.), many
parents, particularly from newly arrived immigrant populations, are unaware of these expectations, and many teachers are unaware of other cultural traditions for supporting students. I believe that as parents we act very similarly to the way we were raised. For instance, my wife and I were not aware of what the school expected of us when we enrolled our child. Our engagement and participation in school events were very limited.

I subsequently asked other Arabic students who had come to the U.S.A. from other countries about their perceptions about their children’s U.S. schooling. They all confirmed that the U.S. expectations for school involvement were a new experience for them, and some, especially newcomers, were still unaware of these expectations. I wondered how clearly they understood their new responsibilities for their children’s learning and the importance of home and school engagement in furthering their children’s education. I particularly was concerned about potential areas of miscommunication due to parent’s previous beliefs and practices in regard to their children’s literacy development. At the same time, I was concerned that teachers in U.S. schools were not reaching out to understand the schooling traditions of immigrant populations.

As an interpreter for the Arab refugees, I met many Arab-speaking refugees from Sudan, Ethiopia, and Iraq who had immigrated to the U.S.A. through the United Nations. Those refugees experienced hardship in their counties and left their countries because they were looking for a safer and a better life. Some of these refugees spoke English fluently and others did not. My duties and responsibilities were related to interpreting English for these refugees and their families. First, I accompanied a case manager to the airport and welcomed the refugees, introduced the case manager and informed the new arrivals about their next steps. After we left the airport, I usually went with them to the
welcome house, developed by the refugee resettlement agency. There, the case manager explained to them some issues related to the house and home safety. Then, I explained to the refugees that the next day someone would come and drive them to an office to sign some paperwork, copy their documents and assist them with social services such as Department of Social Services (DSS) and Medicaid. There they would learn about the next step, which was helping them enroll in the Matching Grant Program. These programs assist refugees during the first six months. During this period, the refugee’s case manager helps the refugee find a job, obtain health services, find housing accommodations, and enroll their children at a school in the neighborhood by filling out forms for them. She/he also helps them buy furniture and any household equipment they need such as utensils and pillows, and blankets. After this stage, the case manager has fewer school-related responsibilities. Many families are on their own to negotiate the new situations they find themselves in, and must learn on their own how to meet new expectations and to assimilate into their new community. Some of these refugees, especially the ones who do not speak English, usually contact me to help with issues such as health, car insurance, and school requirements. These parents sometimes ask me to translate letters they received from DSS, schools, banks, hospitals, and insurance companies. One time, I even interpreted a teacher-parent telephone conference.

Statement of the Problem

After the war in Iraq 2003, the quality of life and education in Iraq declined. Many schools were destroyed and this increased the number of students in classrooms. Also basic services such as water and electricity were not available. As a result of that, some families left the country for political, economic, and religious reasons (Foster &
Foster, 2009). The Iraqi refugees who flee Iraq and who speak only Arabic often choose to temporarily reside in neighboring counties such as Syria, Jordan, and Turkey while they are waiting for their refugee application approval. Some of their children are able to continue their education, but others are not and, as a result, some children drop out of school. All these families have had different schooling experiences than those found in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. When these Iraqi families come to the U.S., they have different expectations and experiences with schools. I believe that it is vital that teachers reach out to these families. Making home visits, for example, may help parents engage and participate fully with the school to assist and support students.

There are many different ways schools communicate with their students’ parents. Some schools use email or send letters; others use telephones, including an automated system through which the school sends recorded messages. Some schools use social media and require parents to check these social media sites or the school’s website for upcoming events. However, it is typical that schools require families to come to them rather than schools venturing into students’ homes and communities to build relationships. Thinking about all these possible methods of communication made me wonder about the way schools communicate with Arab speaking families who speak little English and about potential barriers to communication that do not only include language but also differences in cultural traditions about home-school relationships. Do the schools and teachers provide translations of what they want to communicate to their students’ parents? Or do they assume all families can understand English? Do schools make an effort to learn about the cultural traditions of immigrant families regarding
schooling, or do they assume that all families must adopt teachers’ own cultural norms? In my experiences, there was very little translation done by the school and very little (if any) knowledge about the home-school cultural traditions of immigrant families. In my role as a translator, I often was asked to translate school paper work, and provide information about different school events and experiences such as state tests, field trips, information about the school cafeteria, and classroom expectations. I also served as translator of American cultural norms for families, explaining the expectation to be involved by attending school events such as International Day, Bingo Night, and Dinner Night.

It is important to try to resolve or enhance communication and cross-cultural understanding so that both families and the school benefit and students’ education is facilitated, and negative stereotypes of immigrant families and their children are not perpetuated in schools. In this study, I attempted to better understand the home-school involvement among Arabic speaking Iraqi refugee families and to explore some of the issues that facilitated communication and impacted the parents and their children in their new educational environment.

**Rationale and Research Questions**

It is well established that children learn from their parents at home (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). Parents provide the first informal schooling including developing learning resources that children can utilize: artifacts such as photos, recipes and materials, their family’s shared histories, and unique family experiences and cultural practices. Moreover, the children learn about morals, language, and social roles and expectations from their home and surrounding environment. In order for teachers to appreciate, build
from, and broaden curriculum to embrace their students’ repertoires, teachers need to understand the kind of knowledge and background their students have, the “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) they will draw upon as they begin formal education. Without such understandings, teachers may disregard their students’ personal resources and knowledge base. Negative and deficit stereotypes create inequities in classrooms where children from dominant cultural groups benefit and internalize views of their own ways of being as superior.

There are very many arguments within the academic literature about home-school connections (Boutte, 1999; Compton-Lilly, 2004; Gay, 2010; Heath, 2006; Kinloch, 2008; Nieto, 2010; Sheldon, 2002; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). For instance, Compton-Lilly (2004) postulated that when there is a positive home-school relationship established, both trust and enthusiasm are fostered. A number of scholars such as Boutte (1999), Compton-Lilly (2004), Heath (2006), and Nieto (2010) believe that teachers should better understand their students’ families and try to build a better understanding about their cultures.

Most of these authors focus on the benefits of the home-school connections. Gay (2010) and Meyer, Mann, and Becker (2011) believe that with strong connections, students’ achievement will improve, trust will grow, and parents will learn how to better help their children. Thus, a study of Arabic-speaking Iraqi families and their relationships with the schools their children attend in the United States has the potential to not only inform refugee families about the realities of schooling in the U.S., but also to open U.S. teachers’ eyes to the strong and effective cultural traditions brought to the country by immigrant families, and to the discrimination many families and children
experience because teachers do not understand or appreciate those differences. There are implications for how to create more mutually-appreciative and supportive home-school relationships. My study contributes to filling this gap in the literature. Specifically, I asked:

1. What kinds of relationships have Iraqi refugees and their children established with teachers and school personnel as part of the US educational process?
2. What factors affect the home-school involvement or communication experiences of these families and their children?
3. What literacy forms have the Iraqi refugees utilized with their children at home to enhance their home language and heritage?
4. What kind of school related services are provided by the Refugees’ Agency for the Iraqi refugees, and for how long?

The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between home and school for Arabic-speaking families. The home and school contexts are not mutually exclusive; they complement each other and neither one can work by itself. When both parents and teachers build accepting attitudes, and use multiple ways to support students at home and at school, positive home-school connections will exist. Stereotypes about both school and home can be avoided. Children from immigrant and other under-represented communities can be understood, represented, and better served. And children and families from dominant cultural backgrounds can begin to believe that their families’ ways acting, believing, and speaking are but one way of acting, believing, and speaking in the world.
As a researcher, I had personal, practical and intellectual goals (Maxwell, 2013). Personally, as I interacted with some of the families and observed the struggle and hardships they faced using English to communicate, I felt a desire to change something and thought that conducting research to highlight the issues Iraqi families face in their daily lives would be a first step in bringing to light their particular needs. I hoped that the results of this research would increase awareness of the issues that Arabic-speaking families face so that others could develop community and school-based programs that might offer specific types of support and so that teachers would have better understandings about differences in home-school expectations. Practically, it was clear to me that without effective communication and mutual respect for differences in support systems, neither home nor school could achieve their educational goals. Thus I sought to uncover the issues that might impede home-school communication channels, and clarify the educational issues that parents, children, and teachers face as they seek to communicate effectively and establish and achieve common goals. I hoped that through my study, teachers, and school personnel might gain an understanding of Iraqi families, their culture, and their education-related struggles, challenges, and needs so educators could develop effective ways to serve diverse populations and that parents might gain insights into expectations of teachers in U.S. schools.

Intellectually, I wanted to understand the ways that refugee families and teachers communicated with each other and what worked well and what did not. When communication was not effective, I wondered if there were particular factors unique to the circumstances Iraqi refugees faced. Knowing all these things could assist in
strengthening home-school relationships and improving the communication process between families and schools.

**Significance of the Study**

When family members speak languages other than English, communication with U.S. school personnel in most situations is challenging, especially if the school does not provide translation or specialized services. The findings from this study provide insights into how parents can have a better understanding of the school’s goals and expectations, become more engaged with teachers, and overcome problems that interfere with their ability to participate fully with all school events. The findings from the study can help new refugees make a successful transition to the culture of schools in the U.S. despite the difficulties they may encounter. Parents and school personnel will be better able to communicate and cooperate together to build mutual understanding and respect and, consequently, achieve better outcomes for the education of their children.

This study contributes to filling a gap in the literature, as there is currently no other studies of Arab speaking Iraqi refugees’ home-school relationships. The study also provides recommendations and suggestions that might assist and support refugee and community agencies to better serve this group.

**Assumptions**

Several assumptions guided this study as I designed the methodology and analyzed data. Those assumptions included the following:

1. There might be very little communication between home and school due to existing language barriers and the unavailability of Arabic interpreters and specialized services for new Arabic speaking residents in the United States.
2. Teachers might be unaware of their students’ background and unique experiences due to a lack of information provided during registration.

3. Teachers might be afraid to conduct home visits to Iraqi refugee families.

4. Parents might be reluctant to take the initiative and visit their children’s classrooms and schools.

5. There are new Arabic speaking residents who may be unaware of the resources they need to utilize in order to enhance the literacy development of their children.

6. They may be unaware of the resources they do have that they could use more strategically to enhance their children’s literacy development.

**Subjectivity and Positionality Statements**

The following quote captures my thinking about my subjectivity and positionality:

A person’s knowledge can only exist by virtue of a vast range of past experiences, which have been lived through, often with the most intense feelings. These experiences, including textual experiences (books, lectures, lessons, conversation, etc.), we have been taught to disguise so that our utterances are made to seem as though they emerge from no particular place or time or person but from the fount of knowledge itself. (Rosen, 1998, p. 30)

**Subjectivity statement.** I believe the issue of home–school relationships is very important to the success of students. Many researchers discussed the benefits of a productive home-school relationship in terms of improved student achievement (Rubin, Abrego, & Sutterby, 2012). This understanding influenced me during the research process. I also believe that funds of knowledge (Gonzales et al., 2005) are very important. Families need to realize and value what they know and schools need to value what families know. I was aware that many of my participants were unaware of their
own funds of knowledge and they did not always understand how those funds could contribute to their children’s education.

I came into the study believing that, due to the challenges of learning a new language, Iraqi refugees would have little communication with schools. I based this on my personal experiences in Libya – where other parents and I had very little communication with our children’s schools. Such experiences influenced my expectations, and so I expected similar attitudes from my participants. My subjectivity was present when I selected the topic and the questions I wanted to research, and while I conducted and analyzed the data I gathered.

**Positionality Statement.** My participants and I have the same religion and language. In the U.S., they and I were considered people of color. We differed in five ways: country of origin, dialect, age, socio-economic class, and power. Because we came from different counties, there were differences in our traditions and culture. What might have been normal in one culture might not have been considered normal in the other. I worried that the participants might say something that I did not pay attention to or I might consider unimportant. We had different Arabic dialects. Although I used standard Arabic to make sure that the participants understood what I was saying, they might not understand me when I spoke my Libyan dialect. To avoid that, I paraphrased as needed, and asked them to explain things to me again if I was unclear.

One participant was considerably older than I was and I thought perhaps he might be reluctant to talk about some old events because he assumed I did not have enough historical background. Some of the adults might have been reluctant to share some details about their life and the problems they have faced. As a doctoral student, I had
academic status, which is a kind of power. This might have caused families to refrain from sharing some solutions to problems or resources they used because they assumed that I might know more than they did.

Initially, I was simply the interpreter for the refugee agency in this area. I did, though, translate for them outside the agency. Consequently, we became friends. I gave the three families some gift certificates as compensation for their participation in the study.

**My Subjective I’s and their impact.** My first subjective I was sensitivity to the importance of home-school communication and family literacy. I believe that home-school communication and family literacy affects students’ performance (Glesne, 2011). I was expecting a high level of resistance or disagreement from some of my participants’ beliefs because they might not share this belief. I wondered if their beliefs might annoy me and push me towards proving that I was right and they were not. My second subjective I was the empathy I felt with my participants. I know how difficult it is to not speak English fluently, and not realize the importance of family literacy. As such, my empathy level was high. My third subjective I was my sympathy toward issues related to discrimination, racism, and prejudice and being a person of color. I have encountered discrimination, racism, prejudice, and I understand how it feels to not be from the mainstream. Consequently, I thought I might be quite sympathetic. My fourth subjective I is that I tend to have the attitude that I am responsible for “fixing the world.” I am the kind of person who likes to fix everything so during the interviews I worried that, if I felt that my participants were upset when discussing problems related to speaking in English
or if they had any kind of difficulty communicating, I would try to reduce that feeling and push them toward trying to be communicative and involved.

As an international student and as a non-Iraqi individual, I felt that my participants might open up more to me and share richer data, because being an outsider might play a positive role. In my experience in Libya, especially in smaller areas, some people are more open to an outsider than to an insider, because they feel that outsiders will leave and they will not see them anymore. Their fear is that if insiders know something about their lives, they might share it with someone they know. So my position as an “outsider” with few opportunities to engage with other people in their lives was a strength that facilitated conversation and gathering key information from my informants.

**Monitoring Strategies.** I believe that we can never hide our identities, but being aware of subjectivities and our positionality provides credibility to the research (Peshkin, 1988). By monitoring my feelings such as being happy, angry, sad, or annoyed while I was collecting data, I felt I was able to sense those emotions and become more aware of my subjectivity. I tried to notice how my feelings influenced my interactions with the participants, my analysis of the data my assumptions and conclusions. I was aware that I might want to change behaviors and perspective. Through analytic memos about how I felt, I was able to track my emotions, and to understand them in relation to my attitudes, beliefs and feelings. Naming my subjectivity and being conscious about how I positioned myself in the research enhanced the data interpretation and added credibility to the research.
Language and Education Terminology Used In This Study

Through this research many terms related to language were used:

**Refugee.** According to the Geneva Convention on Refugees is a person who is outside their country of citizenship because they have well-founded grounds for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is unable to obtain sanctuary from their home country or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (Refugee, 2015).

**Assimilation.** A process in which a group gradually gives up its own language, culture, and system of values and takes on those of another group with a different language, culture, and system of values, through a period of interaction (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Acculturation.** A process in which changes in the language, culture, and system of values of a group happen through interaction with another group with a different language, culture, and system of values. For example, in second language learning, acculturation may affect how well one group (e.g. a group of acculturation 5 immigrants in a country) learn the language of another (e.g. the dominant group) (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Bilingual education.** The use of a second or foreign language in school for the teaching of content subjects. Bilingual education programs may be of different types and include: a) the use of a single school language which is not the child’s home language. This is sometimes called an immersion program. b) the use of the child’s home language when the child enters school but later a gradual change to
the use of the school language for teaching some Big Books 54 subjects and the home language for teaching others. c) the partial or total use of the child’s home language when the child enters school, and a later change to the use of the school language only (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Bilingualism.** The use of at least two languages either by an individual (see bilingual) or by a group of speakers, such as the inhabitants of a particular region or nation. The use of two languages by an individual is known as individual bilingualism, and the knowledge of two languages by members of a whole community or the presence of two languages within a society is called societal bilingualism. When two languages or language varieties occur in a society, each having very different communicative functions in different social domains it is known as diglossia (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Code switching.** A change by a speaker (or writer) from one language or language variety to another one. Code switching can take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other speaker answers in a different language. A person may start speaking one language and then change to another one in the middle of their speech, or sometimes even in the middle of a sentence (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Heritage language.** Sometimes used to refer to the language a person regards as their native, home, or ancestral language. This may be an indigenous language (e.g. Welsh in Wales) or immigrant languages (e.g. Spanish in the U.S.). Usually the language which a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he or she is living. The
native language is often the first language a child acquires but there are exceptions. Children may, for instance, first acquire some knowledge of another language from a nurse or an older relative and only later on acquire a second one which they consider their native language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Immigration.** Immigration is the movement of people into a destination country to which they are not native or do not possess its citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent or naturalized citizens, or to take-up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker (Immigration, 2015).

**Second language.** In a broad sense, any language learned after one has learnt one’s native language. However, when contrasted with foreign language, the term refers more narrowly to a language that plays a major role in a particular country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use it. For example, the learning of English by immigrants in the U.S. or the learning of Catalan by speakers of Spanish in Catalonia (an autonomous region of Spain) are cases of second (not foreign) language learning, because those languages are necessary for survival in those societies. English is also a second language for many people in countries like Nigeria, India, Singapore, and the Philippines, because English fulfils many important functions in those countries (including the business of education and government) and learning English is necessary to be successful within that context. (Some people in these countries however may acquire English as a first language, if it is the main language used at home.) (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).
**Language shift.** The process by which a new language is acquired by a community usually results in the loss of the community’s first language. Many communities (e.g. the native Maori in New Zealand and the Hawaiians in Hawaii) have experienced language shift as English has gradually replaced their first language. Attempts to prevent language shift are known as Language Maintenance Monolinguism: 1) A person who knows and uses only one language; 2) A person who has an active knowledge of only one language, though perhaps a passive knowledge of others (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Translator.** A translator is someone who translates written language from one language (source language) into another (the target language). An **accredited translator** (or **certified translator**) is someone who has received accreditation (or certification) from a professional organization such as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) or the American Translators Association (ATA), issued on the basis of training, experience, and examinations. In some countries (e.g. Germany) translators may hold titles if they have graduated from programs at degree level. Some translators have specialized skills necessary for specific types of translation, for example medical translation, legal translation, or literary translation (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Interpreting.** The act of rendering oral language that is spoken in one language (source language) into another language (target language) for the benefit of listeners who do not understand (or who understand imperfectly) the source language. Oral translation after a speaker has finished speaking or pauses for interpretation is known as consecutive interpretation. If the interpretation takes
place as the speaker is talking, providing a continuous translation that parallels the speaker’s speech, it is called simultaneous interpretation. Interpretation is often required in a variety of situations, such as conferences, community settings, and the courts (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Interpreter.** In general, an interpreter is someone who provides an oral translation of a speaker’s words from one language to another. An **accredited interpreter** (or **certified interpreter**) is one who has received accreditation (or certification) from a professional organization such as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI), issued on the basis of training, experience, and examinations. Some interpreters have highly specialized skills and are accredited as conference interpreters or court interpreters (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Language barrier.** When someone cannot communicate in the target language, which means the language an individual is intended to communicate with, the individual encounters a language barrier, an inability to communicate clearly in the target language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Cultural pluralism.** A situation in which an individual or group has more than one set of culturally based beliefs, values, and attitudes. The teaching of a foreign language or programs in bilingual education are sometimes said to encourage cultural pluralism. An educational program that aims to develop cultural pluralism is sometimes referred to as multicultural education, for example a program designed to teach about different ethnic groups in a country (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).
**Multilingual.** A multilingual person is an individual who knows and uses three or more languages. Usually, a multilingual does not know all the languages equally well (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

In this study, I use “home language” to describe the language which is used at home. I also use the term heritage language to refer to the native language with relation to the family heritage. First language refers to the first language that the child learned at home.

**Conclusion**

I believe that home-school relationship and communications are very important for enhancing the students’ achievement and engaging parents with the school. Compton-Lilly (2004) stated that, “Schools and homes interests can merge to create meaningful and personally relevant learning experiences” (p.53). I chose to investigate the relationship among the Iraqi refugee because they asked for my help many times and I was curious about how this relationship was going.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To expand my knowledge about home-school relationships and to strengthen as well as to report the theoretical and conceptual framework that impacted the design of the research methodology, I reviewed the literature and the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this research in four areas: family literacy, expectations for parents’ engagement in U.S.A. schools, parents’ involvement ideology in the Middle East and North Africa, and culturally based practices in homes and schools. They are significant to this study because they supported and informed my beliefs, assumptions, expectations and the theoretical frame that guides this work.

Funds of Knowledge

Researchers (Butler & Clay, 1979; Bissex, 1980; Allington & Cunningham, 2002) have established that children absorb their first learning from their parents at home. Homes have many learning resources that children learn from and use within daily activities such as books, magazines, newspapers, and technology. But there also are rich resources available in families’ shared histories, unique family experiences, and cultural practices. Through the use of resources and involvement in family social practices, children assimilate cultural mores and language, and build a set of expectations that guide their actions. When children enter school and their teachers establish strong relationships with parents, the teachers benefit as they learn more about their students’ culture and funds of knowledge (Moll 1992. Moll defines “funds of knowledge,” as “The historically
accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household and individual functioning and well-being” (p. 78)

These funds of knowledge often differ from family to family and sometimes in the U.S, middle-class European-American teachers do not always recognize and appreciate knowledge that varies from their own. As Compton-Lilly (2004) explained:

The funds of knowledge parents possess relative to reading may not be apparent within the traditionally defined parent/teacher relationship. Teachers must learn to listen to parents and to discover the many ways they support their children with reading. Teachers need to develop relationships with parents and find what parents are comfortable with, what materials are accepted, and the cultural mores that the family respects. (p. 28). By using students’ funds of knowledge, Moll (1992) argued that bilingual and multicultural students achieve better academically and develop a sense of community engagement. Not only students, but teachers also, will benefit from using innovative instructional strategies in their classrooms. Studies have shown that when teachers can connect the knowledge that children bring as a resource to use with planning the classroom curriculum and within instructional settings, children are more engaged and benefit academically (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Building a meaningful relationship between homes and schools, especially with those families who speak a language other than English, is not as easy as some might think. Educators need to build strong relationships with parents so that they can learn about students’ history, language, and unique knowledge and household experiences. This, in turn, enhances teaching and learning.
Parent Engagement in U.S. Schools

It is important to understand how the current expectations for parent involvement evolved in American schools. Writing about the changes that occurred regarding the relationship between families and schools, Epstein (1986) pointed out that during the 19th century in the United States parents and communities controlled school decisions. In fact, parents fully participated in making decisions about a host of issues related to school management, such as hiring and firing teachers, and defining calendars and curriculum. During the late 19th and early 20th century however, these responsibilities shifted so that the control resided solely within the schools, and this had an impact on the relationship between the schools and parents.

Katz (1971) argued that this change occurred because educators began to believe that parents could not deal with these difficult topics and only teachers and school and state officials could deal with them. Henderson (1987) noted that by the 1920s parents had assigned their responsibilities completely to the school. During the 1950s, teachers came to believe that parents should be supportive of their teaching (Berger, 1995). In the 1960s, parents’ involvement was mandated by federal legislation through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, 1965). This act mandated that parents be part of the school advisory boards and take part in the classroom activities. By the 21st century, educators thought that parents’ involvement should not only be connected to music events, plays or fund raising, but that they should fully participate and communicate regularly (Cowan, 2003).

Today in the United States, it is expected that parents should be involved with schools, and that the school benefit from parent participation. The relationship between
schools and homes has undergone major changes in the way parents and teachers function in relation to students’ learning (Anfara & Mertens, 2008) and a number of positive outcomes have been proven for children, parents and schools.

Unlike the past, people now have better facilities that can assist them with communicating with schools. For instance, parents now have transportation to school, Internet, and cell phones, all of which facilitates communication between teachers and parents. In fact, the absence of these might make communication hard for some parents.

