Seeing and Being Seen: A Multimodal Inquiry of Multilingual High School Newcomers and Their Contributions to Educational Communities

Ivana Espinet

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Seeing and Being Seen: 
A multimodal inquiry of multilingual high school newcomers 
and their contributions to educational communities

by
Ivana Espinet

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
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Ivana Espinet

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

Seeing and Being Seen:
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by
Ivana Espinet

Advisor: Professor Wendy Luttrell

This dissertation research followed the experiences of seven high school newcomers who chose to participate in an internship program, assisting elementary school students, some of whom were also emergent bilinguals. This study used ethnographic and visual methodologies to explore young people’s evolving understanding of teaching, learning, and languaging as members of a community of practice within the internship.

The internship provided a space for the young people to make sense of schooling in their new country. The narratives that the interns shared highlight how the set of linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires of practice that they entered with shaped how they engaged and contributed to the classroom communities in which they were placed. They rooted their linguistic practices in their critiques of language policies in their countries and in the United States. They challenged binary classroom relationships by leveraging their own experiences and understanding of what it means to be students, and they brokered relationships, expanding the classroom communities.
Acknowledgements

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A dissertation is not just an individual endeavor, but is also a family endeavor. I could not have done it without my husband, and partner of 25 years, Bryce, who has listened, read, and proofread over many late nights after our children were in bed, nor without my children, Mateo, Luka, and Aliya, who bring me joy every day.
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CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING ABOUT SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES

Ahmed: In my country, the teachers are very strict. If you do bad thing and if you don't do the homework, they beat you with the stick.

Alex: Mine too. (…)

Mayou: I got beat up a lot… In Haiti in school, when you fight, they don't see you or call your parents. They just make you stay after school and clean the lunch room.

Rustam: Yes!!! (smiling knowingly)

Mayou: Wash all the dishes... (laughing ) and mop the floor, clean the table.

Rustam: Yeah, they also cleaning after school like that... Each week we have like... different students... we have to their schedule... like time sheet... like to cleaning the classroom.

Alex: And we even have to clean up the place for flowers ... and...

Rustam: Everything...
Alex: Both have good things and bad things. (Other youths in the group nod in agreement.)

Ivana: Both have good things and bad things?

Mayou: Oh yeah. For me, is like sometimes I see school in Haiti as better... in that kids are more respectful. Here, even though you do something, they just suspend you. Like when you get the kids suspended, they get benefit from them... they sit at home eating ... they get benefit from them. But in Haiti, you don't get suspended, it’s like you learn from what you do. (Seminar 4 Field notes and transcript, April 1 2014)

This dialogue was one of many in which the high school newcomers who participated in this research engaged during our meetings. Each participant, spent between twelve to fifteen hours a week doing an internship in an elementary school classroom\(^1\), assisting a teacher in various tasks, such as setting up for activities and working with individual students or small groups of students. I met with the group for two hours once a week for nine weeks in what we called seminar sessions. All the students in the group came from Flatbush International, a school that is part of the International Network for Public Schools\(^2\). As in the example above, during these seminar sessions, the young people in the group often would make sense of their schooling

\(^1\) All of the students in Flatbush International are required to do an internship in the Spring semester of 11th grade. The school offers a variety of options for internship sites from which the students can choose. The students in this study chose to work in an elementary school.

\(^2\) The International Network for Public Schools supports twenty-two secondary schools in different areas in the US. The schools serve recent immigrants who are emergent bilinguals and have four years or fewer of education in U.S. schools. In chapter three, I provide more information about their model.
experiences by comparing their home countries’ systems and expectations with each other’s and with those of the U.S.

In entering their internship, many of the interns talked about choosing PS129 because they wanted to learn about schools in the United States.\(^3\) At the time, I didn’t think much of it, but as I went deeper into the analysis of their conversations, journals, and images, I realized that making sense of schools was an essential process for them as they learned to be students in the United States. Reflecting on my own process as an immigrant, I realized that when I first came to the U.S., even though I was a little older (almost at the end of college in Argentina), I chose to do something very similar. I spent almost a year observing two schools for newcomers in San Francisco, one for students whose home language was Spanish and another one for Filipino students, and writing about them. I wrote about the spatial organization of the classrooms, the interactions between the kids and the teachers, their strategies for teaching, and the use of language\(^4\). While I was interested in education, my college degree was in Communications. When I went back to Argentina to show what I had written to one of my professors, she told me that it didn’t have anything to do with Communications (as she understood it). Looking back on it, I realized that perhaps the hidden agenda of my project, as someone who was in the process of immigrating to the U.S., was to make sense of schooling for myself. As a child, I had marched joyfully to my elementary school classroom in the morning to the rhythm of a military march, sat in rows, only rarely got to speak during class, but got multiple recess periods and a shorter