The Benefits of Parent Involvement

A number of scholars have discussed the positive outcomes that result from parent-school collaborations (Gay, 2010; Godber, 2002; Hong et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2011; Reynolds et al., 2015; Sheldon, 2002; Zaoura and Aubrey, 2011).

Benefits to parents. Zaoura and Aubrey (2011) explored parents’ perspectives in a qualitative case study on home school relationship in their children’s primary school in Cyprus. The researchers interviewed sixteen parents and the participants were from six different primary schools. Their findings showed that parents knew that the close home-school relationship might improve their achievement. Parents also believed their meeting with teachers and routine communications enhanced the relationship with teachers.

In another study, Sheldon (2002) surveyed 195 mothers of 1st - 5th graders in two elementary schools to investigate the relationship between the school’s social networks and parents’ involvement. She found that there was a strong positive correlation between achievement of students and involvement of parents and their use of resources. Likewise, Cotton and Wiklund (1989) and Dodd and Konzal (2002) reported that parents’ increased involvement positively affected students’ success. Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems,
and Holbein (2005) discovered that students whose parents were involved usually became more responsible and accountable for their own learning.

Meyer et al. (2011) used a questionnaire to investigate out if teachers still believed in the value of home visits. For data collection, they requested 29 kindergartens through second grade teachers to complete a questionnaire. They found that home visits enhances students’ performance and causes better communication with parents.

In a study with Latina parents, Hong et al. (2011) found that after involvement in a Parent’s Mentor Program, parents became more familiar with school programming, became more involved, and better understood how the school functioned. They described how participants in low-income communities changed through a program in which they become educational activists. In their study families learned how to become engaged in schools. Their involvement also fostered parents’ leadership and helped them see themselves as active agents for community and personal transformation. The research reviewed on parent involvement in the schools provides evidence of benefits at many levels. In short, the benefits of parental engagement with the schools is integral to nurturing a collaborative learning community and establishing mutual cooperation and trust that ultimately propagates a positive outcome for all involved partners.

Benefits to teachers. Gay (2010) argued that increased parent involvement impacts teachers as well. Teachers better understand their students’ needs, become more aware of any challenges that the students are facing, and learn about their students’ culture and backgrounds. This kind of involvement allows teachers to better serve their students and makes their teaching more culturally relevant. Jacobs (2008) conducted in depth interviews with 21 elementary school teachers. He found that teachers utilized
students' information and knowledge about home lives and integrated that to their teaching and their teaching became more effective.

Reynolds et al. (2015) used a mixed method approach to examine the influences of role constructs and self–efficacy, invitations, and life contexts on parent’s decision to be involved with an urban high school. They used focused groups, teacher’s interviews, and parents and teacher surveys. 119 participants responded to the survey and the results revealed that school invitations and taking into consideration the family culture increase parents’ involvement. They also found that teachers focused on school communication, while parents focused on events out school.

Benefits to schools. Increased parent engagement impacts the schools as well. The first outcome is that the parents and school work together for the benefit of the students. When parents have a vested interest or stake in their child’s education, they are more inclined to urge their students to work hard at home and complete their homework, assignments and projects. Parents will also make sure that their children respect and follow the teachers’ and school’s rules. This, in turn, will create a thriving, communal learning environment in the school. Godber (2002) in a qualitative study interviewed 27 parents in an elementary school and asked them about their perspectives of school climate. He also investigated how the parents’ perspectives were linked to some other variables, such as the levels of parent involvement, self-efficacy, role construction, and family economic status. The findings revealed that there was a moderate correlation between school climate, parent involvement, school satisfaction, role construction, and involvement barriers. The school benefits from parents in so many ways. When the school invites parents from culturally diverse backgrounds to be actively involved
throughout the school year, the parents share information or tidbits about their culture that can inform teachers and administrators. In addition, the school can engage parents in authentic ways by asking them to join activities, events or even serve on committees, which then affords parents the opportunity to act as activists and participate in decision making about curriculum.

**Disconnect Between U.S. Schools and Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families**

There is a disconnect between family and school literacies in schools that serve linguistically and culturally diverse families. Schools sometimes do not utilize the students’ funds of knowledge (Zygouris-Coe, 2007). This causes a gap among multicultural students and may contribute to low performance. Many researchers indicate that multicultural students do not perform well at school because the literacy practices at school are different from the literacy practices at home and this can result in confusion and disengagement. For instance, Oikonomidoy (2010) collected data from seven female high-school refugee students from Somalia. In her study she examined the subtext of the students’ experiences with the curriculum and the teachers. For the data collection, she used three focus groups, informal conversations, and observations at the school site. The results revealed that the students failed to identify with the material at their school. When student do not relate to the curriculum or they do not see any representation that reflect their culture, they become demotivated. In another study, Heath (1983) examined the literacy practices of different social classes in her study. Her results revealed that when the school’s literacy practices were similar to the child’s literacy practices at home, students performed better. Smitherman (2006) believed that African American language should be predominately used at schools to facilitate the students’ mastery of English.
When families’ value schooling, higher student achievement often results. For instance Heath (1983) interviewed African-Americans and Delgado-Gaitan (1992) looked at Mexican-Americans, and Li (2006) interviewed Chinese families. These researchers showed that when families believe that schooling is highly valued, they also instill that idea in their children. However, not all families have these same beliefs, or knowledge about how their actions and values play a critical role in shaping their children’s education (Fu, 2009). If parents do not communicate the importance of education, and do not engage actively with the school in support of their children’s learning, then the school is left to fill this void.

In these cases, the expectations and cultural practices utilized within the schools may or may not be supportive, depending on the teacher’s familiarity with the different cultural practices of children and parents from cultures other than their own. If there is a cultural gap between home and school, students’ achievement will be affected and students might lose interest.

Parents’ Involvement Ideology in the Middle East and North Africa

Based on my experience, in Libya and many other countries in the Middle East, North Africa and South Africa, such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, and Nigeria, religion plays a central role in education. This influence has strong ties to instructional practices and oral recitation used in learning the Quran (Sengupta, 2011). A long time ago and through to the present, people urged their children at young ages to recite and memorize the Quran, first orally and later with more emphasis on both written and oral practice. Parents believe that reciting the Quran will impact their children morally, culturally and intellectually. In this process children are independent and rarely
ask their parents for help or involvement. This process is a mutual responsibility between the Muhafiz (teacher) and the child. These practices may influence the lack of participation by some parents in the schools their children attend. In the U.S.A. I believe that some parents may have been influenced by their prior experience before coming to the U.S.A. This might leave parents feeling disconnected from schools because they expect classroom teachers to behave similarly to the Muhafiz. But for parents from this background who now live in a different cultural context, there may be particular difficulties for them as their children attend a very different educational setting with different expectations (Sengupta, 2011). Therefore, parents should be aware of this cultural change with regard to school involvement, and those parents need a tremendous support during their first experiences with American schools.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Critical theory, linguistics, and sociocultural theory form the foundation of my current theoretical and conceptual framework. The work of Freire, (2000); Macedo, (2006); Nieto, (2010), Heath, (2006), and others influenced the way I think about literacy. I began thinking about the materials used at Libyan schools and universities, the voices missing from them, the nature of teacher-students interactions in classes, parent’s attitudes and beliefs about literacy and their interactions with their children, and the mechanism of home-school communication and relationship. I also thought about home visits, home literacy and community involvement with schools.

These inquiries led me to think about the way teachers in Libya still teach and position themselves as a master-figure charged with filling students with information that students receive and memorize, and the nature of home–school communication. In fact,
there is little to no space for teacher-student dialogue or student creativity in the setting. Instead, the teacher believes himself or herself to be a source of information and is discouraged from welcoming students’ knowledge and contributions. And thus, the parents generally believe it is the school’s responsibility to teach their children, and the parent’s responsibility to make sure homework is completed. When these parents relocate to the United States, they bring these expectations for how they will relate to American schools and how they support their children.

Realizing this made me decide to conduct a study around the communication between home and school. In particular, I was interested in how Iraqi refugee families in the U.S.A are coping with school. I wondered if the schools provided any support to these refugee families with limited English such as translations of forms, or newsletters, or announcements of school activities in Arabic. If not, I wondered how this group managed and supported their children. I wondered what issues arose, and how issues might be resolved as a result of potential differences in expectations and practices.

Consequently, as an insider sharing a similar culture, I felt that I was in a better position to carry out this research. In this study, I intended to utilize a sociocultural theory (SCT) framework to investigate the problems Arabic speaking Iraqi refugees and their children faced in their school settings in the United States. Using the SCT lens enabled me to show the important role of culture in students’ learning. My research shed some light on the issues these multicultural Iraqi refugees faced and the problems the children encountered at school due to miscommunication between home and school due to language barriers. To investigate how the school-home communication and relationship developed, I conducted a qualitative study.
The following have shaped my thinking and guided me in conducting this study: 1) sociocultural theory; 2) funds of knowledge; 3) culturally responsive teaching; 4) use of learning resources; 5) critical theory, and 6) issues of social justice.

**Sociocultural Theory**

Learning has traditionally been defined as a cognitive process that occurs in the mind of the learner. Sociocultural theorists have criticized these traditional ideas by arguing that knowledge, skills, and identities are obtained or acquired through people’s interaction as they participate in historical, social, and cultural contexts (Dantas & Manyak, 2010) and that social relationships and participation in culturally organized practices play a central role in learning (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Vygotsky, 1962).

Sociocultural theory (SCT) originated with Vygotsky’s seminal research (1962). The core idea of sociocultural theory is that society plays a vital role in individual development. Vygotsky (1962) emphasized that the human development takes place when individuals interact with society, such as the interactions that occur whereby children learn from their parents or teachers. Vygotsky (1962) stresses the dynamic nature of this interaction. Vygotsky (1962) believed through the “Zone of Proximal Development,” (ZPD) a child can develop further with the help of more experienced others. Of course, this learning differs from one society to another and even from one family to another within a given society.

Ratner (2002) defined SCT as the field which, “studies the content, mode of operation, and interrelationships of psychological phenomena that are socially constructed and shared, and are rooted in other social artifacts” (p.9). Dantaz and Manyak (2010) stated that SCT explains how knowledge, skills, and identities are
acquired when people participate in practices that have cultural, historical, and social roots. SCT provides educators different lenses, causing them to view learning differently (Nieto, 2002), and in an educational context, this impacts teacher instructional decisions and the relationship between teachers and learners.

While some teachers think of learning as only a cognitive process, and ignore the sociocultural aspects, as well as the wide range of sociocultural and sociopolitical theories that impact learning. Nieto (2002), postulates that “learning is not simply a question of transmitting knowledge, but rather of working with students so that they can reflect, theorize and create knowledge” (p. 7). Nieto (2002) believes teacher-centered models are pervasive. Consequently, teachers need to move away from teacher-centered instruction and adopt student-centered approaches. Moreover, teachers need to stay away from what Nieto (2010) called “chalk and talk methods” in which the textbooks dominate teaching through materials and teachers ignore students’ creativity and critical thinking.

To illustrate how differences in sociocultural settings can impact a cultural groups’ beliefs and expectations, an example from the Libyan context may be illustrative. In Libya, the answer to the question of what counts as an important piece of knowledge or knowing is the political propaganda that the government deems appropriate for the public to learn. The Libyan education system uses indoctrination as a consistent practice, as indoctrination was the main goal of Gadhafi’s beliefs (Gadour, 2006; Orafi & Borg, 2009). Libyan teachers use traditional methods, such as audio-lingualism and the grammar translation methods in second language instruction. Their philosophies and instructional methods are antiquated and teacher centered as a result of the isolation of its
people from other cultures and practices. Based on my experiences as a teacher educator and language inspector, Libyan teachers do not have access to effective professional development programs (Orafi & Borg, 2009). Due to state suppression, sensitive political issues like inequality are not discussed. As an example, this serves to highlight how differences in sociocultural contexts can impact an educational context as well as a cultural context.

From a sociocultural perspective, the first crucial step to creating greater cultural awareness, then, is to help teachers to see the influence environment and politics have on education. Such a change in ideology will hopefully improve literacy instruction and achievement. Shor (1992) believed “a curriculum that avoids questioning school and society is not, as is commonly supposed, politically neutral; it cuts off students’ development as critical thinkers about their world” (p.12). Shor’s (1992) perspective matched that of Freire (2002) and Macedo (2006). Students need teachers who engage them in class and welcome their culture and identities. Teachers need to show explicitly that differences are honored and accepted.

The concept of “social situatedness,” as Lindblom and Ziemke (2003) refers to the idea that, “the development of individual intelligence requires a social (and cultural) embedding” (p. 79). Therefore, teachers and educators should take social factors into consideration and base their instruction around them. Lindblom and Ziemke (2003) also suggest that human behavior and cognitive processes result from the interaction between the individual and his environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), “social situatedness and interaction cause ‘internalization' the process of learning societal norms that are mediated by adults, community, and cultural artifacts” (Neito, 2002, p. 14). To sum up,
“sociality lies at the heart of cognitive development” (Lindblom and Ziemke, 2003, p. 91).

**Funds of knowledge.** According to a sociocultural approach, people in all societies need to dismiss and ignore myths and stereotypes about other people and cultures that tend to represent multicultural races and classes, and look at the funds of knowledge which all families have and how those can contribute to their schools and communities (Moll, 1992; Moll et al., 1994; Moll et al., 1994). Moll (1992) defines ‘funds of knowledge’ as, “The historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household and individual functioning and well-being” (p. 78). In the research that has been published on funds of knowledge by researchers and scholars such as Compton-Lilly (2004), Dantas and Manyaks (2010), Kiyama (2011), and Linda (2011) the researchers interviewed African Americans, Latinos, Chinese, and Vietnamese families in ethnographic studies, but no research has been done with Arabic speaking refugee families now residing in the United States with regard to home-school relationships.

Teachers need to help support parents and their children in classrooms by creating a third place as Compton-Lilly (2004) called it. As she explained, “One of my goals is to bring the home literacy lives and the school lives of my students together by creating a “third space” in which home and school interests can merge to create meaningful and personally relevant learning experiences” (p. 53). So students’ success depends on the privilege school gives to other cultures and subcultures. Moll (1992) also reported similar observations as he suggests, “if school could find a way to explicitly privilege other culture’s tools, some students would be successful” (p. 78).
Culturally responsive teaching. The literature on culturally responsive teaching is critical to a sociocultural approach (Gay, 2010; Kea & Trent, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Ladson-Billings (2014) suggested that schools and teachers have a major responsibility to reach out, engage, and relate to students in a variety of ways, as practices that do not take the different cultures represented in today’s classrooms into account, and the increasingly diverse classrooms of the future, will create a widening gap for the growing multicultural populations in the United States today. Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students” (p. 31). According to Gay (2010) some of the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching:

- Acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students’ dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
- It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.
- It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other’s' cultural heritages.
- It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (p. 29).
According to this approach, educators need to provide support for families to connect with the schools in different ways. In order for teachers to make this happen, they have to make strong connections with their students’ parents and homes and appreciation for differences from their own views and practices. Such connections can have a great impact and enhance school-parents communication.

Gay (2010) noted that major changes should be made to reduce the social, political and economic inequities among schools, parents, and communities. In support of that Compton-Lilly (2004) argued that, “while parents may not be involved in schools in the ways the school personnel expect, parents do connect with their children’s education in other ways and feel that they are aware of what is happening at school with their child” (p. 39). Gay (2010) commented, in particular, on two students’ experience, Amy and Aaron, when they were young feeling that some of the elementary school subjects were dull. Gay (2010) explained:

They complained about their subjects being dull and boring; about not being able to understand what the teachers were talking about; about teachers who were impatient with students asking them questions, about teachers who did not seem to care or be genuinely concerned about students; about all the tests they had to take, with no one explaining why the answers they gave were not correct and about not having time to get everything done that school and classes required. (p. 6)

The literature supports the belief that these attitudes and behaviors are not the fault of the students, but the responsibility of the teacher who need to figure out how to teach in culturally responsive ways. If administrators, teachers, policy makers succeed in
creating such positive attitudes, the change will be associated with positive consequences that will make a huge difference in both their school, home and future work lives. As we have seen in the literature, families of different cultures and subcultures have many forms of knowledge that are not recognized in the schools, thus creating a cultural gap that tends to make learning much more difficult for students. Teachers should draw on those funds of knowledge and any oral or non-written literacy forms. They also need to move toward more culturally responsive teaching and critical literacy approaches in order to help children grow in literacy and become critical thinkers.

**Learning resources.** The term earning resources refers to books, videos, and software and also to relationships, experiences, knowledge, and artifacts that children experience or obtain knowledge about as they participate in family and community practices. As Dantaz and Manyak (2010) explained:

> The concept of learning resources sits at the nexus to the ethnographic perspective, cultural perspective, and sociocultural perspective on learning and represents a useful way for teachers to remain cognizant of these concepts and to apply them in practice. (p. 11)

As an Arab speaking teacher and a parent, and before enrolling in the Ph.D. program, I used to have a narrow view about learning resources as only school textbooks and the internet. This narrow definition disregarded family histories and each student’s unique knowledge base. Teachers can use these valuable resources that the children bring to school to support teaching practices. Speaking of the importance of learning resources, Dantaz and Manyak spoke of their belief that, “learning resources help educators to see beyond narrowly conceived definitions of school readiness” (p. 11).
Similarly, Taylor (1997) stated that the family has a great impact on education. Families, particularly African American, Mexican American, and poor families, have been blamed for these students’ disproportionately lower achievement compared to children in wealthy and mainstream families. For instance, Taylor (1997) reported the reaction of a father named Tomas who wrote a letter to the school after being frustrated by the negative way the school viewed him and his family. In addition to narrow views of certain families, some teachers have a very narrow view of literacy resources.

Teachers need to integrate multiple literacy forms and instructional techniques into their classrooms. Goodman (1997) wrote that there are multiple roads to literacy, such as family literacy traditions. Examples of those traditions are the ways in which parents interact with other adults and children, and children’s use of language as they play with siblings, talking to adults, exploring and asking about things around them, explaining their feelings and ideas, reading the Bible, singing together, and acting out comics.

Access to these multiple roads to literacy is through the funds of knowledge approach suggested by Moll and Gonzales, (1994). Likewise, Goodman believed, “each household has a unique literacy experience of which schools and researchers are often unaware” (p. 59). Some of these unique experiences could be reading cooking recipes, religious books, catalogues of car parts, or culturally related books for example.

To be a literate in today’s world, and into the future, it is not enough to depend only on some forms of communication; rather, it is imperative to study language, gestures, art, music, dance, drama, architecture and more (Berghoff & Harste, 2002).
**Critical Theory**

One guiding framework in the education of multicultural populations comes from critical theory, which derives from recognition of the need to contradict elements of educational and other systems that oppress and privilege. Critical Theory is unique in the sense that it questions power relations. In fact, it questions systems and structures that maintain injustice through ideological constructs regarding gender, race, class, religion, and sexual orientation. It also seeks to distribute power equally. Further, it gives voice to those who have been silenced or belittled in historical texts, economies, and political offices.

Critical Theory is emancipatory, placing those who have before been silenced in the center of conversations and inquiry. In addition, it inspires political action. Critical Theory is similar to social political theories, which helps those who have suffered from injustice and oppression to spur political change and societal transformation (Freire, 2000; Given, 2008; Macedo, 2006).

**Social justice.** Social justice is the core of critical pedagogy and critical literacy. Guzzeetti (2002) stated “literacy for social justice has roots in liberation theology” (p. 589), and thus seeks to liberate all who have been oppressed and forgotten as a result of enacted policy decisions, and unfair laws and social practices. Therefore, social change is the mandate of social justice scholars, and it often puts schools at the center of educational reform. Given (2008) stated that social justice, “refers to a condition whereby all people are afforded fair opportunities to enjoy the benefits of society” (p. 821). For a change to take place, educators must address issues related to social justice in schools, classrooms, teacher professional programs, and communities at large.
Being in the United States as a graduate student, I saw the different levels of opportunity in some districts versus others. This caused me to think critically about equity in the U.S.A. and education with regard to Arab students. For example, I started asking myself why there were not many Arabic materials or bilingual books and materials in some American schools that have Arabic speaking children enrolled. Is Arabic culture not as important as Spanish? Or is it less important in some schools because there are not many Arab students in some public schools? However, the more time I spent time in schools, the more I realized that it just was not Arabic culture and materials that were lacking because most of the materials were mainly for mainstream cultures. Fandel (1997) cited in Given (2008) addresses similar service quality issues in low-income neighborhoods in the U.S.A. Besides the conditions previously mentioned in small cities, the quality of school supplies (desks, boards, chairs, building structures, etc.) are also not the same in poorer communities as in richer communities. Kozol (1991) cited in Given (2008) discussed such conditions. He documented the “savage inequalities” of resources in poor U.S.A school districts nationwide (p. 590). Such conditions affect students’ performance and achievement.

In order for educators to help to improve society at large, they must allow their students to engage in open discussions about issues of social justice. Nieto (2002) urged teachers, for example, to utilize social justice inquiry projects. Nieto’s (2010) research discussed a project by Latino students in Tuscon, Arizona. The project addressed three issues related to Latino students’ personal, professional, and educational needs. Speaking about the goals of the program, Nieto (2010) said, “Specifically, the [project] engages Latino students in studying structural issues that negatively affect their access to a quality
education and thus hamper their life chances” (p. 207). In this project, the Latino students had the chance to come up with some recommendations that they presented at some community meetings and conferences. In a Participatory Action Research, Nieto (2010) showed how David Stovall (2006) engaged culturally and linguistically diverse young students in a proposal for a new community high school. Nieto (2010) wrote that such efforts have contributed to giving these young students voice and they learned about democracy in action.

I have come to understand that social justice is an important issue and should be extended beyond classrooms and schools to be a concern of communities as well. In fact, educators need to allow their students to engage in projects that include real world applications. Students need to be activists themselves, discussing issues, such as poverty, public safety, and homelessness, and they need to do so beyond the boundaries of their own schools to bring about change within their communities.

Conclusion

Based on my experience as an educator, I chose to engage in a rigorous, scholarly questioning of how the new Arab refugees are managing and engaging with their children in their sons’ and daughters’ current learning endeavors. In so doing, I hope to identify how parents perceive American schools and their children’s learning. I also sought to see how the home school relationship was functioning to identify any problems those Arab families encountered with the school about their communication with the school and with their children’s literacy development. The goal was to find ways to facilitate their transition into this culture, to better address their needs as new refugees and facilitate of their own actions as well as those of their children’s teachers and school personnel.
For the last 30 years, Iraqi refugees have immigrated to the U.S.A. in large numbers. According to Dantas and Manyaks (2010), around 3,000 - 5,000 are living in Nebraska and 12,000 arrived in the United States by 2008 (p. 90). Dantas and Manyaks (2010) urged researchers and teachers to conduct research that helps them to understand the Iraqi culture and social classes. They said, “It is imperative that researchers and teachers begin to understand how their culture and social classes will impact the transition into becoming Americans” (p. 90).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

As an interpreter for Lutheran Family Services, I helped Iraqi refugees with accommodations, job interviews and doctor’s appointments. I realized that some of them did not speak English. As a result, I started thinking about the relationship between home and school and how the teachers and school personnel communicate with these families. Based on my experience as an educator, I chose to engage in a rigorous, scholarly questioning of how the new Arab refugees engaged with their children in their current learning endeavors. In so doing, I hoped to identify how parents perceived school and their children’s learning. I also wanted to identify any problems those Iraqi families encountered with the school and in their communication. Also I wanted to identify problems encountered with the school and with their children’s literacy development to find out ways to facilitate their transition into this culture, and so their needs as new refugees could be better met in terms of their own actions as well as by their children’s teachers and school personnel.

Methodological Approach

I conducted a descriptive study with three Arabic-speaking Iraqi refugee families living in the mid-south of the United States. I focused on the language communication and experience these refugee families had when their children attended American schools. Qualitative methodologies allow for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under investigation via interviews and observations (Given, 2008; Glesne, 2011;
Merriam, 1998). Walsh et al. (1993) argued that an Interpretivist qualitative approach is the best fit for this kind of work because, through the interviews, I could focus on people’s experiences. Given (2008) agreed in her statement that: “Interpretivist approaches focus on the meanings attributed to events, places, behaviors and interactions, people, and artifacts” (p. 517). Finally, this approach suited the research because the knowledge I sought resided in the participants themselves. The qualitative design helped me focus on each family, individual, and the contexts and issues they faced as Arabic speaking individuals immersed within an American English educational and home environment.