\(^3\) During the second and third year of the internship, I helped the school interview and place the students. When I asked them why they chose this internship, most of them responded that it was either they didn’t go to elementary school here and they curious about it, or because they have young cousins or siblings and they like taking care of them. None of the youths said that they were planning to become teachers or that they were doing it for professional reasons.
school day. Watching children sit in groups, work out math problems with manipulatives\textsuperscript{5}, and spend most of their day at school was fascinating to me. But like the interns in the discussion, I was mostly trying to make sense of the school system for myself.

In participating in these discussions with the interns during the seminar sessions, I also shared some of my school experiences growing up in Argentina. I found that, for the most part, my school memories were much closer to those of the interns than to what my own children experience every day in school. In the exchange of school descriptions, I also found relief in not having to explain that, while marching to my classroom to the sound of “Marcha de San Lorenzo” could be read as a form of oppression that mirrored what was going on in Argentina during the military government of the time, as a kid, I actually quite enjoyed it. When I remember it now, my initial memory is of the playfulness of marching with my friends, knowing that we should keep in formation and not bump into each other, but doing it anyway, as a subtle form of rebellion and play.

Christina Igoa, in the “Inner world of the Immigrant Child”, describes how her work with elementary age immigrant children creating stories through film strips helped them to make sense of the different educational systems and teaching styles. She talks about how many of her students were initially perplexed by the differences: “The child, confused by different teaching styles in the host country as compared to his her own country asks, ‘Did my teacher in Hong Kong teach me the wrong way? Is her method better than in Hong Kong? Do I discount the manner in which I learned in my country? Is the new teacher interested in me?’” (Igoa, 1995, p.102) While the youths in the internship were older when they immigrated to the United States

\textsuperscript{5} Manipulatives are objects designed so children can learn concepts through hands on experiences by manipulating them.
than the children in Igoa’s book and had already been in the country for a few years before they began their internship, I believe that they were also trying to make sense of the different educational experiences. Their choices to do their internships at a school and their discussions about their everyday lives in the elementary school classroom were also part of this process. At the end of the internship, a few of them reflected on how they felt lost at the internship, similar to how they felt in their first day at school in the United States.

Many of the comparisons that the youths made were related to the basic structure of the day, the physical organization of the classroom, and the number of teachers and students. But there were other discussions in which they went deeper and sought to explore the more complicated aspects of schooling. In the example that I use at the beginning of this chapter, the interns were wrestling with two different issues: discipline methods in both systems and the different ways that students were expected to participate in their school communities. As the semester went on, they examined and critiqued language policies in their home country and in the United States, reflected on their own language practices, re-framed binary relationship between teachers and students, and discussed and critiqued the value of standardized testing.

**Statement of the problem**

Since the mid 1980’s, the domestic United States emergent bilingual population has more than doubled (García & Kleifgen, 2010). In the New York City public school system, 42.42% of enrolled students speak a language other than English at home. Emergent bilinguals (EB) make

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6 The NYC Department of Education uses the term English Language Learners for students who are not yet proficient in English. However, I choose to use the term ‘emergent bilinguals’ because it emphasizes students’ potential to become bilingual instead of solely focusing on the academic English development part of the students’ education. Using the term ‘emergent
up 13.1% of the entire NYC Department of Education (DOE) student population, with 152,455 EB’s enrolled in the school system (NYC DOE, 2015). High schools have the second highest concentration of emergent bilinguals, 26.42% of the DOE’s EB population is in high school. In the 2014-2015 school year, the percentage of emergent bilinguals who were newcomers was 63.73% of the overall emergent bilingual population. (NYC DOE, 2015).

In the last twenty-five years educational reforms in the United States were driven by an emphasis on high-stakes mandated testing and the privatization of public education. (Cuban, 2016, Ravitch, 2016) These reforms were not designed with emergent bilinguals in mind and provide a backdrop for views of teaching and learning that affect all students in public schools across the nation. They have created a system that imports corporate thinking into education, privileging competition, data gathering, and punitive accountability over questioning, discovering, learning, and providing spaces to develop creativity, kindness, honesty, and good citizenship. Most recently, the political discourse at the federal level has created a hostile environment against immigrants and their children, blaming them for the ills of society and promoting fear and segregation. At a time when we are facing an ideological struggle over the forms of knowledge, social practices, and values that should drive education, more than ever, there is a sense of urgency in creating counter-narratives that provide a window into the experiences of immigrant youth as active participants and contributors to educational communities.