According to Fetterman (2010) cited in Given (2008) an emic perspective is defined as “the insider’s view of reality” (p. 249). My approach was emic because I wanted to understand the people’s conception of the world around them. I was trying to understand how the Iraqi refugees communicated with school personnel and their perception of the home-school relationship. Fetterman (2010) cited in Given (2008) believed that “Adopting an emic perspective allows for ‘multiple’ realities depending on the role and/or perspective of the individual in the community” (p. 249). Hancock and Algozzine (2011) stated that in an emic approach “the goal is to understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participants’ and not the researcher’s perspective” (p. 9). The reason for adopting an emic approach was to understand the reality through the data gathered from the parents’ and the teachers’ interviews and from responses to a questionnaire. Through the emic approach, I was able to make sense of the data from my participants’ views.
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The main purpose of the study was to describe the relationship between home and school and identify any communication problems Iraqi families faced. I also wanted to find the multiple literacy forms and “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) which these families exhibited and utilized. These research questions guided my study:

1. What kinds of relationships have Iraqi refugees and their children established with U.S. teachers and school personnel?
2. What factors affect home-school communication and involvement?
3. What literacy forms and funds of knowledge do the Iraqi refugees utilize with their children at home to enhance their home language and heritage?
4. What kind of school related services are provided by the Refugees’ Agency for the Iraqi refugees, and for how long?

Methodological Design

The purpose of the study was to look at the communication process between the Arabic speaking Iraqi refugees and their children’s school, and the multiple literacy forms and the methods the family used to enhance their children’s heritage language and literacy at their schools. In this chapter, I discuss the following topics: study site and participants, data collection methods, data analysis conformability and data dependability, trustworthiness, positionality, and protecting the confidentiality of participants.

Study Site and/or Participants

My goal was to learn about ways to build strong relationships between Arabic-speaking parents and the U.S. schools their children attend. To accomplish this, I wanted
to understand the relationships that Arabic speaking Iraqi families had with the schools their children attended. I also wanted to find out about the literacy forms the families used to support their children at home and at their American school. I focused on three families, the teachers of their children, and the families’ case manager from Lutheran Family Services because this number was manageable for the research. There were, though, about 12 Arabic-speaking Iraqi refuges families at the beginning of the research process from which to choose, and my plan for my dissertation study was to involve three newly arrived Iraqi refugee families who were in residence for less than six months to a year. In choosing these families, I used a purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2002) because: (a) the individuals were critical to the issue under investigation; (b) the purpose was credibility rather than generalization; (c) the particular sample minimized any issues related to differences between individuals and setting; and (d) it was easier to establish good relations that facilitated collecting relevant data.

I had access to the three participant families, the teachers of their children, and the families’ case manager since I was the interpreter in the refugee agency that was providing services for them. I chose Arabic-speaking Iraqi families because they considered me as a researcher, as someone who wanted to help them communicate with their children’s schools and as an insider to their culture, not as an intruder or outsider who might do something against them. Through my Arab identity, however, there was a possibility that they could consider me as an outsider because of my Libyan nationality. The locale of my research was the southern part of the U.S.

**The families.** In September 2014, I met the three Iraqi families and I discussed with them the possibility of their participation in the study. In December 2014, I sent the
invitation letters in Arabic and English in which I explained the reasons behind the study and the interviews and research content. I also explained to them that their identities would not be disclosed. I chose these families because they were three of the more recent families in the area and they spoke only fluent Arabic and I was curious about the nature of the communication processes each participant had in his or her educational and home environments.

Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy had four children-one girl and three boys- they were 3, 5, 7, and 9 Years old. Mr. AL-Khalidy was in his early thirties and his wife was in her mid-twenties. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Hakeem had four children- two boys and two girls. They were 10, 12, 17, and 19 years old. Mr. AL-Hakeem was in his mid-fifties and his wife was in her early fifties. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky had two boys who were 5 and 9. All of these families were Iraqis and they all arrived in the U.S. in July 2014. They all spoke Arabic as their native language and only Mr. AL-Hakeem spoke some English.

**The teachers.** I met the three teachers who were teaching the Iraqi families’ children in my study as a part of my work as a translator for the families.

Mrs. Smith was a European-American second grade teacher. She in was in her mid-thirties. Mrs. Dimka was an African American third grade teacher who was in her mid-forties, and she was bilingual. Mrs. Green was a fourth grade European-American teacher who taught fourth-grade. She was also bilingual.

**The families’ case manager.** Establishing relationships with the resettlement agency case managers was not difficult since I worked with all of them and they already knew me. One of them was Mrs. Brown who was an employee in the refugee resettlement agency. She was also my neighbor. I met her when I worked as an
interpreter in the refugee resettlement agency. She was a bilingual Asian in her mid-thirties. Some of Mrs. Brown’s duties at the refugee resettlement agency included helping the families with social services, such as obtaining social security and medical insurance cards. She also sometimes helped the families to enroll their children at school.

Data Collection Methods

The unit of analysis used in this study was the communication between home and school, and the literacy, cultural and social practices among my participants and their children. My data collection tools were questionnaires, the parents, teachers and refugee resettlement agency case manager interviews, and the home visits and observations. These are discussed as follows.

Questionnaire

I used two questionnaires with my participants. These questionnaires were administered in February 2014. In the first questionnaire I asked parents to provide some demographic information such as age, nationality, visa status, date of arrival to U.S.A., and native language (see Appendix E). In the second questionnaire, I asked some questions about their previous home-school experience before they came to the U.S.A. and their current home-school experiences in the U.S. The first questionnaire consisted of 10 questions related to demographic data. The second questionnaire consisted of 10 questions; four of the questions were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from poor to excellent, and seven questions were open ended (see Appendix E).

Interviews

I interviewed parents, teachers and the case manager. I interviewed each participant twice; each interview focused on different issues. I recorded the interviews
and transcribed them. I transcribed the parents’ interviews in Arabic and the teacher’s and case manager’ interviews in English. The parents’ interviews were translated from Arabic to English with translations obtained for only the portions relating specifically to my research questions. The interviews were semi structured and the parents’ interviews were in both English and Arabic (see Appendix M & N).

**Interview protocol.** For the interviews I designed open response questions. For the data collection, I followed Yin’s (2014) four principles: First, to use multiple sources of evidence, to create a database, to maintain a chain of evidence, and exercise care when using data from electronic sources.

During the parents’ interviews, I conducted two interviews with each parent. I scheduled the interviews at a mutually agreed upon place and time. The first set of interview questions explored the nature of the home and school communication (see Appendix M). The second set of the questions focused on the artifacts or any kind of cultural knowledge or literacy that parents used at home or in the community (see Appendix N).

Teacher interviews were semi-structured, during the teacher interviews, I asked the teachers questions, related to their home- school experience, multiple literacy forms used at home and the funds of knowledge which Iraqi refugees have (see Appendix J & K).

**Home Visits and Observations**

I conducted four home visits so that I could observe the parents’ interaction with the children and to understand what literacy practices were taking place. I also wanted to know about any other forms of literacy and funds of knowledge that were being used at
home. I took notes and I recorded them on the observation forms during the home visits, but I did not video tape it because the participants did not agree. During these visits, I paid attention to:

- Interactions of children and parents
- Languages used and literacy practices.
- Forms of literacy practiced at home.
- Any artifacts or any special knowledge expressed by the participants.
- Any materials used within the home or from the school.

The interviews were scheduled at the beginning of the school year, January, March and late April.

**Data Analysis**

**Types of Analysis**

I listened to each interview multiple times and transcribed those sections that addressed my research questions. I then coded the interviews and identified themes in the data. I constructed themes based upon my understanding of current issues in the field and patterns I found in the data.

I followed Saldana’s (2013) two-cycle approach. The first cycle involves the initial coding of the data. In this cycle, there are seven subcategories. For this study, I used descriptive coding, In Vivo and process coding from the elemental methods; emotion and values coding from the affective methods; and attribute coding from the grammatical method.

I used descriptive coding because I agreed with Saldana (2013) who argued that “descriptive coding was the foundation of a qualitative inquiry” (p. 88). I chose attribute
coding because it is suitable for studies with multiple participants and sites and a wide variety of data (Saldana, 2013). I also followed the three steps mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006): be familiar with the data (which means do it yourself), then read it many times, and finally generate initial codes.

**Narrative analysis.** I also used narrative analysis. I analyzed the stories told by the participants to understand their form, content and function. Following Gibbs’ (2007) practical steps for narrative analysis, I analyzed the content for key ideas related to the interview themes. I looked for any problems the individuals and families faced with the school and ideas that individuals had about ways to connect schools and families.

**Thematic analysis.** Liamputtong (2009) and Gibbs (2007) recommend looking at main categories and subcategories and creating connections between them. First I read through the data to make sense of the information, then I started identifying and analyzing the data to find themes. I started searching across the data for repeated patterns. Finally, I gathered all the data related to a particular theme then I created my themes.

**Conformability and Data Dependability**

In the next section, I discuss the steps that I made to support validity and reliability. Validity and reliability are very important components of research (Yin, 2014).

**Construct validity.** To provide evidence of construct validity, I used multiple sources of evidence. I used a written questionnaire for confirmation of information gathered orally within the interviews with both parents, and I also gathered a variety of information from the home visits, including observational notes about artifacts. I asked
the key participants to review the draft. If the participants disagreed with any of the conclusions or the interpretations, these portions were revised, eliminated or reanalyzed.

**Reliability.** To insure that this study was reliable, I used a database to organize the transcripts, coding, and narratives. In Dropbox, I created folders for each participant into which I uploaded all the data I had on each person. In so doing, I increased the study’s reliability (Yin, 2014).

**Trustworthiness**

**Trustworthiness, triangulation, and member checking.** The study was designed with great care to ensure the validity and thoroughness of the data collection and analysis. First, I used multiple sources of evidence, which adds a major strength to the study. Speaking of data triangulation, Yin (2014) stated that “Using multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied on single resources of information” (p. 119). The five sources of evidence used in this study were the questionnaire, the parents’ and teachers’ interviews, documentation of information, the home visit and observations. Second, in order to make sure that the data were reliable, I used a digital voice recorder while conducting interviews for this study. I also shared the findings with both teachers and parents for member checking and they all agreed with the findings. The availability of permanently stored responses in their entirety gave me the ability to remove errors due to misunderstanding of what was said, which in turn supports the quality of the study. Quality assurance was addressed by showing the participants the initial analyzed data for member checking. I also asked them to provide me with verification and their feedback or criticism of the data. My ultimate goal was to collect data from multiple sources around the same finding.
Yin (2014) recommended convergence of the evidence since it avoids analyzing each source of evidence individually. The data triangulation process utilized throughout the convergence of evidence increased the trustworthiness and credibility of the study and avoided any biases, romanticism, essentializing or overgeneralizations (Yin, 2015).

**Positionality.**

Qualitative researchers believe that hiding our identities is impossible, but being aware that personal statements and taking care to address subjectivity and positionality gave the research credibility. As an Arabic native speaker, I believed the participants might be more open to me and the participants would not be reluctant to share their experience with home and school, especially as they needed somebody who understood their language. At the same time, I was an outsider to the Iraqi culture and that might have served as an advantage since there was a possibility that my being a non-Iraqi lowered their anxiety. In fact, their greater fear was that I might know something about their lives, and that this information might be shared with someone they knew. In terms of religion, I shared the same religious beliefs with my participants, and this enhanced our discussion about many beliefs and attitudes. All these factors facilitated the research process and had positive effects on the data collection.

There were a number of factors that made me well suited to conduct this study. First, as graduate students, I was prepared to conduct such research through reading the theoretical and research based literature, and through practical experiences that were provided. I thoroughly read the literature about family literacy, parents’ engagement, “funds of knowledge”, and “culturally relevant teaching”. Moreover, I conducted mini studies related to other ethnic groups, interviewed people, distributed surveys, and
observed teachers and students. Second, since half of my sample was drawn from the Arab speaking Iraqi community, I shared with those participants a similar culture, traditions, language and religion. Finally, I had many Iraqi friends who provided me with access to their families and communities.

**Epistemic orientation.** It was important to discuss my epistemic orientation and its relationship to my research. I hold a constructivist view and perspective (Vygotsky, 1978). I believe that social interactions play a vital role in individual development. I followed a constructivist approach in which I believed the truth resided in my participants and their construct of meaning and their stories, and these meanings had been constructed through their life experiences and cultural and historical practices. Through my research tools, my participants shared their stories and reality.

**Protecting the Confidentiality of Participants**

I followed Yin’s (2014) suggestion for the highest ethical standards and accuracy by presenting the data honestly without deception or falsifying information.

Yin (2014) suggested the following:

- Obtain informal consent from all participants.
- Protect the participants
- Protect the participants’ privacy and confidentiality
- Take special precaution
- Choose participants equitably

To insure confidentiality and high ethics, I contacted the IRB at USC for approval. I sought review by the ethics committee and obtained a certificate from the American Educational Research Association. I also explained the research to my participants and
provided them with the research questions and interview questions to see if there was any kind of risks for them. Pseudonyms were also used.

**Conclusion**

There have been very no studies conducted with Arabic-speaking Iraqi refugees about the communication process and relationship between home and school. (Feuerherm, 2013), so there is not much information about home–school relationships involving them. I conducted this study to fill this gap in the literature. I collected the data through questionnaires, home visits, and interviews with parents, teachers, and a case manager from the refugee resettlement agency. I coded the data using Saldana’s (2013) two-cycle approach. I also used narrative analysis and thematic analysis for presenting the data in the study. The results of this study have implications and recommendations for school personnel and teachers about refugee families’ and their children.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA SPECIFIC TO EACH IRAQI FAMILY

This chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative data collected to better understand the experiences of each family participating in this study. Data presented in this chapter result from families’ responses to questionnaires, and interviews, as well as my observations of the three Iraqi refugee families, the teachers who taught their children, and the Refugee Resettlement Agency Case Manager.

Initially, I gathered demographic information about eight Iraqi husbands and wives with whom I had become acquainted in the southeastern U.S. city in which I live. I did so to eliminate potential participants who were not refugees, and those who spoke English proficiently. Ultimately, the families in my study were the AL-Khalidy, AL-Maliky, and AL-Hakeem families.

Each of the husbands and wives spoke Arabic as their first language (see Table 4.1). They came to the U.S. as refugees in the summer of 2014. I eliminated one family because of their level of high English proficiency. Some of Mrs. and Mr. AL-Waleed’s family members remained in Syria, and some were in Iraq and Jordan. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Waleed were residing in Jordan before their move to the U.S.

What I Learned From Parents and Teachers

AL-Khalidy, AL-Maliky, and AL-Hakeem families each had children enrolled in public elementary, middle and/or high school. All interviews were conducted in Arabic
and all but two of the interviews were conducted at the families’ apartments. The other two interviews were conducted outside their apartments - one at my apartment and another at a coffee shop. During the interviews, and at other times that were designated for home visits, I had the chance to see how the parents and the children interacted with one another, the way the parents and children used language and literacy practices, what forms of literacy were practiced at home, what artifacts or any special knowledge that was held by the parents and their children, and what materials were used within the home or from the school to support their children’s learning.

When I was interpreting for the parents, I talked to the teachers about the study and they agreed to participate in the study. After I had obtained an approval from the district, I sent them invitation letters and a description of the study. The interviews took place at their classrooms and the public library.

Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy’s Family

Mr. AL-Khalidy was in his mid-thirties and Mrs. AL-Khalidy was in her late twenties. They both had a sixth-grade education. Their four children were 10, 7, 5, and 4 years of age. Mr. and Mrs. AL-Khalidy lived in Iraq before they moved to the U.S. Mrs. AL-Khalidy believed that Iraq had deteriorated since the Gulf War in 1991 (see Table 4.1). The government had collapsed, and the country was in a state of anarchy. Since the toppling of Sadam Hussein’s government, corruption and insecurity had taken over. Moreover, they believed that people were deprived of their civil rights. They explained that having the right to pursue education and send the children to schools had become a dream for all civilians including Mr. and Mrs. AL-Khalidy. The lives of everyone – children, women and men - were threatened by aerial bombs and suicide bombers. The
also described that people were afraid of being abducted for ransom. Schools became insalubrious environments. The infrastructure was destroyed and the services were inadequate. There was a lack of clean water, healthy food services, and health care. Classes were not prepared adequately for learning. A large number of students were cramped in one poorly furnished classroom: one class could have as many as 80 students sitting on the floor with their books strung out around them. This life which they described as being filled with misery and tragedy impelled Mr. and Mrs. AL-Khadidy’s family to leave their country.

Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy applied for refugee status, and they left Iraq to go to Jorden and then to the United States. They arrived in the United States in July 2014 (see Table 4.1). I met Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy through the refugee resettlement agency where my duties were to translate for them. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy spoke Arabic proficiently. They spoke little English, the language of their host country had little or no information about American culture. Although the refugee service pledged to provide them with assistance, the services pertaining to school support was assigned for a limited period only, and only involved helping the families get their children enrolled in school.

I visited Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy at their apartment 6 times. They interacted with their children in Arabic, and the children used Arabic to interact with each other. Mr. and Mrs. AL-Khalidy did not have American television channels because they said they wanted their children to keep their home language and heritage.

**Teaching cultural values.** Mrs. AL-Khalidy wanted to raise her children the way she was raised. Her parents, for example, taught her to be hospitable to others, kind and helpful. She wanted her children to show respect and good manners with everyone, and
love all people regardless of their nationality. She added, “We make them love their religion, and the Arabic heritage and culture in which we were raised.” She wanted them to be good Muslims.

Mrs. AL-Khalidy also believed that it was important to encourage her children and for them to learn patience. Two of the children were enrolled in school, a daughter in first grade and a son in second grade. She noted that her children did not like school at first, but she started encouraging them to be patient about their learning process, and she explained to them that they were learning a new language, and that was normal. She also used praise with her children and encouraged them to study hard. She said, “If there is something difficult at school, I say this requires patience to encourage them and make them love education.”

Supporting children’s school work. To help her children with English and their American schoolwork, Mrs. AL-Khalidy also read with them. They read English numbers and colors, and she helped them pronounce some letters. Mrs. AL-Khalidy also used some cartoons from the Internet and sometimes she used schoolbooks. She usually asked her daughter, Fatima about how the teachers taught the children at school. She then tried to follow those ways to teach her children. Mrs. AL-Khalidy also said she asked her children about what they did at school, and she did it again with them: “I say to them ‘Remember the explanation of the teacher’… I ask them what you do at school. I encourage them. The thing you do at school, we do it at home like paints, Arts.” Mr. AL-Khadidy added, “We learn from the Internet.” They had not yet accessed the public library (see Table 4.7).
Mrs. AL-Khalidy was particularly concerned about helping her children learn stories, which were written in English. To help her children with this, Mrs. AL-Khalidy told the story in Arabic by using the pictures in the book so that her children would remember it:

I tell them come here to read the story from the book. Some stories can be told through images, so we tell the stories with pictures, and so we understand its script.

During the home visits, I did not have the chance to see the children reading or writing; however, other forms of literacy were apparent, such as conversations, use of laptops and the internet, and the children playing and role playing. I asked the parents about any materials they had in English or Arabic. They explained that they did not have any English materials even though their home was filled with English (internet, labels on food and other products). They did not seem to see these environmental examples of English language and literacy as instructional, being accustomed to teaching solely from textbooks. But they had Arabic textbooks, such as Math, and Arabic language texts, which they brought from Iraq, and they used the books to teach their children Arabic.

Mr. AL-Khalidy shared with me that he and his wife also taught the children about their religion, Islam. I also saw some pictures that reflected their rich heritage and culture.

**School concerns.** Relative to their children’s education, the parents were concerned when the school did not follow through as needed regarding issues of bullying (described later in this document), the lack of classes for English language learners, and the challenges posed by language differences. Mr. AL-Khalidy reported that his son suffered from a disease that affected his development and the school
neglected this issue despite the fact that a doctor’s report was provided to the school. The parents also reported that the children were bullied. Mrs. AL-Khalidy noted the children resisted going to school because other children at school had beaten them but parents did not know why. She hoped that in the future other refugees would not experience such actions. Mr. AL-Khalidy had gone to the school and complained to the teacher about the child who had been bullying the children. As he explained:

I went to school more than once that means there were some problems between students and my children. The teacher apologized for that. An example for some problems would be that the children hit my children. This means you know my children are aliens…they are coming to schools that they know nobody there.

That means the language is not their society language.

The teacher talked with the child, who had done the bullying, but later on the child repeated the bullying. Consequently, the principal talked with that child.

Both parents also were concerned about the lack of classes for English language learners. On the second questionnaire, Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy both rated support for English language development as poor (see Table 4.3). Both parents were not only aware of what services their children received, but they also were aware of what other schools offered. Mrs. AL-Khalidy noted that her children did not receive English as a Second Language (ESL) classes like children in other schools. She believed that it was vital that teachers focused on developing the newly arrived refugees’ English language abilities. Mr. AL-Khalidy also wanted ESL classes for their children. He believed that newly arrived children with limited English needed ESL classes to support them. He hoped that
the school designated some courses in English for English language learners (ELL). Mrs. AL-Khalidy explained about both the bullying and the lack of ELL classes:

We hope that the school devotes particular lessons to teach the English language because expatriate children feel that there is difficulty with the language, and this is what happens with my children, but some schools allocate particular lessons to teach the language. Do not make them feel alienated because our children felt alienated and ill-treatment by the American students. Because they hit my children and especially in the first five months of the school year. Moreover, they repeated these actions many times and every time their father goes to the school to meet the female teacher or the principal. However, the female teacher does not accept this act and brings the student to apologize, but he repeats his behaviors and hits my children and especially my daughter, but the director had warned him and told him that if you beat them, I will move you to another school, but these behaviors affected my eldest son and with regret my son hates American children, and his actions became aggressive. He does not like the school we hope that does not repeat in the future with the refugees.

In addition to being concerned about follow through, bullying, and the lack of ELL classes, both Mr. and Mrs. AL-Khalidy were concerned about the problems that came about because the teachers did not understand what the children needed. The problems were related to language. As Mr. AL-Khalidy explained “language is the major problem. If there were a teacher who speaks English and Arabic, that would help them (his children) from the beginning.” Another time, he commented:
Language hinders me. I mean, if I have the English language, then I would be able to deal with the school. I would check on my children, attend my children’s meetings.

Mr. AL-Khalidy, he and his wife were also concerned about other culturally and religiously sacred traditions. For example, they were afraid that their children might eat pork at school without realizing it because they could not ask if it was pork or not. He said:

We were afraid for them, for example, these are important things [about not eating non-Halal meat or the meat of pork] and … we have informed the school about this thing.

The parents were also concerned about their children’s inability to ask for basic needs such as going to the toilet or going to the nurse in case of illness. He said:

The simplest things are the boys say “Dad, we want to go to the toilet facilities, the simplest or basic things are those.” This means they (the teachers) do not know what the child is saying to go to the rest room or about issues related to eating certain foods, or he feels that he is sick or confused.

My kids did not know the language the problem was the difficulty of the language which means he did not know how to talk to the teacher. We did not know how to convey the idea for the teacher. All those were problems which are the language.

Mrs. AL-Khalidy stated that they missed some of the school events because they did not understand the details about the particular event as she said, “We do not know English
and they (she meant the school) sent us a letter we do not understand, and we do not
know what they want.”

**Interactions with and impressions about the school and teachers.** On the
questionnaire, both parents rated all school services except ELL as below average. In the
interviews, however, despite the problems with follow-through, bullying, lack of support
for English, and limited communication because of language differences, Mr. AL-
Khalidy and his wife had very positive attitudes about his children’s school and teachers.
They reported that they had occasionally visited the school. Mrs. AL-Khalidy had
attended a festival and during that festival she asked the teacher about her two children’s
progress. Mr. AL-Khalidy had visited the school for different purposes four different
times. He visited the school to check on his children’s books, to check on available ESL
classes, and to complain about the incident of bullying his children. Mr. AL-Khalidy
provided an example:

> We went, for example, the time in which we had a date with the doctors for the
> children, so I went and took the children from school until I finished the
> treatment, and I returned them to school.

Mr. AL-Khalidy said he had a very good impression about his children’s school.
Although he had been to the school only a few times, during these visits he found the
teachers and school staff very welcoming. He also believed that his daughter’s teacher
was very kind, very polite, and helpful with him and his daughter:

> I see that teachers and the school staff become happy when they see us, and I have
> a feeling that she was happy and smiling. The teacher was very polite, happy and
> smiling I mean she likes to help children.
He further said the teacher was very polite in the way she dealt with us-- she was wonderful. Mr. AL-Khalidy described how the teachers dealt with him with consideration, and consequently he had a very good impression that was a result of the teacher’s tenderness, and style, and way of communicating with him.

When both parents were asked to describe the home–school experience with their children’s school in the U.S. they both indicated that there was no relationship because neither of them spoke English and the teachers did not speak Arabic, nor where translators provided. Mr. AL-Khalidy noted that the school kept sending him letters, field trips forms, newsletters, and homework in English. These were hard for him to read and to understand. Other than the few visits the parents made to the school, Mr. Khalidy explained, “I have no relation with them (school personnel and teachers).” And they reported that no one from the school had visited them, either.

Mr. AL-Khalidy believed that home-school relationships could be improved. First, he believed that the school should have a bilingual teacher who could speak both languages, English and Arabic, so that they could assist the newly arrived refugees at school. This teacher could provide interpreting assistance. Second, he believed that the school needed to conduct home visits with an interpreter, and provide an interpreter at school:

I mean they were supposed to make a gathering (have a meeting) for us, the Arabs who are coming here as refugees, but we do not know the language. They make it inside the school or visit us at home. They should bring us an interpreter, and see what our conditions are, and to see the life that the child lives at home so that they feel how the child feels.
Third, Mr. AL-Khalidy believed that teachers should reach out to these families, and provide tutoring or extra support. He said:

I mean they are supposed to strengthen them I mean there are teachers who reach out to homes or inform us about the holidays or teach the children in private lessons; I mean, we wish the school to help more than parents. What the school is doing is correct, but we want more assistance to develop our children. I mean the first few months are hard for us.

Finally, Mr. AL-Khalidy said that the school should create events for the children, and call it the ‘Arab child.’ He believed such events would help the children who speak only Arabic.

Mrs. Smith, the Teacher of the AL-Khalidy’s Daughter, Fatima

Mrs. Smith was a European-American teacher who was in her mid-thirties. She taught second-grade students. Mrs. Smith was asked to be one of the informants in the study, and she agreed to participate in the two interviews. The AL-Khalidy’s daughter, Fatima, was a student in her classroom.

No initiative taken to seek information or seek solutions. Speaking of her knowledge of her student, Fatima, Mrs. Smith noted that her relationship with Fatima had started very suddenly and she was not given very much information about the student or the family. She said that she did not have a chance to meet the parents and learn about Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy. Mrs. Smith also stated that it was not one of her duties to do any home visits:

I’m not sure on that, I know the teachers do not do home visits. Like I said we were kind of thrown into it. We were not given much information; we were just
told you are to have a new student coming from here, and so we did not know very much… I had Fatima, she was a very sweet student, she came in very nervous but after a while she warmed up to me. The parents did not come in initially, so it was just kind of… we were both thrown in it together and trying to figure each other out, and the dad would come in and talk ah, with concerns, only when there was an issue.

Mrs. Smith did not know what to do when Mr. AL-Khalidy came to school with some concerns because they did not speak the same language. She wanted to talk to him but could not. Mrs. Smith believed that using a student as a translator helped a little bit. She also felt that parents missed the parent – teacher conferences because they did not know about them from the messages sent home.

He may have been nervous about coming in, and like I said, we were just kind of thrown in it together and trying to figure it out ourselves, but that’s – I did not have a negative experience. I tried to have as much patience, and to try to understand them, and I think we used one of the older students to translate a little bit, one that understood more of the language. I know a lot of times we had parent conferences, and I do not know if they just did not understand what – and I’m sure it was they just did not understand what I was sending home.

Speaking of how hard it was without a translator at school, Mrs. Smith said:

It was very hard because there was no translator there, so it was us trying to figure out what was wrong, what he was attempting to tell us., and it had – we were in the nurse’s office, so it was, the nurse and I and… I want to say Sara, which is another 4th grade student, so she could translate a little, but the father seemed
very agitated like he’s, like this has been going on for a month, I do not know what to do, and I felt like he was just trying to get some help, and so we just listened and tried to explain to him – I think the nurse gave him some papers to take home to be filled out or something, but I explained to him that I was not seeing anything in the classroom as far as her getting sick anymore, but I guess that helped because he did not come back in saying any more concerns about that.

Mrs. Smith stated that she did not have any email for Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy nor did she reach out on her own to obtain email addresses from them or to visit them at their home. She communicated with parents through the nurse because she was the one who had their phone number:

I did not have any email for them. I want to say that the nurse had the phone number, so she usually does try and phone the parents, too. I believe it was through the nurse like I said anytime they go in the nurse’s station, she sends a letter home to the parents letting them know.

**Solutions for the future.** When I asked Mrs. Smith about what she wished she had done differently, she said she wish she had a translator:

If, like I said, we were kind of thrown into this and felt our own way, um, that I - if I could have found a better translator, I think I would’ve gone that route…Right. Um, looking back on it, I wish I could’ve found a better way to comfort the parent like I could do with Fatima, and I became you know close, but I wish I could’ve gotten on that level with the parents. A lot of times I just felt like dad would come in when there was a problem, and I do not– I like to work
with my parents, so if there was a way, I wish I would’ve looked a little harder to find a way to better communicate with them or better comfort them.

Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky

After the harsh ordeal that Mr. AL-Maliky’s country, Iraq, went through as a result of the Gulf War in 2005, Mr. AL-Maliky said his country was destroyed, and life became unbearable. Militias and gangs were active, and they took lives of many innocent individuals. He explained that people were killed because of their religious identity and religious practices. People became terrified of leaving their homes – afraid being hunted or killed by a bomb blast. In 2007, Mr. Al-Maliky decided he and his family should leave the country. They moved to Syria where he worked in a store to support his family. Their son was born in Syria in 2009. In 2013, his son started school as a kindergartener and the following year he was in first grade. Then the revolution in Syria began, the situation there deteriorated and Mr. AL-Maliky decided the family should go to Turkey as he thought it would be safer. His son was not able to pursue his education because Arabic schools were not available in the city where they were living. They lived in Turkey for a year. The year was full of obstacles and difficulties because they spoke Arabic, not Turkish and the Turkish people where they lived rarely spoke Arabic. Mr. AL-Maliky decided the family should come to the United States and they applied for refugee status to the U.S.A. In July 2014, the family arrived in the United States. His son started school and was enrolled in third grade because he was 9. He completed third grade and moved to fourth grade.

I met Mrs. And Mr. AL-Maliky when they arrived in the United States because I was translating for the refugee resettlement case manager. Mrs. AL-Maliky was in her
early thirties, and she had completed elementary school. Mr. AL-Maliky was in his early forties, and he had a technical diploma as an electrician (see Table 4.1). He was a full-time employee, and his wife was home full time with the children. Their nine-year-old son was the only child old enough to be in school. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky, their two children, AL-Maliky’s mother, who came from Syria with them, resided with them in a two-bedroom apartment. Everyone in the family spoke Arabic proficiently. Therefore, I conducted the interviews in Arabic and most of them I conducted in their apartment. This gave me a chance to see how the family interacted with one another. During the times I was there, they talked to each other in Arabic. As with the previous family, they did not have cable TV because they wanted their children to learn Arabic. Some of the literacy practices that I observed were related to their culture and were religious in nature, such as praying or listening to the Quran. The children sometimes used the laptop, iPad, and their father’s phone for other literacy practices and games. Once, their nine-year-old son showed me a small book in English, and he told me his teacher gave it to him, and he asked me about the word non-fiction. He seemed very interested in learning English. His parents reported that he spent 45 – 60 minutes a day reading (see Table 4.8).

**Support provided at home.** Mrs. AL-Maliky explained that she usually supported her son by helping him with English homework, and school assignments. She used things like fruit from around the house to teach both children English vocabulary. Mrs. AL-Maliky sometimes talked to her son in Arabic and encouraged him to watch English cartoons. She believed that her role was to support her son, and to “help him with his homework and math,” “urge him to study consistently,” and to provide a good atmosphere for academic success and academic excellence. Mr. AL-Maliky explained
some words to his son in English and asked his son to use them in reading and writing. He also encouraged his son to watch English cartoons and taught him English words using items in the home. He said he used apples, bananas, grapes, chicken, and fish to teach him English words and also taught his son the English words for days of the week, and months of the year.

**Views of children’s language progress.** Mrs. AL-Maliky stated that when her son came to the United States, he did not speak any English. However, after six months, he showed progress, and she was content with that progress. She believed that she and her husband were supportive of their children’s education. Mrs. AL-Maliky stated that they helped their son by encouraging him in his early days of school, and later they supported him in English and math to help him succeed at school. Mr. AL-Maliky commented about their son:

As he attended school, and participated, his level has improved, and he has started speaking English language words and understands others. He understands what others say. I myself as his father, I think it has improved 80% over what it was before arrival in America. He can complete his homework, and he has learned a lot of words and vocabulary in a very good way, and we help him in completing his homework, and follow up with him daily, and have the right atmosphere for study and ongoing monitoring. We are very happy with his progress and success in the school. We do our best and what we can to excel and advance him in school and achieve good future Inshallah.

**Impressions about communication with school and teachers.** Mrs. AL-Maliky believed that the school and staff members were excellent; however, there was no
communication between home and school because they and the teachers did not speak the same language. She believed that if the school appointed an interpreter at least on a phone line, she would communicate much more with the school. Mrs. AL-Maliky also thought that the newly arrived children with little English needed an interpreter especially when an incident occurred at school. Mr. AL-Maliky also believed communication did not exist between home and school because of the language barrier. He said, “In the Arab countries, we communicated with the school through the common language.” He further said, “Here if I want to call the school, they do not understand me, and there was no one in the school that spoke the Arabic language.”

Mr. AL-Maliky said the school should think of this problem, and find a solution. He also offered a suggestion for the school:

We are suffering from this thing; they call me to inform me about my son, I apologized, and I tell them I do not know English. They do not understand what I want, and they do not understand me. This is the first problem.

Mr. AL-Maliky hoped the school would make an interpreter available for him on a telephone line, and make one available at school when those newly arrived children face an emergency at school:

Assign an interpreter inside the school for the Arab students who do not know the language to know their homework at home with a simple explanation. It is necessary to put an interpreter in the school in order if a bad incident occurs, or students are sick or any problem, they know they can talk to the interpreter to convey the picture to the school administration, and this is very necessary.
Mr. AL-Maliky mentioned another problem that he faced concerning his son’s homework:

The second problem: my son is new to the learning of the English language. His teacher asks him to complete homework so he does not understand what she wants, and no one speaks my son’s language, Arabic, and he does not do much of his homework because of a lack of understanding of homework.

Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky reported that the only time they went to school was when the school asked both parents to attend parents’ conferences. However, both Mr. and Mr. AL-Maliky rated their child’s school teacher as very good. Mr. AL-Maliky rated their child’s school and the child’s English language development as good while Mrs. AL-Maliky rated it as very good (see Table 4.9).

**Differences in school experiences.** Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky explained though that there were considerable differences between their relationship with the school in the US and in Syria. When they were in Syria, Mrs. AL-Maliky helped her son at home with his school subjects, and she followed up at school. She stated that because the school was an Arab school she was able to communicate weekly with the school. It was easy to help her son with his school subjects because she and the teachers spoke Arabic. Here in the U.S., helping their son was more difficult. Mr. AL-Maliky reported that, in Syria, he and his wife communicated with the school weekly because the school staff spoke their native language. He also stated that the closeness of the school made possible to go and check on their son:

The Experience was in Damascus, Syria. My son entered the first grade in a private elementary school, and the reason was to learn the Arabic language and
numbers and life. He was very good in perseverance, and always had good
grades, and he succeeded from the first grade to the second grade. The Father and
mother’s role was good in weekly follow-up and communication with the school.
My visit was to the school to know his school level. My son's school results were
positive regarding absorption and activity and participation. My son enjoyed
participation with the school and the students in the class, and the daily activities
in school, and completed homework in a good way with my help and his mother’s
help. The communication between home and school was because of the nearness
of school to the house and the ease of Arabic language that we speak.

When both parents were asked about whether anyone from the school visited them at
their home, both parents indicated that school workers did visit them from the school.

**Concerns About Schools in the U.S.**

Mrs. AL-Maliky had preconceived notions about schools in the United States.
Her visits to the school played a vital role in changing some biases that she held about
school. Mrs. AL-Maliky stated that before going to the school, she and her husband had
heard about immoral issues that happened at school, and these issues made her anxious
and worried about her son. During her first visit, she had the chance to look at the
school. She came a second time to check on her son’s progress, and she used a friend for
interpreting. Mrs. AL-Maliky reported after these visits, her fears disappeared; she was
very happy about the way the teachers and staff treated her. She stated that when she left
she had been reassured. Speaking of that experience, Mrs. AL-Maliky said:

I was afraid about my son for many things, first the community here is different
from the Arab community, and I was afraid of that, my son does not speak the
language, but when I went and saw how the teachers helped my son, so as not to be afraid and the teachers told me that my son will gradually learn, and I was also relieved a lot when I saw the teachers, director and students, they were sweet and I was reassured.

Mrs. AL-Maliky said the availability of the interpreter made her comfortable. She wished that the school had an interpreter: “I mean if there were a translation line, things would be solved” and, “If there were a translator, daily I would go, and ask about my son.” She also mentioned she was very happy about the way that the teachers dealt with her. Moreover, the progress that her son had made so far was a comfort to her as well. Finally, she mentioned that when she met the teachers, and talked with them, she felt very comfortable. She was pleased that her son’s teacher supported her son’s home language by allowing him to translate the English words into Arabic in his notebook:

Yes, my son does not know the language dealing with English, and I heard about immoral things in school, but when I went to school I did not see anything immoral; I entered the bathrooms, and I was assured, and I became more assured when I saw the police at the school watching everything.

Mr. AL-Maliky laughed when he told a story about his first interaction with the school:

The beginning was a story! One day, I was registering my son for the first day at school. I’ve got an organization (speaking of the refugee agency), which is responsible for me and my case, and they registered my son at school, and they forgot to register him in the school bus, and the school contacted me, and they said, please come to take your son to the house.
Mr. AL-Maliky believed that the teachers at the school handled the situation very well, and his son did not panic or feel abandoned. He also stated that during this visit he met the math, and the ESL teacher whom he believed were eager to develop his son’s scientific and artistic abilities.

Mr. AL-Maliky subsequently received a letter to attend a parent–teacher conference. During this visit, the parents were taken for a tour around the school and the teachers showed them the cafeteria, the restrooms area, theater, and the playground. Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky attended “because we were eager about our son’s educational progress.”

Mr. AL-Maliky explained that the school originally left messages for them in English on their answering machine and he found a way to improve that communication:

They contact us by phone, and we told them we did not know English, and then they left a voice mail message by phone or a text message. I then change the message from the English language to the Arabic language and understand what is required of me. Today, for example, the school day ends at 12:00. Today the weather is cold, and there is snow, and there is a delay in the schedule, and the bus comes at 9:00. And the examples are many.

Mr. AL-Maliky said the school was very professional and educational. He not only had a good impression about the school, but he had a very good impression of, and experiences with, his child’s teacher. He believed that the teacher motivated his son, and his son made very good progress. He was impressed by the teacher when he went to the school for the first time:
The teacher was very friendly and compassionate, and her dealing with the students was very good, and she made my son love the school and the teachers, even in times on public holidays, Saturdays and Sunday, he missed the school, and he says, ‘Father, I miss school and the teachers.’

Mr. AL-Maliky considered his experiences with the school to be pleasant, believed that the transportation service was very good and considered the school location very convenient since it was very close to his residence. He also thought the teachers and school facilities were very good. Mr. AL-Maliky explained:

The relationship was good when my son traveled (a part of a field trip) at the school or the results of exams to be signed by his guardian. They take the father’s and mother’s opinion first. From the educational side, they take the Father’s opinion and my consent first, and foremost on this subject. Moreover, I help him and encourage him because the school is a professional school and good and there is not any shortage. This is what makes me happy because my son he will get to the stage of science and progress, and this was what I observed during seven months.

**School support for home knowledge.** Mr. AL-Maliky was grateful to the teachers and school because they had supported his son with art and math, the two areas in which he considered his son to be talented. Furthermore, he believed that the teacher had supported his son’s home language and allowed him to use Arabic for writing his essays. He stated that “I trust the school, and I know they are doing their job very well.”

He continued saying:
I told you it was a professional, educational and modern school. I mean they discovered that he likes drawing and mathematics. I thank the teachers and their help because when he draws they encouraged him and gave him paint and paint pens and accessories for drawing.

**Support provided at home.** Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky helped their children at home with English, math and Arabic. Mr. AL-Maliky commented that teaching and supporting the child at home with school and home language was the mother’s responsibility. Because the father was busy at work, this made the mother more accountable for her child’s education. Mr. AL-Maliky explained that his wife was the one who supported his son with his school subjects and home language and heritage, and also his mother played a vital role with home language, culture, and heritage. Mrs. AL-Maliky commented that she thought it was very important for her son to be able to read in both Arabic and English. She said she advised him to read magazines, and newspapers to develop his knowledge:

> I always teach him reading, and I teach him to write, spelling, and I text him and teach him to write the words in Arabic, and then read them. God willing I will teach him to write verses from the Koran, and write so that he does not forget Arabic…I always teach him reading and spelling, and always teach him to read books, newspapers, I mean reading.

Mr. AL-Maliky used a book that he obtained from the refugee agency to teach his son some English vocabulary and encouraged him to memorize words. He encouraged his son to watch wrestling, cartoons, and children’s programs to strengthen his English. He also helped his son in math and with his homework.
**Maintaining home culture and language.** Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky supported their son’s home language and culture by speaking Arabic at home and by teaching their son the Arabs’ traditions and culture. Consistent with what I learned from the home visits, in the interviews, Mrs. AL-Maliky noted that she spoke Arabic to her son and she used TV programs and channels to teach him about Arab culture and traditions. For instance, she mentioned that she used the Arabic channels and stories from the Quran to enhance his learning with regard to his heritage language and culture. Also, she taught him about Arab discoveries, inventions, medicine, mathematics, and sciences. Using all this has helped her son develop his Arabic language and maintain his culture. Finally, she used religious rituals and reading the Quran before he went to bed to enhance his language and culture.

Mr. AL-Maliky also noted that he and his wife exposed their son to some Arabic channels on TV. His son watched TV programs such as comedies, cartoons, and other programs to preserve his heritage and home language. They taught him reading and writing through religious books, and his son used the Internet and his iPad as well. Mr. and Mrs. AL-Maliky also provided explicit explanations about religious rituals. For instance, watching family rituals during Ramadan, and attending religious festivals, and traditions helped their son to preserve his heritage language and culture. Mr. AL-Maliky also educated his son about moral and behavior issues. He said he wanted to emphasize good qualities in his son. He encouraged his son to accept the new school system in the U.S.
Mrs. AL-Maliky hoped though that the school would include information about the Arab culture: “I wish if they teach the Arabs children customs and traditions of the Arabs.” She elaborated:

We teach them at home and teachers teach students in school, and he has a love for his country and its customs and traditions. On the contrary, everything is useful if they teach them, and the Arab students benefit, and do not feel alienated. I mean they in school do not teach them such as what we teach them from our own culture and traditions. If they teach them at school, the children will benefit from the experience.

Mr. AL-Maliky hoped that the school could designate some time for his child to pray at school because the prayer is part of his culture:

First thing is the language this thing is important, and the second thing we are Islam (he meant Muslims). I hope that the school administration would allocate a small amount time during the day or immediately after school, so our children could pray. They must put a quarter of an hour for visible religious rituals. This is my request.

When I asked the parents about any special experiences or additional information they wanted to share, Mr. AL-Maliky noted that the school experience in the U.S. was a very hard experience for his son at the beginning. However, he and his wife encouraged their son to go to school and encouraged his efforts. Mr. AL-Maliky wanted his son to complete his education and get a good job. He said his son was talented in basketball, Arabic Calligraphy, and Art. He believed that his son inherited that from him because Mr. AL-Maliky also had skills with art and math.
Mrs. Dimka, the Teacher of the AL-Maliky’s Son, Ali

Mrs. Dimka was an African American female teacher who was in her mid-forties. She was a third-grade teacher in the elementary school where the Iraqi family’s son attended. She was interviewed about her home-school experience with the family and several themes emerged.

**Welcoming home culture and language.** When Mrs. Dimka was asked during the interviews to describe her relationship with the family of the Iraqi child in her class, she reported that she supported her refugee student’s language and culture in some ways. First, she allowed him to use his home language in class. For example, when he first came it was hard for him to write an essay in English. This did not stop Mrs. Dimka from giving him a chance to develop his writing through the use of his home language. She asked him to express his ideas in Arabic and then they would translate them into English. She believed that by allowing him to use his home language, he would feel welcomed, engaged and develop self-confidence. Additionally, using his own language would assist him in learning and developing his English writing. Finally, she stated that her goal was to enhance her student’s achievement without causing any kind of loss of his native language or culture. In Mrs. Dimka’s words:

- Because even though the main focus and the main goal was for him to learn English, I still allowed him to use his native language, you know, to help him to have that confidence, you know? ‘Cause to me they do not need to lose it.

**Taking initiative to get to know families.** When Mrs. Dimka was asked about how the relationship started, or not, Mrs. Dimka was eager to understand and learn about her students’ culture. She started learning about whether her students’ parents shook
hands, and gave hugs, for example. She also stated that she wanted them to feel comfortable, and she did not want to offend them in any way. She said.

So I have to figure out, okay, is this family where we’re able to do certain things with them, and from that you build that relationship. You know because sometimes with some cultures when you stretch your hand out and the person says you know we think, oh, he's rude, but then you have to stop and think, well in his culture, in his country did they shake hands, can they touch, you know, so those are the small things I try to figure out first.

Mrs. Dimka was asked about what happened that made her feel comfortable, and for the refugee children to overcome their shyness and to become acclimated. Mrs. Dimka believed that the Iraqi student felt part of her class, and he did not feel like a stranger. She felt that his parents were very happy with his development and progress. She stated that one time his parents said that their son liked her very much.

Ali (the Iraq boy), because Ali is smiling, and he just was – he had eager – he wanted to learn. And once he demonstrated that, it was just my job to say, okay, let’s go. And then when I had another conference with the parents, they just – every time they came for something else, they wanted to see me, and they were just giving me praise and you know saying that Ali just loves you and so that just motivated me to keep going.

Belief that parents were supportive. Mrs. Dimka believed the refugee parents and their children were eager, caring, and had high expectations. Mrs. Dimka said she really felt that both her refugee students and their parents cared about education. She felt
that Ali’s parents were supporting him, and they had high expectations for their child. She believed they wanted him to succeed at school, and preserve his home language.

When Mrs. Dimka was asked about the ways the family supported or did not support, the child’s success in U.S. schools, maintaining, and building upon their heritage and home language, she provided many examples that showed how Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky supported their child. For instance, she mentioned the fact that the child always came to school, and his parents also came to the school and visited the school during events. She indicated that the father acted as a role model and learned English to support his son as a way to help him succeed in American schools. The following interview excerpt captures this:

   "Even though the language barrier was there, when they – one way that was successful was them coming in and just showing that presence, you know, it was hard for me to call on the phone to explain what was going on, but when they made their presence known in the classroom, that showed, okay, I want my child to learn. I care. I want you to do what is best for my child. When we had events in the school, they showed up, so that was also key for me to say okay, they’re ready and just by speaking in their best possible English, teach my child, you know, teach my child English, that was just saying you know they want their child to succeed in America, you know, so that was key."

Beliefs and concerns about communication. Asking Mrs. Dimka when she first established contact with the family, the teacher believed that she needed an interpreter to be available whenever needed to enhance communication between teachers and parents. She believed that only speaking Arabic made it difficult for parents to communicate with
the teacher at first. As a result, when Ali first started school, he did not do his homework. The teacher also believed that because she did not speak her student’s home language that it was a barrier for her, too. She believed that establishing a relationship with parents who speak only Arabic was hard for her and for them too, and that affects the relationship between home and school. Mrs. Dimka also made some recommendations that she believed would improve the home–school relation with the Iraq refugees. First, she stated that it was vital that the school provide an interpreter in cases of emergency when the teacher needed to contact one of the parents because that puts a huge pressure on her as a teacher. Second, she believed if the parents spoke English, they would support their child both at home and at school.

One of the reasons why I was nervous is because when you have a family come in, speaking no English at all, and you do not speak their language, you wonder, okay, how I am going to get through to these parents. What do I need to do? Am I offending this parent? So I was very nervous but I think both parties understand and make it easy because the one common factor we have was Ali.

**Taking the initiative to communicate.** When Mrs. Dimka was asked about her experience with the Iraqi family in and outside of school, the teacher believed that she used some effective ways to communicate with Ali’s parents, Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky. For instance, Mrs. Dimka used technological devices such as her smart phone and Google for translating the conversations, which took place before the child was able to speak English. After that she said she believed that working closely with the child and developing his English was a must, and that would help her a lot for better communication. As Ali learned English, she used him for communication between her
and the home. She said she sent messages home through the agenda to the parents, and she believed this was very effective as the child translated it to his parents. She mentioned that she also used computers and telephone calls to communicate. However, she said using phone calls was not effective. She also used some interpreters who spoke both English and Arabic. Those interpreters came with the family, or she asked a teacher in her school that knew someone, but she said it was hard sometimes to find an interpreter. Finally, Mrs. Dimka stated that she believed the availability of an interpreter would be a “big plus” and she believed that having a translator assists and supports teachers.

I used my phone and the computer, and they were able to have somebody like yourself to come in and translate for them.

In another quote she said:

Yes, it was through letters, like agendas and things like that, written letters.

Umm, it was not much phone conversation, because one of the reasons why I chose letters and agendas or messages is because Ali knew how to translate.

**Awareness of the student’s background and story.** I asked Mrs. Dimka questions related to Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky, such as their story before coming to the U.S., the reason they came here, what they did before coming here, and how she learned these stories or background information. Mrs. Dimka indicated that the family did not share that information with her as a result of their inability to speak English nor did she seek an interpreter to try to learn those stories. The language barrier prevented them from sharing such information. However, her prior experience with an Iraqi child the year before suggested that it might be possible that they were from Iraq, and that the Iraqi
student in this particular family may have had interrupted schooling before coming here to the U.S. The information she did receive came from the front office rather than from the family, plus some information from the international center as part of a report:

Well the family did not give me much information on why they came, you know, that’s probably, I do not know if it is likely due to the barrier of – you know they could not explain themselves, you know so this particular family did not give me that information. But I had another family the previous year – she came because of hardship and she, I guess issues with whatever was going on over there, so she and her twins were able to come here.

She also explained:

I think mainly because of the language barrier. I think you know they could not explain themselves as they would have liked to, you know to give a story, you know, but I did know one thing--I think the child did not go to school prior to coming to America. We get it from – I got it from the front office and like when they come to America they have to do that check about if they went to school and took the test and things like that in the international center, so that’s where we got that particular information from.

**Drawing on the student’s strengths and background knowledge.** While Ali was learning English, Mrs. Dimka discussed how he was able to become part of the class and still have a sense of belonging to this class. She felt that some of his previous experiences were a support, as he knew about computers and phones, for example. Thus she felt Ali acclimated easily to the classroom, and the other students in her class because he knew how to relate to, and cooperate with the other students, and how to use his
previous experiences to interact with the other children. He used what he knew about the world, and conveyed messages in writing, even in Arabic, and drawing. So, he used a variety of methods to express himself and convey messages.

Well this particular child, even though he did not speak any English, his knowledge of understanding children, understanding how to cooperate with each other, you know that sense of belonging and that sense of family, that was very important – he did come with that. You know so he was able to blend in with the class. It was not like an isolation kind of thing where he came in and he did not want to interact or anything like that. He had enough knowledge to become a part of our family. And another background knowledge he came with – even though he had that language barrier, the knowledge of knowing how to express himself was there. He had the knowledge of what a computer is, you know, what a phone is and things like that, so that’s how we were able to communicate with each other, you know and a key thing was the knowledge of where he was able to tell me – if he wanted to express himself he would try to draw or write you know and it was funny because he would write in his language.

**Appreciated that the family worked to maintain home language and heritage.**

Mrs. Dimka also seemed very sure that this particular family preserved their home language and heritage because of the presence of the grandmother within this family. She discussed how they wore their country’s clothes when she came to the school. She believed that because they spoke Arabic to one another, they would not lose their language. Mrs. Dimka also showed that sometimes she was not sure about a few things such as why the women covered their heads, for example.
They did not lose it and they would not lose it because one time they came for a program and I got to meet – I met the grandma, and I got to see – this is just my observation – it looked like the grandma was the dominant force in the family, you know, because the grandma was the one who was telling them the language… but just by the way how they interact with each other and they still speak in their native language with each other, I think that’s one way of keeping their heritage. Um, the females, they wear their dress even though they came to America--they did not lose that. They still dressed in that form of covering themselves up and everything else and I guess that’s religion or what, I do not know, but just that particular part of how they did it.

Mrs. Dimka shared her perspective about the way this Iraqi family maintained and built heritage and home language, and built knowledge of home cultural traditions and beliefs as part of their daily lives and through their circle of friends as she said:

That one I did not see so much have in the home I think just the fact of not losing it, still having this family and finding people that are a part of their culture, so they could celebrate whatever holidays or whatever customs.

**Supportive solutions.** When Mrs. Dimka spoke about any special methods that the Iraq refugee families used to help their children succeed in U.S. schools, she believed that Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky sought help from some friends to come to the school so they could translate for them: “I think one of the main thing (sic) is finding a support system, like you, for example, where you guys can come in and translate for them.”

Some of the skills and knowledge that Mrs. Dimka utilized as resources to enable the Iraqi’s children to succeed in her class was observing and listening to her Iraqi
student to find out what his needs were. Moreover, she provided him with some listening materials on the computer where he listened to some stories, and she did a read aloud with him as well.

Um, one of the main thing is first – my first skill to be truthful is my listening – listening to what are his needs, what he wants, you know, first just observing him, and after I observe him I start having him listen to stories in English, just having him listening and hearing and then I would do a lot of read aloud for him.

It seemed that Mrs. Dimka used a number of ways with Ali as she paired him with other students, and allowed him to copy from them, worked with him one-on-one and gave him some time to practice at his own, let him used her iPad to find word meanings, let him write in Arabic, and she used pictures for translation:

And then I would work individually with him and those resources individually would be a one-on-one where I would teach a skill with him and when I teach that skill he has to go home and practice that skill with himself… I would use my iPad and we would go look up the word, and then if it does not have a picture I would put it in his language Arabic and it would say it for him.

Mrs. Dimka also indicated that she valued her students by inviting them to participate in her class. By doing this, she gave her students voice in class and included them. She also allowed her students freedom of speech and did not silence them.

You know you help him to bring it up, like when we have a discussion or anything, you ask him to include himself and to tell his story so he would realize his story’s still important, you know, yes, you know, the classroom is dominantly American English, but you still have a story, and it needs to be told, you know, so
giving him those opportunities. I think that was important and that was able to help him.

**Acknowledging the need to know more.** Asking Mrs. Dimka what more she needed to know to be able to utilize the resources they bring to the classroom in support of their learning, she believed that using the online translation tools were not very effective since these tools sometimes did not recognize some slang words or dialects. Mrs. Dimka was thinking of how she could solve this problem.

Another thing that Mrs. Dimka seemed to be interested was learning more about her student’s and the family’s culture. She also stated that both families she had last year and the year before were very different and consequently she is interested in learning more about Iraqi families.

I think about learning more about their culture, but sometimes you know when you think is one thing, is not, and having the – this is my second time having a child from that country, so just…and it was two different families, you know, so it was like, oh, so I’m interested in doing some more research for myself.

Mrs. Dimka shared her experience about the Iraqi child in her last year’s class, and how he had a single parent who was by herself. Mrs. Dimka believed that she had to learn more about the country’s history.

This family now, I do not know much about they (sic) history in the country, you know, so, but this family came a full family, parent, mom, grandparent.

**Recognized parents as supportive.** Asking Mrs. Dimka about the way the parents supported their children’s learning at home, she explained despite the fact that the
family could not help with homework because of the English barrier, they emphasized the importance of school and education.

I think because it was – it was difficult for them to help with the homework or for things like that because of that English barrier, I think just the fact of telling them the importance of school reinforcing that, you know, and even using their language to show the importance of it, you know, doing stuff in they (sic) language to show the importance of education and things like that and always coming to school.

Progress made. When Mrs. Dimka was asked what she wished she had done differently, she spoke of how she felt sad when Ali, the Iraq student, left her class and moved to another state, and she wished if she was able to keep him in her class. In fact, she stated that she considered her experience with Ali, the Iraq student, “a success story.”

Yeah, he has, because he came in September, by November he was reading, you know one sentence and things like that and then when he left, he was able to go to the library, check out two books and read those books to me, or his friends, you know. He was answering questions. He was decoding words, you know, so he was not just caught in the words, he would look at a word and if he did not know it, he would break that word up like, sh-ah- you know, so he was my success story.

Mrs. and Mr. Al-Hakeem

Mr. Al-Hakeem was in his fifties, and he had a technical diploma. Mrs. Al-Hakeem was also in her fifties, both parents had completed middle school. Mrs. and Mr. Al-Hakeem had seven children, but only four of them came with them from Iraq. The
children, two boys, and two girls, were 21, 18, 13, and 10. Mrs. AL-Hakeem spoke Arabic proficiently. Mr. Al-Hakeem spoke Arabic as his first language, and was beginning to learn English, and he also spoke another European language fluently (see Table 4.1). Mr. Al-Hakeem and his family left Iraq and moved to Syria in 2006 because of turbulent conditions there. He felt insecure, and the schools had been damaged. He and his family moved to Syria and lived there for six years where his children received a free education. When the turmoil started in Syria, he went back to Iraq but the conditions were not safe. He and his family resided there for two years then they left to emigrate to the U.S. as refugees.

During the home visits of Mrs. and Mr. Al-Hakeem four–bedroom apartment, I saw all of the family members interact in Arabic and sometimes in English. Specifically, the two children who were in elementary and middle schools spoke in both English and Arabic. The family used the internet to watch Iraqi programs on YouTube, and they used laptops as well. During the visits, the two young children were doing their homework, but the older ones in the high school were always upstairs, and I rarely saw them downstairs. This family often talked about food and wisdom; food, moralistic and educative social lessons were important parts of their daily practices. Mr. Al-Hakeem gave his children advice and told them stories that were all related to moral and economic issues.

Speaking of the ways in which the parents supported their children’s learning and language at home, Mr. Al-Hakeem believed refugee families needed more support with education. Speaking of his experience when he came here to the U.S., he said he was
enrolled in ESL classes, but after a short time he stopped these classes to start his new job.

**Lack of or limited contact and communication with the school.** Speaking of their visit to their children’s school(s), Mr. AL-Hakeem shared the reasons for visiting his children’s schools. He stated that he had not visited the school for five months due to transportation, as he did not have a car to visit the school. Moreover, Mr. AL-Hakeem also stated the fact that he was a full-time employee and going to school was not possible for him since he was at work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Both parents said they visited the school once because there was a problem with their son and daughter that they were facing at school. Mrs. AL-Hakeem said, “Yes, I went to a school for my son Mohammed because he was suffering from a problem.”

He also mentioned some problems that prevented him from communicating with the school. First, regarding transportation, Mr. Al-Hakeem said that it was difficult to go to the school without having a car. Second, his lack of knowledge of the English language made communication difficult. Third, his lack of knowledge of how the schools worked in the U.S made it difficult. And finally, he mentioned that there was a huge difference between education in the U.S. and education in Iraq.

When Mr. Al-Hakeem and Mrs. Al-Hakeem were asked about the relationships they had with schools in Iraq both parents stated that there had been no communication between home and school in Iraq. They believed that parents visited the schools either because there has been a problem that their child is facing, or there has been a parents meeting for the election of the council.

Mrs. Al-Hakeem talked about how the school relations started, she said that she
visited the school because her son had experienced some bullying by some of the students. For this reason she went to school to complain, and a friend helped to interpret. Another reason, she explained, was as a result of a problem related to her son’s bus. She stated several reasons for neither visiting nor communicating with the school very much. First, she said transportation was an issue as she could not drive, and she did not have a car. Second, since she did not speak English, this made her reluctant to go to school. Finally, she felt some kind of time constraints on her time, as she was busy with housework, such as cooking, cleaning, and so forth.

She also indicated that if everything was going well, so she did not have to go and visit the school. In her words, “Their relationship is nice with the teachers; they love them, and there is no problem.” (see Tables 4.11 – 4.14)

**Transportation issues.** According to Mr. Al-Hakeem, he believed that two factors contributed to reasons for neither communicating with nor visiting at the children’s schools. Like his wife, the first one was transportation. He stated that when he came here to the U.S., he could not go to the school because he had no car. In fact, he said for the first three months he did not have a car. Speaking of the transportation barrier, Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that transportation was a very common problem among all refugees as he stated: “No refugee buys a car when he first arrives; he needs at least three-to-four months until he buys a car.” The second reason for not visiting the school was his limited English. He also said when he got a job as a full-time worker, he had no time to communicate and visit the school. He said, “Because I work and my wife cannot speak English.” Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that transportation and language are major obstacles for any refugees.
Mrs. Al-Hakeem believed that the school relationship had not changed because she was under the same circumstances, but she believed that driving and speaking English supported the relationship between home and school. She said, “If I know the language and another thing if I know how to drive I would go.”

**Learning a different system.** Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that there were some issues that affected the home-school relationship. He explained that the school system here in the U.S. was a different experience for him and his wife. He said that he was familiar with the European system, but the American system was different. Speaking about his impressions after his first visit to the school, he said the buildings were fascinating, and the school had a nice quiet atmosphere. Describing his feeling when he visited the school, he said that he had the chance to learn about a new world unknown to him. He said “These things I did not know them, and when I knew them, you can say, I learned how to communicate with the school, and I can go to the school without help.”

**Need for interpreters.** Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that there was no relationship with teachers and other personnel at the school. He offered a solution to the language barrier. He believed that the school needed to appoint someone who could be there all the time to help them when interpreting is needed. He said.

> Five families, not many, maybe someone becomes available and be connected to these families, preferably an Arab nationality, because she is fluent in the language.

**Need for home visits.** Both parents stated that no one visited them from the school. Mrs. Al-Hakeem stated that “No one has visited us” similarly, Mr. Al-Hakeem said “No one visited us from the school until now” (now refers to April). Mr. Al-Hakeem
believed that home visits were important and the school should provide interpreters during that visit. He believed that home visits are important because the school would have an idea about the family status and their educational level. Moreover, Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that during the home visit parents could learn about the communication process between home and school, and the school system, and the school events. He said:

No one has visited the house and that is the biggest mistake. Because the school should take the initiative to visit the house with the interpreter to be aware of the of the family’s status, and their level, and explain the process of communication between the school and the home, a means to communicate and explain the education system in America and how to communicate and what events that the school do during the school year study, and how to communicate with them.

Mr. AL-Hakeem said, ‘We did not know the difference because we were new.’ He shared his experience about the home–school experience with his children’s school in the U.S. He stated that it is difficult for a newly arrived person to discuss that. In fact, he believed that it is only after three years of residency he could discuss this experience. He also said, “When he visits the school and someone from the school visit him at home, the parents will feel he is not lonely, and some people care about educating his children.” Mr. Al-Hakeem also requested that someone at the school should be available to help them as he stated, “When the refugee first arrives and registers his children at school, there should be one at school.”

Supporting children’s school learning. Mr. Al-Hakeem shared his experiences with his children's teacher and school, Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that there were two types
of knowledge: scientific background and life background. He stated that scientific background related to physics, chemistry, and other sciences. Life background related to daily life experiences, and he said he usually shared this type of experience with his children and believed it was more important than scientific background knowledge. He provided an example of being careful with money and he taught his children how to be frugal with electricity to save money.

Mr. Al-Hakeem believed that his children had an eagerness for learning and success. He believed that his children wanted to be successful at school. He also mentioned that his younger son was skillful at drawing and his other son was skillful at soccer. He stated that the teachers did not support his son, but his other son got some support from his school with regard to soccer. Mr. Al-Hakeem shared his belief about the benefits of unique experiences, he said, “It adds to the child the new culture and preserves his home language and instructing them not to give up their culture.”

Mr. Al-Hakeem discussed the special methods and materials he used to help his children maintain and build heritage and home language. Mr. Al-Hakeem indicated that he did not focus on teaching Arabic because they were focusing more on the new language, English; however, he said he taught Arabic through conversation at home. When asked if he supported them with reading and writing, he said he did not focus on writing, and his children did not write often. He stated, “The Arabic language means it is through being at home. I think the hours are enough for talking, but they are getting away from writing.” Mr. Al-Hakeem used oral stories with his children but did not mention that as a strategy. Mr. Al-Hakeem said he had very few Arabic materials.
Mr. Al-Hakeem discussed the special methods and materials he used to help his children maintain and build heritage and home language. He explained that he supported his children in some ways. First, he provided his children with moral support by which he encouraged them and urged them to do well at school. Second, he explained he usually checked on his children’s progress. Finally, he provided his children with financial support as he bought sports clothes for his son and he also wanted to buy an iPad for his youngest son.

**Maintaining cultural traditions and beliefs.** Mr. Al-Hakeem also talked about the special methods and materials used to help his children maintain and build knowledge of home cultural traditions and beliefs to help his children preserve their heritage language and culture. Mr. Al-Hakeem felt that a father’s knowledge was important to pass on to them. He believed that food was important to help his children preserve their Iraqi culture. He also mentioned that the TV, the Internet, and Arabic books helped them learn about their heritage language and culture. He believed that his family traditions and cultural practices helped his children learn more. For example, he said he told them stories orally and stories about life lessons from which they could learn. But he also believed that young children did not pay a lot of attention to culture and traditions. He stated, “Young people are not motivated to preserve culture and traditions or preserve their history.” But he felt the kind of knowledge gained from cultural and life experiences were very important. Mr. Al-Hakeem said, “Children need to preserve their culture and learn a new culture.”
Mrs. Green, the Teacher of the AL-Hakeem’s Daughter, Rosa

Mrs. Green was a White female teacher who taught fourth-grade. She was a bilingual teacher who had a European heritage. Mrs. Green was asked to participate in the study, and she agreed to share her perspective during the interviews. The following themes emerged from my analysis of her responses to the interview questions.

Meetings with parents. When Mrs. Green was asked about her experiences with the Iraqi family in and out of school, she said that she had met Mr. AL-Hakeem when he first came to enroll his daughter at the school. She indicated that she also visited with Mr. AL-Hakeem during some school events and festivals, such as the Fall Festival and a Bingo night:

Well, like I said, they brought her the first day of school, and I would touch base with them every couple or three weeks, and let them know – um, when we had things after school, we had like a Fall Festival, the dad would bring her up. We had a Bingo night, they came to the Bingo night, so we were able to talk then.

Methods of communication. When Mrs. Green was asked about the way she established contact with the parents, she mentioned that she kept in touch with them through a weekly newsletter, sending notes home in the child’s folder, and through telephone calls.

We would send them – I sent home a weekly newsletter, so that they know what’s going on in the classroom, what’s going on in the school, um, our students at our school have a planner, so like if there were any notes that needed to be sent home I would write a note in the planner about certain things. If there was something
coming up or if we had a field trip, I would call and let them know, the ESL teacher would call and let them know.

Perceptions about communication methods. Speaking with Mrs. Green about the methods she used to communicate with the parents of her Iraqi children, she indicated that communication was hard for the Iraqi family because she believed the newsletters were difficult for them to read. She said:

Yeah. With the communication, especially because– like the newsletters I would send home, they may not be able to read everything because the reading in English is different from the reading in Arabic, you know, with the Arabic goes right to left and we read left to right. And then the characters, the letters and then – the Arabic letters are totally different, so that was a big thing.

Need for translators. Asking Mrs. Green about the factors that affected the relationship between home and school with her Arabic-speaking Iraqi parents, she believed that she needed more of the documents she sent home to be translated into Arabic, in the same way, they currently do with the Spanish language speakers.

Yeah, I think what hinders the communication is the fact that we do not have a lot of translations from what we’re doing in the classroom in English into the Arabic language. That, that – I think the country as a whole has recognized – you know, the Spanish community is in, and so they’ve offered translations there, but we’re getting – as we get more of the Arabic community, people who speak Arabic in the country that that really hinders it.

Mrs. Green also sent information in English about certain projects or field trips, and she felt that it was hard for these parents to understand these documents and what they were
supposed to do at home with their children. She believed that hindered the relationship as well.

Um, examples of something that would hinder would be like when I send family letters home or we do projects like at home projects you know do some research on – we did a huge one on animals or we do a book report that – sending the letter home in English really does not help because if the parents do not understand what they’re reading, then that hinders the child and it hinders our relationship between the parent and the teacher.

Strategies for facilitating communication. When asked about what she did to help her Iraqi student feel comfortable, she focused on strategies that were specific to helping her Iraqi student communicate and learn to use English in the classroom. Mrs. Green discussed labeling everything in her class in Arabic so that the students could understand important things in the classroom and learn to use them.

Um, well what I did in the classroom was I labeled everything, like she had notebooks, Notebook, you know I put the word on what it was. You know when we started – when she had to go pick books, I put a big label this is where the books are, this is where the doors – I taught first grade, so that’s kind of what I went back to, and so as soon as she started learning the words, I could take the labels down so that she knew – even if she did not know how to read it, she could associate the word with what it was.

Mrs. Green also spoke of using a bilingual child in her class to translate for the other student if needed, and she immersed the Iraqi student in study groups where her peers could help her with certain tasks. In her words:
I really worried about the language barrier, you know, especially with the student, she...she came in and, fortunately, I had another student who spoke Arabic in the classroom, so at the beginning of the year, for the first month, I would ask her to do something in English, and then the other student would translate, oh, go get your book bag, or make sure you have pencils, but she – you know I knew she needed to hear the language to start associating this is what it means, but that language barrier at the beginning between me and the student was a little rough going.

What I Learned From the Refugee Resettlement Agency Case Manager

Mrs. Brown was a case manager in the Refugee Resettlement Agency that served all three families in this study. She was one of four employees there who helped refugees from different countries from all over the world with social services, such as obtaining social security cards, medical cards (Medicaid), food stamps, school enrollment and transportation. Each case manager was responsible for particular services and each case manager was assigned certain families to supervise.

I knew Mrs. Brown as a neighbor and as a co-worker as she provided me with a part time job in their agency interpreting for Arabic refugees from many countries around the world. I explained the aim of the study to Mrs. Brown and asked her to participate in the study. During the interview (see Appendix L), she discussed the kind of school related services the Refugees’ Agency provided for the Iraqi refugees, and the length of time these services were offered. The following section shows what I learned from Mrs. Brown about the school-related services her office provided for the Iraqi refugees.
Support for School Enrollment

Mrs. Brown described the kind of services the refugee agency provided for the Arab speaking Iraqi refugee families and their children. She shared how her office helped the refugees enroll their children in school within a month of their arrival. First, she said they contacted an interpreter because the schools did not provide the services of an interpreter. Second they contacted the parents to inform them about the date that was scheduled with the school to enroll their child. Third, the case manager picked up the parents to meet the interpreter at the school. Mrs. Brown said that sometimes finding an interpreter was difficult, so they filled out the forms with the information needed on the parents’ behalf since they have the refugees’ biographical information on file in their office. She stated:

We have to enroll refugee children within 30 days, and so the case manager contacts the interpreter and sometimes we have an interpreter and sometimes we cannot find interpreters, you know it is difficult to find interpreters sometime, you know, and specific day and specific time and we do not have on-staff interpreters, you know so sometimes it is difficult to find somebody. Most people are working full-time, so they are not available.

Agency Services Provided for Refugees

When Mrs. Brown was asked about the kind of school related services the refugee agency provided for the Iraq refugee families and their children she said that when a new family arrives, they assisted the family with school registration and obtaining some services, such as providing school supplies, filling out applications for free school lunches, and information about transportation.
Ah, we provide school enrollment if it is new arrival family. We have to add a refugee family within 30 days. Our agency provides school enrollment you know, and a school package for the refugee children, and make sure that they receive our free lunch meal from the cafeteria and then we also need to make sure with that you know, transportation for the refugee children how to ride the bus…

**Educating Parents about American Schools**

When Mrs. Brown was asked how we could help the Arab speaking Iraqi refugees become actively engaged with teachers and schools, Mr. Brown believed the newly arrived refugees should be educated about their children’s school and how the school is organized because the school system here in the U.S. is different from those schools in Iraq. She also stated that these families were living in camps before coming here, and some of their children were not enrolled in schools. Mrs. Brown stated:

Ah yeah. We should educate our client to the school system in U.S. as it is totally different from their own country and sometimes our clients, you know, like when they are [new] in a country or they are in refugee camp you know, they have never been to the school, or sometimes they may have like a 2nd grade or 3rd grade and then they put them here in, you know, 6th or 7th grade, so…which is difficult for refugee children you know, so yeah, it is a lot of, you know, engagement between parents and the school.

**Conclusion to Chapter Four**

This chapter presented themes constructed through an analysis data gathered about the experiences of three Iraqi refugee families. It reported demographic information about each family and themes drawn from the analysis of family interviews,
teacher interviews, case manager interviews, and observations. These data documented critical information about the experiences and issues faced by each family. Themes emerged about the lessons each family learned and the different approaches they took to communicate in an English-only school environment. Each family reported the way in which they supported their children’s learning in school and about their native language and cultural heritage. The family stories were enhanced by the interviews conducted with the teachers of the children in each family. Each teacher described the strategies she used to communicate more effectively with each child she taught and, in one case, little initiative was taken by the teacher to attempt more effective communication. The themes that emerged from each teacher interview completed the picture of the family’s struggles and successes. The teachers’ interviews also described the methods and the issues each teacher faced teaching the children in this study. Finally an interview with the Refugee Resettlement Agency Case Manager provided a glimpse of the support services that were provided to refugee families in their transition within the U.S. The next chapter presents the findings from an analysis of themes that emerged across families and teachers.
Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Iraqi Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating families</th>
<th>Family 1</th>
<th>Family 2</th>
<th>Family 3</th>
<th>Family 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>30-34/ 40-44</td>
<td>25-29/ 30-34</td>
<td>50 or more /50 or more</td>
<td>50 or more /50 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>Sixth grade Technical diploma</td>
<td>Sixth grade Technical diploma</td>
<td>Middle school Technical diploma</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>3 boys /1 girl</td>
<td>3 boys / 1 girl</td>
<td>1 girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Arrived to USA</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa status</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City and State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages spoken</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic and Southeast Europe language</td>
<td>Arabic and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of residency in the US.</td>
<td>7 to 9 months</td>
<td>7 to 9 months</td>
<td>7 to 9 months</td>
<td>A year or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly income</td>
<td>10,000 or less a year</td>
<td>10,000 or less a year</td>
<td>10,000 or less a year</td>
<td>10,000 or less a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2

AL-Khalidy Number Of Minutes Reading Everyday

1A) For approximately how many minutes does your son or daughter read every day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; son or daughter</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; son or daughter</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; son or daughter</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; son or daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 15 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 30 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 45 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 60 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never read everyday</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Khalidy
Table 4.3

AL-Khalidy Satisfaction About Services For First Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1C) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Poor ضعيف</th>
<th>Below دون المتوسط</th>
<th>Average متوسط</th>
<th>Average متوسط</th>
<th>Very جيد جداً</th>
<th>Excellent ممتاز</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your first child’s school مدرسة طفلك الأول</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your first child’s transportation وسيلة النقل لطفلك الأول</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your first child’s teacher مدرسة طفلك الأول</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your first child’s English language development تطوير اللغة الإنجليزية لطفلك الأول</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your first child’s Arabic language development تطوير اللغة العربية لطفلك الأول</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Khalidy; F = Mr. AL-Khalidy
Table 4.4

*AL-Khalidy Satisfaction About Services For Second Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your second child’s school teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your second child’s transportation</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your second child’s teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your second child’s English language development</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your second child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* M = Mrs. AL-Khalidy; F = Mr. AL-Khalidy
Table 4.5

*AL-Khalidy Satisfaction About Services For Third Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1D) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Your third child’s school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مدرسة طفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your third child’s transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وسيلة النقل لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your third child’s teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مدرسة طفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your third child’s English language development</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تطور اللغة الإنجليزية لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your third child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تطور اللغة العربية لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* M = Mrs. AL-Khalidy; F = Mr. AL-Khalidy
Table 4.6

*AL-Khalidy Satisfaction About Services For Fourth Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1E) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Below</th>
<th>Above</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Your fourth child’s school

B. Your fourth child’s transportation

C. Your fourth child’s teacher

D. Your fourth child’s English language development

E. Your fourth child’s Arabic language development

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Khalidy; F = Mr. AL-Khalidy
Table 4.7

*Frequency of Going To The Library*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Participating families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. M = Mother; F = Father*
Table 4.8

AL-Maliky Number Of Minutes Reading Everyday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st son or daughter</th>
<th>2nd son or daughter</th>
<th>3rd son or daughter</th>
<th>4th son or daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>15 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 دقيقة أو أكثر</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>30 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 دقيقة أو أكثر</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>45 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 دقيقة أو أكثر</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>60 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 دقيقة أو أكثر</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never read everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا يقرأ أبداً كل يوم</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Maliky; F = Mr. AL-Maliky
Table 4.9

**AL-Maliky Satisfaction About Services For First Child**

1C) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your first child’s school teacher</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your second child’s transportation</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your first child’s teacher</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your first child’s English language development</td>
<td>F/M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your first child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. M = Mrs. AL-Maliky; F = Mr. AL-Maliky*
Table 4.10

*AL-Hakeem Number Of Minutes Reading Everyday*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1A) For approximately how many minutes does your son or daughter read every day?</th>
<th>1(^{st}) son or daughter</th>
<th>2(^{nd}) son or daughter</th>
<th>3(^{rd}) son or daughter</th>
<th>4(^{th}) son or daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 15 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 30 min. or more</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 45 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 60 min. or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never read everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: M = Mrs. AL-Hakeem; F = Mr. AL-Hakeem*
Table 4.11

_AL-Hakeem Satisfaction About Services For First Oldest Child_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1C) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your first child’s school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your first child’s transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your first child’s teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your first child’s English language development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your first child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Hakeem; F = Mr. AL-Hakeem
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Below</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your second child’s school teacher</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your second child’s transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your second child’s teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your second child’s English language development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your second child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mrs. AL-Hakeem; F = Mr. AL-Hakeem
Table 4.13

**AL-Hakeem Satisfaction About Services For Third Child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1D) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>برجى تقييم مدى رضاك على ما يلي:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Your third child’s school</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>مدرسة طفلك الثالثة</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Your third child’s transportation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>وسيلة النقل لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Your third child’s teacher</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>مدرسة طفلك الثالثة</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Your third child’s English language development</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>تطور اللغة الإنجليزية لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Your third child’s Arabic language development</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>تطور اللغة العربية لطفلك الثالث</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. M = Mrs. AL-Hakeem; F = Mr. AL-Hakeem*
Table 4.14

*AL-Hakeem Satisfaction About Services For Fourth Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1E) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:</th>
<th>Below</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your fourth child’s school</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your fourth child’s transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your fourth child’s teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your fourth child’s English language development</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your fourth child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. M = Mrs. AL-Hakeem; F = Mr. AL-Hakeem*
### Table 4.15

*Frequency of Going to the Library*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Participating families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times a Week</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
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*Note.* M = Mother; F = Father
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Introduction

Learning a foreign language not only reveals how other societies think and feel, what they have experienced and value, and how they express themselves, it also provides a cultural mirror in which we can more clearly see our own society. By Gorsuch

The analogy of language as a cultural mirror was particularly apt within the research I conducted over the past two years. Both the pilot study (2013-2014) and the dissertation (2014-2015) research clarified the cultural values held by the American and Iraqi participants. This lens also magnified the issues the participants faced as I examined the home-school relationships and communication strategies employed by Arabic-speaking families within their new American context, as well as the communication strategies employed by teachers who served their children.

The research process, as well, provided important lessons that have import for future research. The pilot study clarified some of the issues these families experienced as new residents in the United States and as their children attended American schools. It also allowed me to see the need to explore this topic in greater detail and assisted me in making some changes concerning research tools to utilize in this dissertation research: the questionnaire, parents and teachers interviews, and the home visit observation forms.
As a result of the pilot study, I conducted more in-depth interviews in the dissertation and expanded these interviews beyond the three Arabic-speaking Iraqi families to include their children’s teachers and a case manager from the refugee resettlement agency. It was a privilege to have visited these families in their homes. During the home visits, I learned critical lessons from each family as they discussed their home literacy and cultural practices, and the dynamics of breaking into an entirely different school culture than the ones the parents and many of the children had previously experienced. A key area that emerged was the great need they felt, and the resources they utilized, to maintain their heritage language and culture and to take on new literacy and social practices needed in the American context.

The literature I reviewed that related to family literacy, parents’ engagement within schools, and culturally based practices in homes and schools enhanced my understanding of the research as I enacted it, and it helped me better understand many of the issues faced by new refugees whose young Arabic speaking children attended American schools. The findings from this study cannot be generalized to the broader population due to the small sample size although, as described in Chapter Six, there are insights to be gained from this study that potentially speak to other populations and that, I believe, are important for immigrant families, case managers, and for U.S. school administrators and teachers.

The study investigated the communication process that developed between the Iraqi families and their children’s teachers and schools. I used an interpretive approach within a descriptive analysis design. Data were collected through questionnaires, home visits, and interviews with parents, their children’s teachers and the resettlement agency.
case manager. I utilized a qualitative method approach to analyze the data, and I coded the data for major themes. I confirmed that the lack of interpreters and translation services impacted the communicative process between homes and schools, participation in school events and other curricular activities; however, despite all those obstacles parents and teachers made efforts to remain connected. I found that the lack of full engagement with the school did not impede parents from supporting their children’s learning-related to school assignments or the goals they had for learning within the home. In fact, both parents and teachers stated that the school did not provide any kind of translation service. Parents and teachers struggled to communicate. Moreover, both parents and teachers said that all school forms were in English and not translated. The teachers tried to use a fourth grade student to translate between them and parents. The parents used a variety of methods to enhance their children’s language, literacy, and cultural heritage. The Iraqi Refugee Agency provided needed services early in the resettlement process that included translation services, and eased the refugees’ initial housing, transportation, medical, and school enrollment needs. However, beyond enrollment, key aspects of American school expectations and information needed by parents and teachers to facilitate language and school acclimation was not provided. In the following sections, I discuss the patterns found across the parents, children, teachers, and the families’ caseworker. In Chapter Six, I provide implications for parents, teachers, the schools, the districts, and the refugee resettlement agency.

**Findings from the Secondary Analysis**

To further explore the research questions related to home-school relationships, factors that impacted communication, use of literacy and funds of knowledge within the
Iraqi parents’ homes, and school and resettlement agency related services provided in support of the refugees, a secondary analysis was conducted. This analysis included all interviews, questionnaires and home visits to code data across groups of parents, teachers, children, and the resettlement caseworker. This analysis led to key findings that describe my interpretation of the efforts of parents and teachers to further children’s learning and factors that impinged upon their joint goals.

**Findings Related to Parents**

Analyzing the data from this study helped me to have a sense of the relationship between home and school and factors that affected communication among the Iraqi families I studied and the schools and teachers who served their children. From the following findings, I have come to understand that, in spite of stereotypes and misperceptions that often abound in U.S. schools about immigrant families and children, the parents in this study:

- unanimously demanded translation and interpreting services be provided within schools;
- actively supported their children’s literacy and language development;
- made efforts and persisted in order to connect with their schools, often initiating the first contact;
- cared deeply about their children’s literacy, heritage, and language growth;
- tended to visit their children’s schools to solve particular problems;
- used available literacy resources within the home to support their children’s learning in both Arabic and English;
because they had not adequately communicated cultural and/or traditional expectations to families, there was confusion and misunderstandings when Iraqi parents’ communication with schools in America was based upon experiences they previously had with schools in Iraq and this was not understood or acknowledged by U.S. teachers and administrators;

were more actively engaged within the school when the school events were planned, although transportation was an issue for the mothers;

parents’ were not cognizant of school-based expectations about home–school relationships;

problems were encountered within the school and in the community that were generally unknown or unacknowledged by schools and teachers;

there was a lack of availability of an interpreter; when interpreters were present, more communication and participation occurred;

schools were not aware of, or did not honor, families’ cultural beliefs regarding mixed-gender activities;

the Iraqi children were recognized by parents as gifted and talented in their areas of strength.

Parents’ unanimously demanded translation and interpreting services be provided within schools. There were many instances reported by all families where an inability to communicate about special needs, services, essential core beliefs or strictures related to religious or cultural practices adhered to produced consternation and concern by parents and children in their daily lives. Teachers also felt the lack of translation services, particularly when key information needed to be communicated clearly to
parents. Parents consistently requested that the schools be more proactive in providing translation services within the school and for important communication about their children’s schooling, school operation, and special events.

**Parents actively supported their children’s literacy and language development.** I found that all three families valued education, and actively supported their children with both English and Arabic languages where possible. However, there were differences in the kind of assistance they provided. For instance, in one family the father helped his son with math and art, and the child made a very good progress with this support. In another family, the father helped his children with basic knowledge with regard to the English language, for example, helping them to learn the names of common foods. The third family helped with teaching their children Arabic and maintaining their native culture, but they could not provide their children with any further help. It seemed clear these three families had different needs and resources. The three families used different ways of fostering literacy at home. Some used oral stories to support their children. Another family used formal Arabic materials that they brought from Iraq to support their children besides some historical and cultural artifacts. Another mother asked her children to describe the methods the teacher used in the classroom, and she fashioned experiences in the home using the same methods, such as reading aloud and using pictures to tell stories. The level of help provided depended on the family’s knowledge and background as well as their ingenuity.

**Parents made efforts and persisted in order to be connected with their schools.** Another finding related to the level of involvement parents had with the school across the three families. All of the parents attended the enrollment day and met the
classroom teachers on that day. I found that most of the teachers did not attempt to reach out to the parents. The data revealed that all the contacts happened inside the school and not outside the school.

The nature of each family’s involvement also varied tremendously. It was evident that the job demands and the parents’ availability contributed to the degree of communication they had with the school. Two fathers were full-time employees, and they did not have time to come to school. The third family’s father visited the school many times because his shift was at night and this made it easier for him to visit and stay connected with the school. The absence of an interpreter made the communication with the school limited because of the language barrier. However, the parents did make efforts to stay connected, such as asking friends to come with them as interpreters. The local networks that some families developed facilitated communication with the school and helped them connect and navigate within the school system.

Parents cared deeply about their children’s literacy, heritage, and language growth. This finding was consistent among all families with parents demonstrating how deeply they cared about literacy, heritage and language growth, even though the parents used different strategies to support their children’s education. Two families stated that they taught their children about their heritage and the Iraqi language. These two families used materials that they brought from Iraq. However, the third family’s father stated that they were focusing more on English because their children could speak their home language very well. Generally speaking, the Internet and the television were used most of the time to support literacy in the home.
Parents tended to visit their children’s schools to solve particular problems. I found that all of the families went to school because there were particular issues they needed to address. The parents’ initial visits to the school happened because there was an issue. They visited the school one to three times at most. Only one parent went for a parent conference, but the other two families went for other reasons such as to pick up a child for a doctor’s appointment or because there was a problem. Some of the problems were related, but not limited to bullying, transportation, or use of a cell phone at school. In fact, two of the parents stated that they usually only went to the school if there was a problem. It seemed that parents did not know that they should be connected with the teachers and the school for other purposes, such as to observe, to help in classrooms, or to volunteer in other capacities.

Parents used available literacy resources within the home to support their children’s learning in Arabic and English. All three families used different literacy resources within the home to enhance their children’s language and literacy. Mr. AL-Khalidy family used Arabic books that they brought from Iraq and in the other family the father brought an English–Arabic dictionary. In Mr. AL Hakeem’s family, the parents used the Quran and some religious books for culture, language, and literacy. Another source that all families used to support their children with culture, language and literacy was the Internet. They all used it as a way to keep their heritage language and culture. Two families used the Internet for helping in learning English. One father said his children listened to American music, another father said his son used boxing and cartoons. Another thing that two families mentioned was telling stories that had moral and cultural lessons. Finally, one common thing that all parents mentioned was their
continuous encouragement to learn English and be successful at school. Finally two families used the available objects at home to support their children’s literacy. Mrs. AL-Maliky, for example, used objects such as spoons, forks and knives to teach her son the name of things around them. Mrs. AL-Khalidy also used fruits such as bananas, and oranges to help her children learn numbers and names of fruits. These were some of the examples that both mothers used to support literacy at home.

Parents were more engaged in schools when there were events to attend, but transportation was an issue for mothers. I found that school events helped to engage the families and their children more actively in the school community. My findings coincided with what Frew et al. (2013) and Poza et al. (2014) found in their studies. Poza et al. (2014) found that “attending events at school or outside of school that parents deem supportive of children’s learning, and altering/augmenting children’s educational trajectories to improve outcomes” (p. 119) increased school engagement. Two of the participants attended events the schools offered and they commented that the programs like the International Day, Bingo Night, and Dinner Night were very good. One father hoped that the school would do them very often. These events were beneficial to engage the families, so they had reasons to visit the school at times other than when there was a particular problem. This also broadened their cultural and language understandings. I attended the family night in the district, but only one Iraqi family came because the other two fathers were at work. I found that transportation was an issue that prevented the wives from attending because some their husbands were at work, and others did not have a car or did not drive.
Iraq parents’ communication with schools in America was based upon experiences they previously had with schools in Iraq but this was often not understood or acknowledged by schools or teachers. I found from the parents’ responses that two participating families in this study communicated with their children’s school here in the U.S. only in case of emergencies or related to a particular problem. They all said that they usually did not go to the school unless the teacher asked them to do so. However, one parent indicated that he used to communicate with the school very often to check with the teacher on his son’s progress. It was apparent that the varying degree of involvement was dependent on how each family perceived the importance of parents’ involvement within the school as a means of supporting their children’s learning. Since all the families who participated in this study were newcomers to the U.S. they had some expectations about their role in the school that reflected their previous experiences in their home culture rather than the expectations of their host country. In fact, all the participating teachers stated that they did not have a chance to know any information about their Iraqi student’s family. They also said neither the school nor the parents shared any information about them. The teachers also said they did not conduct any home visits to these particular Iraqi families. And one teacher said it was not her responsibility to do home visits.

Parents’ were not cognizant of school-based expectations about home–school relationships. Based on the data collected from the different research tools, I found that the parents did not have a sense of the potential for home-school relationships because when they were asked about how their current relationship started, they all stated that there was not a relationship, but they believed the relationship was very good. This
contradiction showed that they had no sense of the range of possibilities available to them or the impact or positive gains that might be possible for their children from a stronger home-school connection.

Parents encountered problems within the school and in the community that were generally unknown or unacknowledged in schools. I found some problems that the parents and their children faced in the school and the community influenced the degree to which they could communicate and participate actively within the schools. The most common problems was language barrier and the unavailability of an interpreter in and outside the school. The English documents the teachers and schools sent home were difficult for the parents to understand. Another common problem was that two of the fathers’s work schedules prohibited them from visiting the school to talk with the teachers about their children’s development. One parent said that transportation was another factor that hindered communication with the school because he lived far from the school and he did not have a car. Poza et al. (2014) believed that to make school inviting, the school should provide transportation for parents.

A third problem that impacted all families was the lack of information the schools had access to regarding their children’s previous education and needs. Two of the participating families fled Iraq before coming to the United States. Two of the three families resided outside Iraq and stayed in Syria for two years before coming to the U.S. These families experienced violence, torture, and instability. One family mentioned that when they were in Syria as refugees, their sons did not go to school for two years before coming to the U.S., and when he arrived at school, he was placed in a grade level due to his age, and not because of the number of years he had attended school. One family had a
son with special needs, and he was placed in a regular classroom setting and did not receive special services recommended by a physician in a letter the resettlement agency had provided to the school. Parents mentioned that they had to work in many different places to support their families. All of the families went through extraordinary levels of stress when they were waiting to travel to the U.S., which made their travel and resettlement difficult for all members of their family. Because communication surrounding these issues was not initiated by either the school or the parents, the children were the likely ones to be impacted by this lack of communication.

Despite these similar experiences, each family encountered different problems at school including bullying, the types of food that were served in the school their children could not eat, and their inability to help children with homework due to lack of understanding of assignments.

There was a lack of availability of interpreters; when interpreters were present, more communication and participation was encouraged. I found that access to interpreters stimulated parents to visit and talk with the teachers about their children’s progress and development. Five out of the six participating parents said that if an interpreter were available within the school, they would more likely visit the school. When I asked parents about what would make the home–school relationships better, they all said providing an interpreter and translating school documents from English to Arabic. They also said that school events around their culture would engage them and facilitate communication.

All the three participating families stated the fact that they struggled with communicating with the teacher and school personnel in English. All Iraqi families
suggested that the school employ a bilingual teacher who speaks Arabic and English in the school or the district to assist parents and Iraqi children with any issues that they have at school. They believed the availability of the translator would encourage parents to communicate with the teachers and the school, and help them to understand better how to help their children with school assignments and other aspects of school organization.

**Schools were not aware of or did not honor families’ cultural beliefs regarding mixed gender activities.** One of the Iraq families in this study preferred to have their daughter work only with girls. The parents showed some concern about their first-grade daughter’s participation in a mixed gender class. They said that the school should separate girls from boys when they seat them on tables in class because their daughter did not feel comfortable talking to boys. The father believed that his daughter refrained from participating with boys and putting his daughter with boys on the same table affected her attainment and progress. He said he would not mind mixed gender classes on the condition that his daughter sat with other girls.

**Findings across Teachers**

There were eight patterns across teachers; they valued the eagerness, care, and high expectations the Iraqi parents showed for their children’s success and education:

- teachers valued the eagerness, care, and high expectations the Iraqi parents showed for their children’s success and education;
- believed the language barrier affected the home –school relationship, but did not see that they should learn Arabic;
- were unaware of the Iraqi’s families’ backgrounds and the students’ stories;
- used bilingual children for translation;
honored their Iraq students’ language and fostered Arabic and English language use within the classroom;

• made efforts to convey messages to their non-English speaking students and their families;

• were not content with the communication tools used to communicate with the Iraqi parents;

• received no support with interpreting through the school.

Teachers valued the eagerness, care, and high expectations the Iraqi parents showed for their children’s success and education. The data suggested that the teachers believed parents’ had positive attitudes about the children’s education. They believed that their student’s parents showed enthusiasm and care about their children who were at the school. The teachers said their students’ parents came to the school and checked on their students’ progress and urged the teachers to take a good care of their children. The teachers confirmed that the parents were very supportive of their children’s education.

Teachers believed the language barrier affected the home–school relationship, but did not make attempts to learn Arabic. I found out from teachers in this study that they felt that the language barrier affected the home-school relationship. All the teachers struggled because they spoke English and the parents spoke Arabic and were learning English. Interestingly, the teachers did not express that they might strive to learn some Arabic. The teachers felt the methods that they used to communicate with parents were not effective with Arab speaking families because the parents had a difficult time understanding telephone messages that the school left through voice mail.
Moreover, teachers felt that sending newsletters home was also difficult for parents to understand since they were in English and not translated into Arabic. At the same time, teachers did not seek an Arabic translator to help them create Arabic-language newsletters and documents to send home. Thus, parents did not understand many of the notices for field trips or parent-teacher conferences that were sent to the parents written solely in English.

**The teachers were unaware of the Iraqi families’ backgrounds and the students’ stories.** The analysis of the codes indicated that the Iraqi children’s teachers did not know the story or background of the Iraqi parents or the children. I found across the three teachers that they did not seek and therefore missed the stories and key information about their Iraq students and their educational and experiential background and those of their parents. All the teachers believed that reasons for not know this information was because the families did not share their stories with the teachers. The teachers did not take responsibility for seeking out those stories or for getting to know the families in ways that would make them comfortable telling those stories. The teachers said the reasons for not sharing those stories could be the language barrier that existed for them as well as the parents and children but did not look to themselves for ways that they might have reached out and made the sharing of stories possible. However, I found that one teacher felt that she had some knowledge about the students’ backgrounds because of her experiences with an Iraqi child the previous year. She believed that her students this year may have been through some of the same conditions that the previous Iraqi family had experienced. Making this generalization, she utilized many of the strategies that she
had used successfully in the previous year with her new student, however, the teacher did not mention these strategies.

**The teachers used bilingual children for translation.** All three of the teachers used another child for translation. In fact, the teachers used bilingual children to facilitate the communication process between parents, children, and their teachers. Their translator, Rosa, was an Iraqi fourth grade student from the school. Mrs. Green said that when Rosa came to her fourth grade class, she was supported by another child, also from Iraq, who spoke English well to translate between the teacher and Rosa. Mrs. Smith also used Rosa to translate for parents when the parents came to school. Rubin and et al. (2012) believed that teachers should not use children for translation because some information might not be conveyed properly and this could result in miscommunication. However, the teachers in this study found this to be very helpful and not detrimental to the children.

**Teachers and the schools honored their Iraq students’ language and fostered Arabic and English.** During the interviews with the teachers, I found that they all used their students’ home language as a support to assist the children with learning English. Teachers allowed the children to interact with each other in their language and tell stories based upon their previous experiences. Mrs. Dimka allowed her student to write paragraphs in his native language. She also allowed him to write the new vocabulary in both Arabic and English in a notebook she gave him. The teachers encouraged the use of tools for translating from English to Arabic such as Google Translate. But they did not invite Arabic into their classroom curriculum. Moreover, the school provided after school events that showed how they included other Iraqi cultures. For example, in one event, the students from different cultures performed cultural dances and songs. In this
event, they encouraged the students to use their home language. Teachers and school programs such as ESL classes, where available, facilitated the children’s learning of literacy and English language abilities. Among the three families, only Mr. AL-Khalidy’s children did not get access to the ESL program.

**Teachers made efforts to convey messages to their non-English speaking students and their families.** I found that the teachers made efforts to assist the children and the families, for instance, they allowed the children to write in their native language, and the teachers used a fourth grade student to translate for them. Although the participants stated that the school did not provide any kind of support with regard to interpreting inside the school, the teachers did use different tools in their attempts to communicate in the classroom and to some extent with parents, such as Google Translate Website- https://translate.google.com/, bilingual dictionaries, pictures, using other bilingual students to facilitate communication, and other Iraqi families to convey important messages to the parents in this study. The teachers also drew pictures to parents and children to help them understand their messages.

**Teachers were not content with the communication tools used to communicate with the Iraqi parents.** I found that the three teachers I interviewed were not content with the communication methods that they used with parents. Apparently, all three teachers used the same methods they used with main-stream families such as newsletters, telephone calls, and notes. The teachers said all these were in English because they did not have a way to translate them. The teachers believed that the English messages they used were hard for the parents to understand, and it would be easier if these messages were in Arabic. Also, one teacher said she used a family member of
another bilingual student to convey messages to one of the families in this study, and she used Google Translate for translating some phrases. All three teachers in this study stated that the families struggled with these methods because they were not in Arabic.

**Teachers did not get support with interpreting through the school.** All of the teachers said they had to deal with the Arabic speaking families without an interpreter, as the school did not provide any kind of service. The teachers said it would be very helpful if the school provided interpreting services for them. They believed that when some of the Iraq parents took the initiative to provide an interpreter, it facilitated communication and comprehension. The teachers said the availability of the interpreter made it easier for families to communicate. Interestingly, none of the teachers made attempts to find interpreters themselves and seemed to feel that it was the school or the families’ job to provide them.

**Findings Regarding the Children**

The following section presents findings regarding analysis of data obtained about the five Iraqi children based on interviews with their parents. The children:

- were bullied; this made them resist going to school;
- felt honored when they were included in school events;
- were recognized by teachers as gifted and talented in their areas of strength;
- generally had very few English literacy materials at home;
- were reluctant to share any complaints with their teachers and
- received services by the case manager.

**The children were bullied, which made them resist going to school.** This finding was important because the Iraqi children were not able to complain to their
teachers when this form of abuse occurred. In each case, the parents expressed concern because their children suffered physical and mental harm as a result of the bullying. The parents reported the bullying to the school. At home, the parents observed that the bullying made their children resist going to school; however, the families forced them to return.

**The Iraqi children felt honored to be included in school events.** I found that when I attended the cultural day at the school, the Iraqi children were euphoric, and they had self-confidence as they felt the other students enjoyed their cultural dances, clothes, and Arabic language. The parents also believed such events were critical for them and their children. All the three families requested more events like this.

**The Iraqi children were recognized by parent as gifted and talented in their areas of strength.** I found that the parents recognized the Iraq students as gifted and talented for their particular strengths. The Iraq parents spoke of those talents very passionately. For instance, Mr. AL-Maliky’s son was very talented in basketball, Arabic Calligraphy, Math, and Art. Mr. AL-Maliky believed that his son inherited these from him. Similarly, his other son was talented in sports, specifically soccer. Mr. AL-Hakeem said that the coach at school recognized his son’s talent and they supported him by providing transportation for him when he had practice or games.

**The children were reluctant to share any complaints or problems with their teachers.** The Iraqi children did not share their concerns or bullying experiences with their teachers. This finding was confirmed by both teachers and parents. One of the teachers informed me that parents usually came to share some concerns about their
children who did not tell their teacher. When I asked parents, they said their children could express themselves in Arabic only.

**Case managers and interpreting for the Iraqi refugees.** The case manager usually assisted the Iraqi parents to enroll their children at school. Mrs. Brown said that they usually provided translators, but sometimes it was hard due to availability of interpreters; she believed that the school was required by law to provide interpreters, but they did not do that. She said that:

…we have to enroll Iraqi children within 30 days, and so case managers contact the interpreter and sometime we had interpreters and sometime we cannot find interpreters, you know it’s difficult to find interpreters sometime, you know, and specific day and specific time and we don’t have on-staff interpreter, you know so sometime it’s difficult to find somebody. Most people are working full-time so they are not available so, um, so, yeah.

**Summary**

Arabic-speaking Iraqi refugees in new American communities and schools face unique challenges and address them as best they can. Both teachers and parents did their best to assist the Iraqi children. Their parents used whatever materials available to them to support their learning. Their teachers tried to support the Iraqi children as learners and made them comfortable in this new educational setting. One example, Mrs. Dimka allowed Ali to write in Arabic and take notes in Arabic.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study I investigated the relationship between the Arabic speaking Iraqi refugees and the teachers and schools that their children attended. Utilizing a descriptive analysis design enabled me to have a better sense of the parents’ experiences with their schools and the multiple literacy forms they used to support their children with home language, school subjects, and heritage. I also gained a sense of the Iraqi children’s school enrollment process and the kind of education and related services that the Iraqi parents received through the resettlement agency.

Three patterns cut across all data courses: The lack of interpretation services, the efforts parents made at home to help their children and the efforts teachers made at school to help the Iraqi children.

The lack of interpretation services

The fact that interpretation services were not provided by either the school or the refugee agency affected communication among children, parents, and teachers in and out of school. Parents and teachers both discussed the struggles that they and the children experienced when trying to communicate with each other without interpreters. For example, Mr. AL-Khalidy explained that his children literally were speechless because they could not convey to their teacher that they were being bullied, needed to use the restroom, wanted a drink water, or felt sick.
Understanding the experiences of the parents and children, enabled me from a critical literacy perspective, to understand their dilemma in a new way: We empower, liberate, or silence students through the decisions we make and the language we use. Every student has the right to communicate and have his or her voices heard. The Iraqi students though were silenced because they spoke Arabic and their teachers spoke English and there was no interpreter. As Gay (2010) noted: “Effective communication is simultaneously a goal, a method and the essence of quality classroom instruction. Yet communication with ethnically and linguistically diverse students is often problematic for many teachers.” (p. xix) Providing an interpreter for the students could have lessened the anxiety parents, teachers, and children felt. Ideological forces affected the Iraqi children’s actions. The language differences between them and their teachers influenced their actions and constrained them from communicating their thoughts and needs. The Iraqi children were making a significant academic, linguistic, cultural, and social transition. They required language support as they adjusted to schooling and living in the United States.

Parents also were affected by the lack of a translator. Mr. AL-Khalidy shared his story about the struggle he encountered with the school registration process. Speaking fluent Arabic with school personnel and staff who spoke fluent English made communication difficult or impossible, and in the process some information was lost or not understood. For example, the school did not collect information about the children’s former education and backgrounds. Mr. AL-Khalidy’s son was registered in a regular second-grade class instead of in a special needs class because the physician’s letter was overlooked. There were also other times when not having key information about the
children’s traumatic experiences in their war-torn homeland and their educational background severely limited the services and placements that might have been provided to other children in their schools. In addition, all three of the parents complained about the English-only methods of communications, such as the newsletters, teachers’ notes about homework, field trips, parent-teacher conferences, and the telephone calls. Field trips and class projects were particularly challenging. Neither the parents nor the children had experienced them before. There were also oral language challenges. Teachers explained about homework in English and then commented that the Iraqi children did not complete the homework. However, neither the children nor their parents understood what was expected.

Teachers also struggled without a translator. When the Iraqi parents came to the school with some concerns about their children, teachers were unsure of what they wanted. The teachers were frustrated because they wanted to understand and help and could not. Teachers also wanted to be able to discuss homework with the Iraqi children and their parents. While teachers opted to use a fourth grade student to translate between Iraqi parents, children and teachers, this was helpful but not sufficient. As Renee, et al. (2012) noted, there are important issue to consider when using children as translators:

Although many children speak more fluently than their adult family members, using them or other family members should be avoided for three reasons. First, the process of translating important information from the school to the family may change family dynamics. Second, the family member may not have the vocabulary to translate complex educational issues. And third, the family member may be reluctant to convey negative information (p. 82).
As a result of this study, I believe that teachers should use children as translators only as a last resort. I also think that the school should take the responsibility for providing interpreters.

The efforts parents make. Most of the parents helped their children learn English, and all of them wanted their children to be successful in American schools. Simultaneously, they helped the children maintain their home language, and learn about their heritage using multiple method, materials and personal resources. In all three families, the mothers took primary responsibility for assisting their children’s learning.

Two of the three parents explicitly helped their children learn English. Mrs. AL-Khalidy helped her children learn how to count by using oranges and apples. Her use of the objects in her home matched Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas about how children learn through social interaction with peers or more experienced individuals, and how they construct meanings and internalize that knowledge. Mrs. AL-Khalidy also acted as the facilitator for her children as she read a story written in English by using the pictures with her children, a technique her children told their mother that their teacher used. Mrs. AL-Khalidy showed patience with her children as learners while demonstrating to them socio-cultural lessons about working alongside others with understanding and compassion. Similarly, Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky used names of vegetables, fruits, and objects from home to teach their children English vocabulary.

At the same time, all three families wanted their children to speak Arabic and to be knowledgeable about their culture. All the families communicated in Arabic among themselves and they taught their children about their heritage language and culture. Taylor and Dorsey (1988) believed that literacy is culturally embedded and that was true
for these families. For instance, Mrs. and Mr. AL-Khalidy’s religious practices were apparent in their daily practices. They taught their children about the prophet Mohammed and his cousin, Ali, and his grandchildren Hassin and Hussein through artifacts they had brought with them from Iraq. These artifacts were an important element of the children’s daily cultural and linguistic practices. Through these artifacts, the children were developing their own identity and learning about their rich history. Similarly, Mrs. and Mr. AL-Maliky used the Quran and some religious books which contained stories about the prophet to teach their children about their culture and maintain their heritage and traditions. Uniquely, in this family, the grandmother played a vital role in assisting with Arabic language development and preserving their heritage and cultural practices. The grandmother also used oral story telling with the two children, and she shared with them many stories that emphasized morals and wisdom. In the third family, food was a dominant topic. Mrs. and Mr. AL-Hakeem were very knowledgeable about food and talking about food was a daily practice. Mr. AL-Hakeem used oral storytelling and recipes as a strategy to develop the children’s native language, Arabic, and to maintain their culture and heritage. These culturally based practices within the home lay the foundations for literacy understandings in Arabic and in other languages. They helped the parents and children to hold memories, tell oral stories, and express their identities. Phal and Rowsell (2010) believed that if teachers know about these unique artifacts and oral storytelling, the children will be able to connect both their home and school worlds and learn more effectively. When teachers integrate these cultural practices into their curriculum, children from all cultures will more likely enjoy reading and be motivated and engaged (Lazar, 2012).
The efforts teachers made. Teachers supported and enhanced the Iraqi students’ learning in English by using their current cultural experiences and heritage. For instance, Mrs. Dimka allowed Ali to read and write in Arabic in her class, a strategy that Fu (2009) believed teachers should use with multicultural students as a way of engaging and empowering them. Adapting such approaches allowed Mrs. Dimka to legitimize Ali’s native language, and she engaged him into her class as well. Her approach encouraged Ali, and instilled pride, and placed value on his mother tongue. By scaffolding him in this way, Mrs. Dimka facilitate his learning, lessened his tension, and engaged him in critical thinking. Such positive acts challenge the status quo in many classrooms where students’ home languages are ignored and are seen as inferior. By allowing Ali to write in Arabic, Mrs. Dimka valued and affirmed his identity. Incorporating his native language into an English-only class made Mrs. Dimka’s pedagogy culturally relevant and responsive. Gay (2010) and Rueda & Stillman (2012) argued that teachers who are culturally responsive:

1. know about student’s culture,
2. integrate students’ culture and language into the curriculum,
3. build a learning community,
4. care and support students,
5. communicate effectively and,
6. use student’s culture to plan for instructional strategies.

Mrs. Dimka also allowed Ali to present to the class something related to his previous experience about the ocean. By doing this, she built on his strengths and gave him an opportunity to express himself and share his voice as a writer. Her act was
emancipatory as she positioned Ali and others who were silenced at the heart of their classroom conversations. Emancipation is the heart of critical theory (Given, 2008); it gives voice to those who have been silenced, and it inspires a political action. Freire (1970) urged teachers to engage learners and create a space for questioning. Mrs. Dimka’s way of dealing with Ali made it possible her him to be a part of the learning community in her classroom.

Moreover, Mrs. Dimka showed that she was very supportive of Ali’s culture and home language. She showed a positive attitude toward Ali’s cultural differences. Morrow, Rueda, and Lapp (2009) believe that effective teachers create a supportive, encouraging and friendly environment and that was the kind of the environment that Mrs. Dimka provided for Ali.

The second teacher, Mrs. Green, also supported her student in her class. Like Mrs. Dimka, who provided scaffolding to help Ali, Mrs. Green utilized her knowledge and resources to enhance Rosa’s ability to succeed in her class by labeling most of the important items in her class for her in Arabic. Young and Halliday (2005) recommended using such labels because they assist English Language Learners in class. Moreover, Mrs. Green paired Rosa with another student who spoke Arabic to help her understand what Mrs. Green said.

Both of these teachers supported children’s progress, development and achievement by embracing their language capabilities in their first language to support their learning in English as their second language.
Implications and Recommendations

My exploration of Arabic speaking Iraqi refugee’s home-school relationships and communication was a fruitful area for research. The questions raised by my research suggest the area of home-school relationships as framed within families learning English as an additional language should be continued as well as expanded to include those who speak both English and Arabic. This would further enhance our understanding of potential resources and strategies families might utilize to communicate with the schools their children attend.

Implications and Recommendations for Iraqi Parents

The parents made efforts to be engaged with their children’s teachers and schools. However, the parents also reported that there were few formal programs offered by the school to facilitate communication and support parents becoming fully engaged. While it is important that parents ask the school for assistance if they need it, it would serve parents to have someone in the community who can assist them with translating into Arabic the information the schools sends out in English, particularly when the school cannot provide such services. If the interpreting services are not available, then parents should find other ways obtain translations and not rely entirely on school or the Refugee Resettlement agency.

It would be helpful if parents could broaden their understanding of literacy and go beyond its basic meaning as the ability to speak, read or write. They need to know that literacy has many other forms that they can use with their children to help them with school subjects as well as learn in their heritage language and cultural practices so that literacy learning is not restricted only to written materials. Parents may need additional
support as they learn more about the new aspects of literacy required within the new American context and the particular implications and uses of new literacy practices in the new school contexts their children attend.

Parents need to contact members of the community who speak Arabic and ask them about the available resources in the community and take advantage of these resources, such as language classes, and programs offered at the public library. They could contact the schools or churches in their community to learn about resources and activities that will support them in adapting to their new setting and in the schools their children attend.

Finally, parents should become members of their public library and apply for free library cards, and they should always visit the library with their children to read and check out books, CDs, DVDs, resources, magazines, and bilingual books in both English and Arabic. Parents should take advantage of the free computer classes offered at the library and learn about technological tools and social media that can support them and their children.

**Implications and Recommendations for Teachers**

The teachers who participated in this study had very superficial understandings of their Iraqi’ students’ culture. There are several things teachers can do to broaden and deepen their understanding.

Two out of three teachers had Iraqi students in their classroom the year prior to my study. The third teacher indicated that this was her first experience with an Iraqi student who spoke Arabic. Given that dealing with Arabic speaking Iraqi students may be a new experience for some teachers, I recommend that teachers develop their
background knowledge. Teachers could learn about the background of the Iraqi students, where they came from, their stories, their personal resources and their experiences of living in America.

Teachers need to seek out colleagues and resources that will broaden their understanding of the backgrounds and cultural practices of students who come to them from non-English speaking countries. It would also be beneficial if teachers went through the materials and watched the videos provided in the appendices of this document with other teachers, and had a dialogue with each other. As the year progresses, teachers can also share some materials and best practices and strategies related to Arabic-speaking children that they find to be successful. They need to have conversations about what strategies worked for them. Teachers can share information with other teachers who have had Arabic-speaking students and learn from them about effective methods and strategies they have used.

Teachers should reach out to Iraqi parents and learn about and from those families. Teachers should make initial contacts with parents and ask about any concerns their children have or about their children’s daily needs. Issues related to diet, mixed gender classes, and mixed gender groupings are of utmost importance within Arabic cultures.

I also recommend that teachers make at least one home visit, and try to do so during the first three months of the school year. Home visits should include interpreters who can help bridge the gap between parents and teachers and help teachers to better understand their students and their backgrounds. Seeking out someone who can translate for all parties is critical. It may be necessary to explore community services that can be
employed to support teachers in these efforts. Home visits will encourage parents to visit the school.

Teachers could also learn some Arabic themselves and request some Arabic-English bilingual materials through the library or from sources available online such as the one developed by Unite for Literacy (http://about.uniteforliteracy.com/2015/07/literacy-transforms/), a site that provides interesting stories read in multiple languages. Dual language texts support students as language users. Iraqi students who can read Arabic can read these books to their classmates in Arabic and consequently, their classmates will see their use of language as a strength rather than a deficit. Likewise, other students can read these stories in English to the Arabic speakers and assist them in understanding these stories. It is essential that teachers have and use books about children of different cultures and seek out information about whether the books have any misrepresentations or stereotypes. Putting up artifacts from all the cultures represented in the classroom and alphabet charts in all the languages spoken in the classroom will help all students, particularly children who speak languages other than English.

I also suggest that teachers should read more about multicultural education, funds of knowledge, culturally relevant pedagogy, and the socio-historical factors that contributed to their students’ literacy so they can develop practices that will fully engage their students. Teachers should educate themselves about the cultures of all their students. Literacy education and social equity go hand-in-hand. When teachers develop a better understanding about the relationships between culture and literacy, they are embracing a social equity perspective (Lazar et al., 2012).
I also recommend that teachers ask parents about the best way to communicate with them. Maybe parents prefer or feel that some methods are more efficient than others. I also suggest that teachers take the initiative and create the initial contact with the parents and invite parents early in the school year to visit their school, and if possible include a translator or another student who can speak both English and the parent’s language. They can also ask parents to help teach them and their students their language. This will reduce some of the parent’s stereotypes and fears about American schools.

Finally, teachers should invite parents to their classrooms to give them the opportunity to explore the classroom and provide information to answer their questions. This may counter any stereotypes or misconceptions about the daily classroom practices and family experiences that may exist on the part of parents and teachers alike. Such visits will help parents have a broader picture of what an American classroom entails. Teachers can prepare a PowerPoint about their classroom schedule and daily activities that might help parents to learn about their particular classrooms and about education in American schools (Renee et al., 2012).

Implications and Recommendations for the Schools

Based on the findings in this study, I recommend that schools take twelve actions. First, the school should conduct a family needs-assessment in the language spoken by each of their students. Some schools and states already do this, e.g., Washoe School District Needs Assessment of Parents in Reno, Nevada and the Kentucky Department of Education (see Appendix O for a website list). A needs-assessment will provide the school with some insights and feedback from families who might have been excluded from traditional outreach methods. It was apparent from the data that the primary reason
for less involvement and communication with the school was the language barrier. Therefore, it is vital that the schools make efforts for outreach to the immigrant families, and potentially reach out to other community services that might support their efforts. The school also should take into consideration the important differences that some families have. For example, some families might have some friends who have helped them navigate and assimilate in the U.S. while some others might not have any support of this kind. Those families who have been here in the U.S. for some time have more information about the school system and might have experiences to share, which the school can orchestrate so that more knowledgeable immigrants can help new arrivals.

Second, schools should provide interpreters for at least the first three months. This will help parents until they feel more comfortable, and become acquainted with the school’s expectations and the environment. Hopefully, this will have an impact parents’ involvement in and communication with the school. To reduce translation costs, the school can contact Arabic speakers who are fluent in English within the community to assist with translation on the school site or on the phone. Schools should keep in mind that some families might be reluctant to seek assistance from individuals from their culture or may be concerned about privacy issues.

Third, most immigrants are relatively new to the school system, and they are unaware of how American school systems work, and what expectations the schools have of them. They usually face many problems when they arrive. Schools can support them by facilitating their understanding of American schools. The school could prepare PowerPoint slides in the language of the immigrants and English that inform the parents about their school system and organization. I recommend that the school provide
translations in all the languages spoken by the families and these can be posted on the school web site for easy access.

Fourth, schools should provide information about available transportation. If this could be offered at least once or twice a month, or in the case of school events, this would make it possible for the parents to be more actively involved with the school. In fact, the school can tell parents in advance so that they can schedule a carpool with one of the parents if possible. This will encourage all the parents to be more engaged with the school and support their children’s education.

Fifth, schools need to ensure that the receptionist at the main office is able to deal with families who are learning English and can welcome them, or to seek out volunteers who can do this. As one educator explained:

We work hard to make our staff in the office inviting and comfortable and receptive, and I think they’ve done it with enough international families that they’re pretty good at this, so that’s another part of making the school feel welcoming to anybody who comes in to enroll.

Sixth, the school should translate some of most important paper work, such as field trip forms, class projects, and demographic data cards, or at least the enrollment package in the languages spoken by the families. For instance, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the schools have all of the school’s documents available in many languages, such as Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic so that parents can understand them.

Seventh, the school should provide professional development about immigrants, including Arabic-speaking Iraqi families, so that teachers understand the importance of knowing about their students and their cultures and can use this knowledge in the
classroom. At the same time, the school should ensure that the teachers are not taught about stereotypes and that teachers are sensitive to differences within and across cultural groups.

Eight, new students should be assigned to teachers who have experience with emergent bilinguals and those teachers should support other teachers in gaining such experiences. The experienced teachers might give short workshops and share their knowledge with school colleagues.

Ninth, schools might also provide some English language classes at their schools or suggest community locations that might be convenient for the Iraqi mothers and fathers to attend who have no transportation.

Tenth, schools should go beyond food, dances, and art when they design their cultural nights, so as to celebrate the deeper differences among cultural groups (Lazar et al., 2012). Culture is about what individuals in the community do as they engage in daily interactions in their communities and the beliefs and values they hold. Cultural nights can easily help students, teachers and parents broaden their understandings of the various cultures within each school.

Eleventh, schools should give parents a tour in their home language, or offer a presentation at school about the available resources in the community and within the school, show parents the school website, help them subscribe, create user names and facilitate their access to information and communication networks (see Appendix M for the resources).

Twelfth, schools should obtain materials that can facilitate the teachers’ jobs such as Arabic-English dictionaries and bilingual picture books for use by all of the children.
Also, the schools need to provide teachers with some posters for their classrooms that reflect other cultures other than mainstream cultures.

**Implications and Recommendations for Refugee Agencies**

Through my job with the Refugee Resettlement Agency, I provided interpretation services during training sessions about job searches, job interviews, bus training and aspects of American culture. There were no sessions related to schools or literacy in American society.

However, the refugee agency did not provide any interpreters for parents when they went to the school to enroll their children. One of the participants said when they registered his son they forgot to register him for the bus. All the participants said that the agency usually did not help with any issues related to the school. During my job as an interpreter in the agency I helped the parents with health related issues such as doctors’ appointments, and job interviews, and social security interviews. If the agency also provided the parents with an interpreter to help them with school information, that would be a significant improvement.

I recommend that the agency provides refugees with sessions about school as well as literacy issues. The refugee agency can inform parents or ask a teacher or principal to assist them in providing information about their roles as parents in support of their children. The agency could educate and support the refugees upon their arrival with information about school enrollment and registration, and about attending parents’ conferences, and special events. The refugee agency can ask teachers to come and give a talk to the refugees at the agency office about school and ask an interpreter to translate or the refugee agency can conduct this session at the school.
It is important that the refugee resettlement agency and the school work together to better serve those refugees who have had very different experiences with schooling before their immigration to the U.S. In fact, the school should invite a case manager to the school to tell the teachers the stories of each of the refugees who came from different backgrounds and cultures with different schooling experiences. This exchange of information could pave the way for greater access for parents and greater parent participation in the ongoing life of the school.

The refugee office could help provide information about or actually provide Arabic/English materials. They could enroll parents in computer classes so that parents could become aware of how to access email and communicate with the schools. They could provide the Iraqi parents with some websites that have free Arabic materials. They might also show the parents the library and get them library cards so that they can get some books for themselves and their children.

The agency should continue to find a way to help Iraqi parents find English classes in locations that are convenient for them. The agency could conduct some cultural sessions for those parents around certain topics that might help them merge into the new culture. Raising the parents’ awareness of such issues might assist them toward more readily accepting their new culture and help to avoid problems once school starts.

**Implications and Recommendations for the District Office**

First, by law, the district must provide an interpreter for those families who are learning English, so the district must provide an interpreter whenever a family needs one, especially for the first day of enrollment. Each school must know as much information about the child and the family as possible so that the teacher can better serve the child.
The school can obtain such information from parents directly, through an interpreter, if necessary, or from their case manager at the resettlement agency.

Second, the district should provide professional development programs for their teachers, and these should be provided by educators who are deeply knowledgeable about how to support multicultural and multilingual classrooms with culturally relevant methods and techniques. Topics should include but not limited to, multicultural education, supporting funds of knowledge, teaching English language learners and learning about the diversity of families.

The district could provide the schools with Arabic/English literature that represents that culture and provide some posters that could be displayed in classrooms. The district could purchase some Arabic/English literature for the library as well so that the students can check out these books, and their parents could have access to these materials so they can assist their children in both languages. This would create a welcoming classroom and school environment.

The district could provide family literacy programs or projects to engage parents and their children in literacy experiences. For instance, the project FLAME was designed to assist families to share literacy with their children. The aim of this program was to make parents aware of the importance of supporting their children at an early stage of their literacy development, and enhance parents’ understanding about their roles. In a study by Reese and Gallimore, (1995) cited in Parecki (2003), the researchers found that written instructions or short training sessions were not practical with their new Hispanic immigrants. They believed that parents need more explicit information that explained things more clearly.
It is important that the district considers the cultures of the families when making decisions about how to be helpful. For example, Arab males usually do not like anybody visiting their home unless they are present.

**The Need for Further Research**

Spending time with these three families enhanced my understanding of the nature of the home–school relationships, the multiple literacy forms the families used to support their children with school subjects and home culture and language heritage. Moreover, spending some time with the three teachers and the refugee resettlement agency cases manager helped me have a clearer picture of their efforts to communicate with parents, strategies used with their students, and issues from their perspective that affected home-school relationships. Although I have learned much, there is much more that I believe can be learned in this area of study. Further research is needed in:

1. investigating the methods schools used to engage and reach out to Iraqi families;
2. investigating the effect of the unique services available to families and their children;
3. investigating how welcoming the school environment is and what affect it has on families;
4. interviewing the principals and assistant principals to explore how the school engages in outreach to the Iraqi families;
5. finding out why some schools are not addressing the current laws by not providing the Iraqi refugee with translation services and interpreting;
6. interviewing other members in the household, such as the children, aunts, and
grandparents about the literacy forms used with children;

7. observing some teachers in class to document the positive ways used to
interact with the Iraqi children and avoid the problems those students could
encounter;

8. finding out what professional development programs related to home-school
relationships are the most effective as teachers seek ways to support Arabic
speaking families and students;

9. finding out what topics in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs
are offered concerning support for Iraqi families and their children and

10. finding out about effective methods and strategies used to engage Iraqi parents
across geographic contexts in the U.S.

I hope that researchers will continue in the footsteps of this study. Researchers
and scholars, such as Compton-Lilly (2004), Dantas and Manyaks (2010), Kiyama
(2011), Linda (2011) interviewed African Americans, Latinos, Chinese, and Vietnamese
families in ethnographic studies, but no research has been done with regard to home-
school relationships and communication with Arabic speaking Iraq families now residing
in the United States.

Conclusion

I will conclude with what Mandela (2012) said, “If you talk to a man in a
language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that
goes to his heart.” I have learned a lot from the Iraqi parents about the methods they used
with their children to support their literacy learning endeavors and the challenges as well
as the support they encountered in schools. Although I assisted these families with many issues related to their lives, such as interpreting for them for many social services (including but not limited to doctor appointments, social security, and job interviews, teacher’s conferences at school), I wish that in this study, I had focused on only one family rather than three or that I had taken the time to work more with each family to gather more indepth information about them. These three families made a tremendous effort to support their children’s literacy and heritage language. They also showed me how persistent and determined they were to educate and support their children.
REFERENCES


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doi:10.1177/0042085914534272


APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW DURING PILOT STUDY

Interview Protocol

Introduction: the goal of this interview is to find out if there are any problems you are facing in your communication with the school.

Questions:

1. How did you communicate between home and school in Iraq?
2. How do you support the child in the learning process?
3. Are your responsibilities in USA the same as Iraq?
4. What are your responsibilities toward your son’s education?
5. What are the problems your child faced?
6. What is your role at home?
7. What other resources have you used beside your help?
8. What are the problems?
9. What are some suggestions you would give the school to improve communication?
10. Did you attend parents’ night?
11. Did you have a look at the books in his class?
12. Did you find anything related to your culture in your sons class?
APPENDIX B

TRANSLATED PORTIONS OF PARENTS’ INTERVIEWS

DURING PILOT STUDY

Ahmed: My son said I understand, but I do not know how to tell the miss
the boy hit me.

Ahmed: The teacher told me you are responsible for his behavior.

Ahmed: My son told me, “Dad the boy pinch me and hit me. “ My son suffers and
cannot translate to English.

Ahmed: I did not understand if this was the school rule or if my son tried to eat
during improper times.

Ahmed: My son knows the name of the shapes in Arabic.

Ahmed: The teacher said you are assisting him and this is considered cheating.
APPENDIX C

PARENTS’ PILOTED QUESTIONNAIRE

ARABIC/ENGLISH VERSION

Dear Parent,
Please answer all the following questions accurately.

Parents’ Questionnaire

1. Nationality:

2. Gender:
   Male
   Female

3. Age:
   25-29
   30-34
   35-39
   40-44
   45-49
   50 or more

4. Education level:

5. Number of children:
   Boys (      )
   Girls (      )
   (Ages      )

6. Native Languages:

7. Time arrived to the USA:

8. Visa Statues:

9. City and State:

10. Languages spoken other than the native language:

Thank you for your time!

شاكراً لك على أوقاتك!
APPENDIX D

MODIFIED PARENTS’ PILOTED QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respected parents,

This questionnaire aims to collect data about the home-school experience. It also gathers demographic data about your son or daughter and you as a parent. Please try to answer all the 12 questions to the best of your ability and if you have any question, please, ask me.

1. Approximately how many minutes does your son or daughter read everyday?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>15 minutes or more</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>30 minutes or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>45 minutes or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>60 minutes or more</td>
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<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Never read everyday</td>
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2. Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s school</td>
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<td>Your child’s transportation</td>
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<td>Your child’s teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your child’s English language development</td>
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<td></td>
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3. How long have you been here in the U.S?

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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Less than a month</td>
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<td>B.</td>
<td>1 to 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>4 to 6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>7 to 9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>A year or more</td>
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</table>

4. Describe the home–school experience with your children’s school?

5. How many children do you have?

6. Do you drive?  
   Yes  No

7. Do you speak English?  
   Yes  No

8. What is your yearly income?

9. Did any one from the school visit you at your home? If yes answer the next question?

10. How often do you go to the library in your community?

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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Once a week</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Twice a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Three times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for completing the questions.
Dear Respected parents,

This questionnaire aims to collect data about the home-school experience. It also gathers demographic data about your son or daughter and you as a parent. Please try to answer all the questions to the best of your ability and if you have any question, please, ask me.

أعزائي أولياء الأمور المحترمين

يهدف هذا الاستبيان إلى جمع البيانات حول التجربة بين البيت والمدرسة. كما أنه يجمع البيانات الديموغرافية حول ابنك أو ابنتك وعنك أنت كوالد/ة. يرجى الإجابة بدقة على جميع الأسئلة.

إذا كان لديك أي سؤال، من فضلك، إسألي

A. Demographic Data

أ. الديموغرافية

1. Nationality: …………………….. الجنسية
2. Gender: ………………………… الجنس
3. Age: …………………………..... (أختار إجابة)
   A. 25-29
   B. 30-34
   C. 35-39
   D. 40-44
   E. 45-49
   F. 50 or more أو أكثر
5. Number of children: 

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Girls (بنات) Ages</th>
<th>( )</th>
<th>Boys (بنين) Ages</th>
<th>( )</th>
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</thead>
</table>

6. Native Languages: 

7. Date arrived to the USA: 

8. Education level: 

9. Visa Status: 

10. City and State: 

11. Languages spoken other than the native language: 

12. How long have you been here in the U.S? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than a month</th>
<th>1 - 3 months</th>
<th>4 to 6 months</th>
<th>7 to 9 months</th>
<th>A year or more</th>
</tr>
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</table>

13. What is your yearly income? Please choose one answer by putting a check in front of the answer.

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<tr>
<th>Choose one</th>
<th>(اختار إجابتك)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 10,000 $ or less</td>
<td>عشر آلاف دولار في السنة أو أقل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 20,000 $ or less</td>
<td>عشرون ألف دولار في السنة أو أقل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 30,000 $ or less</td>
<td>ثلاثون ألف دولار في السنة أو أقل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 40,000 $ or less</td>
<td>أربعون ألف دولار في السنة أو أقل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. 50,000 $ or less</td>
<td>خمسون ألف دولار في السنة أو أقل</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Number Of Minutes Reading Everyday

1A) For approximately how many minutes does your son or daughter read every day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st son or daughter</th>
<th>2nd son or daughter</th>
<th>3rd son or daughter</th>
<th>4th son or daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>الإبن أو البنت الأولي</td>
<td>الإبن أو البنت الثانية</td>
<td>البنت الثالثة</td>
<td>البنت الرابعة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. 15 min. or more
   15 دقيقة أو أكثر
B. 30 min. or more
   30 دقيقة أو أكثر
C. 45 min. or more
   45 دقيقة أو أكثر
D. 60 min. or more
   60 دقيقة أو أكثر

Never read everyday
لا يقرأ ابناً أبداً كل يوم
### Satisfaction About Services For First Oldest Child

1B) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A. Your first child’s school
B. Your first child’s transportation
C. Your first child’s teacher
D. Your first child’s English language development
E. Your first child’s Arabic language development

### Satisfaction About Services For Second Child

1C) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A. Your second child’s school teacher
B. Your second child’s transportation
C. Your second child’s teacher
D. Your second child’s English language development
E. Your second child’s Arabic language development

**Satisfaction About Services For Third Child**

1D) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your third child’s school</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your third child’s transportation</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your third child’s teacher</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your third child’s English language development</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your third child’s Arabic language development</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Satisfaction About Services For Fourth Child**

1E) Please rate your satisfaction on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your fourth child’s school</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your fourth child’s transportation</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your fourth child’s teacher</td>
<td>ضعيف</td>
<td>دون المتوسط</td>
<td>متوسط</td>
<td>جيد جداً</td>
<td>ممتاز</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Your fourth child’s English language development

E. Your fourth child’s Arabic language development

Frequency of Going To The Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Family 1</th>
<th>Family 2</th>
<th>Family 3</th>
<th>Family 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times a week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How do you support your child’s learning and languages at home? Please write your response on the following blank page. Page 13

2. What are the things that you hope the school does toward your children’s learning? Please write your response on the following blank page. Page 15

3. Did you visit your children’s school(s)? If yes, why have you visited them?
4. Did anyone from the school visit you at your home? If yes, describe the experience. Please write your response on the following blank page.

هل زارك أحد من المدرسة في منزلك؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم، صِف التجربة. يرجى كتابة الرد على الصفحة الفارغة التي تلي.

5. How often do you go to the library in your community?

كم مرة تذهب إلى المكتبة في الحي الذي تسكن فيه؟

Choose one (اختر الجواب)

A Daily
B Once a week
C Twice a week
D Three times a week
E Sometimes
F Rarely
G Never

6. Describe the home–school experience with your children’s school in the US? Please write your response on the following blank page. Page 7

صف تجربة البيت مع مدرسة أولادك في أمريكا؟ يرجى الكتابة على الصفحة الفارغة التي تلي. الصفحة 7

7. Describe the home–school experience with your children’s school in Iraq? Please write your response on the following blank page. Page 9

صف تجربة البيت مع مدرسة أولادك في العراق؟ يرجى الكتابة على الصفحة الفارغة التي تلي. الصفحة 9

Response to question 2

Response to question 3

Response to question 4
Response to question 5

Response to question 7

Response to question 8

Thank you for the answer.

Saad Bushaala
## APPENDIX G

### IRAQI REFUGEE PROCESSING AS OF APRIL 30, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referrals</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>to USRAP</td>
<td>12,098</td>
<td>28,769</td>
<td>49,276</td>
<td>46,472</td>
<td>39,878</td>
<td>15,878</td>
<td>10,950</td>
<td>203,321</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>USCIS</strong></td>
<td>4,437</td>
<td>23,862</td>
<td>29,096</td>
<td>27,277</td>
<td>26,831</td>
<td>20,073</td>
<td>11,094</td>
<td>142,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approved</strong></td>
<td>2,909</td>
<td>18,674</td>
<td>25,238</td>
<td>24,021</td>
<td>22,323</td>
<td>16,992</td>
<td>9,045</td>
<td>119,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by USCIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admitted</strong></td>
<td>1,608</td>
<td>13,823</td>
<td>18,838</td>
<td>18,016</td>
<td>9,388</td>
<td>12,163</td>
<td>11,066</td>
<td>84,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website*
APPENDIX H

TEACHERS’ INTERVIEW PILOTED QUESTIONS

1. What methods of communication are used between home and school?

2. What methods of communication do you use with your Iraqi refugee students and their parents? Which ones do you find the most effective?

3. To what extent are your Iraqi refugee parents involved in your school?

4. What events have been offered by the school to engage the Iraqi parents?

5. What suggestions do you have that can enhance and improve the home school communication and parent’s involvement?

6. Do you conduct home visits with your children and their parents? On what aspects do you focus during your home visit to your Iraqi refugee students and their parents?

7. How do you address your refugee students’ needs in the classroom? If they have any particular problems that you have noticed, what are they?

8. What special instructional techniques or material have you used with your students?

9. Have you done any projects with your students that led to giving them voice and helped in social justice?
APPENDIX I

TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of:</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1(^{st}), 2013</td>
<td>Begin job search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20(^{th}) to 31(^{st}),</td>
<td>Send invitation letters to participants and sign consents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1(^{st})-14(^{th})</td>
<td>Undergo Human Subjects review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15(^{th}) -31(^{st})</td>
<td>Submit a request to District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect data in March - May while</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working on the first three chapters of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dissertation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1(^{st}), 2015</td>
<td>Start data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(^{th})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(^{th})</td>
<td>Conduct the first home visits to the three families and ask them if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they have any questions about the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(^{th})</td>
<td>Continue with data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29(^{th})</td>
<td>Start giving the questionnaires to the families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30(^{th})</td>
<td>Analyze the questionnaire and put them into tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(^{th})</td>
<td>Start working on chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Continue collecting data and begin interviewing the first group of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start working on Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(^{th})</td>
<td>Transcribe the first interview and read the data many times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(^{th})</td>
<td>Continue collecting data and begin interviewing the second group of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(^{nd})</td>
<td>Continue with transcribing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29(^{th})</td>
<td>Continue collecting data and begin interviewing the third group of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1st</td>
<td>Continue with data analyses and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Continue with data analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td>Continue with data analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td>Continue with data analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td>Complete Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write last chapter drafts in May and June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1st</td>
<td>Complete chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td>Complete chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1st</td>
<td>Submit a complete first draft dissertation copy to committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Apply for Fall graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14th</td>
<td>Schedule Pre-defense committee meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td>Begin final editing based upon committee input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1st</td>
<td>Set final defense date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Submit Defensible Draft to Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th - 22nd</td>
<td>Hold final defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd - 28th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td>Final Dissertation submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

TEACHERS’ INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SUPPORT OF

RESEARCH QUESTION #1

1. Tell me about your experiences with the Iraqi family in and out of school?
2. Describe your relationship with the family of the Iraqi child/children in your class.
   a. How was that relationship started (or not)?
   b. When did you first establish contact with the family?
   c. Was it in or out of school?
   d. How did you establish contact?
   e. How did you communicate?

What happened?
How did you feel?
What did you worry about?
What happened that made you feel comfortable?
Did you feel uncomfortable about anything?

3. What do you wish you had done differently?
4. What factors do you feel affect this relationship?
   What hinders it? What supports it?
   Could you give me examples of each?
5. Has the relationship changed over time? If it has changed, describe that change and why you think it occurred? If it has not changed, why do you think there as been no change?
6. What forms of communication have taken place between home and school? a. How effective or ineffective were they?
7. Is there anything you could have done differently to better support communication? What support would have helped you?
8. For what reasons do you think that schools and families should communicate with each other?
   a. Why do you think that?
   b. Why is such a relationship important?
APPENDIX K

TEACHERS’ INTERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN SUPPORT OF

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

1. How did the Iraqi family come to US?
   a. What is their story?
   b. Where are they from?
   c. Why did they come to the U.S.?
   d. What were they doing prior to coming to the U.S.?
   e. How did you learn those stories?
   f. Are there pieces to the story that you do not yet know?

2. What background knowledge and experiences did the Iraqi family and their children bring with them to the U.S.?

3. How does the family support (or not support) the child’s:
   a. Success in US schools?
   b. Maintain and build heritage and home language.
   c. Give me examples.

4. What special methods do you know about that the Iraq refugee families use to help their children:
   a. Be successful in US schools?
   b. Maintain and build heritage and home language.
   c. Maintain and build knowledge of home cultural traditions and beliefs?

5. What skills and knowledge do you utilize as resources to enhance the Iraqi’s children succeed in your class?

6. What more do you need to know to be able to utilize the resources they bring to the classroom in support of their learning?

7. How do you think the parents support their children’s learning at home?

Thank you for your time!

Saad Bushaala
APPENDIX L

REFUGEES’ AGENCY PERSONNEL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Questions

1. What kind of school related services does the Refugees’ Agency provide for the Iraqi refugees?

2. How do the Iraqi refugees get help with their children’s schooling process through the Refugees’ Agency?

3. What kind of services does your office provide for the Arab speaking Iraqi refugee families and their children with regard to school?

4. For how long does your office help them with regard to school?

5. How are the Arab speaking Iraqi refugees’ children enrolled in the school?
   a. Tell me about the process of school enrollment with regard to the Iraqi refugees’ children.
   b. How do they manage to register their children without speaking any English?
   c. How can we help the Arab speaking Iraqi refugees become actively engaged with teachers and schools?
APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SUPPORT OF RESEARCH QUESTION #1

PARENTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your experiences with your children’s teacher and school?

2. Describe your relationships with teachers and other school personnel with your children’s school(s)
   a. How was that relationship started (or not)?
      Tell the stories about when you first established contact with the school, first went to the school, first met and talked to the teacher?
   b. What happened?
   c. How did you feel?
   d. What did you worry about?
   e. What happened that made you feel comfortable?
   f. Did you feel uncomfortable about anything? What do you wish the school/teachers had done differently?

3. What factors do you feel affect this relationship?
   - What hinders it?
   - What supports it?
   - Could you give me examples of each?

4. Has the relationship changed over time?
   - If it has changed, describe that change and why you think it occurred?
   - If it has not changed, why do you think there has been no change?
APPENDIX N

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SUPPORT OF RESEARCH QUESTION #2

PARENTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What background knowledge and experiences do you use to enhance your children’s:
   - Success in U.S. schools
   - Ability to maintain and build heritage and home language.
   - Ability to maintain and build heritage and home cultural traditions and beliefs
      Please give me some examples/tell stories about ways that you do this.

2. What special methods and materials have you used to help your children:
   - Be successful in US schools?
   - Maintain and build heritage and home language?
   - Maintain and build knowledge of home cultural traditions and beliefs?

3. What unique experiences and knowledge do you and your children possess that are important to the children’s success in U.S. schools?

4. What unique skills and knowledge do you and your children possess that are important to maintaining the children’s knowledge of cultural heritage and language?
5. What impact did these unique experiences have on the students?

6. Why such experiences are important?

7. Do the teachers utilize these unique experiences and knowledge in their classrooms?

8. If so, how?

9. If not, why do you think they do not?

10. How would it be helpful for your child if teachers would utilize that knowledge and those unique experiences?
APPENDIX O

TENTATIVE WEBSITE LIST

Web sites that have multilingual books such as:

http://about.uniteforliteracy.com/2015/10/education-without-ends/

Resources for Schools and Districts

IRC (International Rescue Committee) booklet for teachers of refugees

New York State Education Department Resource Guide for Educating Refugee Youth

Guide on Involving Immigrant and Refugee Families in Their Children's Schools: Barriers, Challenges and Successful Strategies

Denver Public Schools videos on refugee family-school engagement (available in English and in Korean (?) to show to parents)

https://www.neafoundation.org/content/assets/2012/03/pthv-full-issue-brief-5.pdf

Videos

https://vimeo.com/16908939  refugee stories

Books

Engaging the families of ELLs by Rubin 2012