The relationship between immigrant youth and their communities has been studied from many different angles, most often in connection to school, school achievement, and differences between immigrant groups (Luttrell, Dorsey, Shalaby, & Hayden, 2011). There is a body of bilinguals’ recognizes bilingualism as “a cognitive, social and educational resource” (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010 p.3).
literature that connects low student achievement and low self-esteem to schools that attempt to divorce students from their culture and communities (Valenzuela, 1999; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Much of this literature has been concerned with immigrant children and youth and the role of educational institutions in shaping their potential. Others have documented the benefits of educational settings and approaches that affirm and embrace immigrant youth communities and cultures (Barlett & García; 2011; Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti; Igoa, 1995; 2005; Nieto, 1994). While there are studies that examine immigrant children’s participation in their communities – for example, in relationship to their transnational identities (Luttrell, et al. 2011; Orellana, 2009; Sánchez, 2007; Utakis & Pita, 2005,)

While many narratives about newcomer students focus on their struggles, needs, and ways to support them, research rarely focuses on understanding their experiences as contributors to educational communities. This research provides insights into how the experience of participating in an internship program that places newcomer high school students in an elementary school shapes their understanding of teaching, learning, and languaging, and their roles as agents in it.

**An Overview**

This study used ethnographic methods to explore the growth processes of young people who are currently engaging actively in practices within educational communities. In this case, the young people chose to participate in an internship program, assisting elementary school students, some of whom were also emergent bilinguals. I embarked on this study because I was interested in what we can learn from the youths’ experiences and perspectives. I believed that in understanding the ways in which a group of high school newcomers takes part in and contributes
to the elementary school’s classroom communities, we can learn from a model of youth participation that already exists.

I began my dissertation research focusing on the following two questions:

- What dimensions of teaching and learning do the students identify and how does that connect (or not) to being part of a community of practice?

- How do the students perceive/understand languaging in the classroom communities in which they participate?  

In working in the classrooms, the interns brought to light a vision of teaching and learning that counteracts the current reforms that call for the standardization of teaching practices. In the process of working in this study more questions emerged and guided some of the analysis:

- How did the experience in the internship shape how the interns made sense of their past and present educational experiences?

- How do they contribute to a vision of education as a relational activity with emotional significance?

Chapter Two provides an overview of the three theoretical framings for this research: socio-cultural theory, critical childhood theory and a translanguaging approach to the understanding of language and education. Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the methodology of the project, the sites, and the participants. I discuss processes of data collection,

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7 For a definition of the terms that I used in formulating my questions see Chapter Two where I discuss the frameworks for this study.
data analysis, validity, and ways of dealing with the ethical issues raised in doing research on and with youth.

Chapter Four explores how the young people in the study used their linguistic and cultural repertoires of practice in the classroom communities in which they were placed. It focuses on the case study of Mayou, a Haitian student working in a third grade classroom. During her time at the school, Mayou provided a strong critique of language policies in Haiti and reflected on her own language practices at the internship and in her life outside of the internship. Through Mayou’s case, I explore how the interns disrupt the adult/child and teacher/student binaries of classroom hierarchy, creating an “in between” space for themselves in the class community and forming relationships with the students who are not subject to those binaries.

Chapter Five examines the experience of Jabir, a newcomer from Yemen and his brokering of relationships that extend the classroom community. In his work in a kindergarten class, he developed an understanding of the complexity of the relationship between teaching and learning in a diverse classroom. In a time in which “data driven instruction” is shaping school reform, Jabir highlights the importance of a different set of “data” that a teacher needs to have: the knowledge about students as individuals to forge relationships, understanding teaching learning as a relational process. Jabir entered the school with a needed expertise that no one else in the school had; he speaks Arabic and is accustomed to moving fluidly between Arabic and English, and he has a similar cultural background to some of the Yemeni students in the school. His language practices in the classroom were rooted in his previous experience as a student, but also in his critique of language policies that he had experienced. While the framing of the internship was that the youths came to the school to “learn” work skills, in this chapter, they
came with their own expertise: a deep knowledge of multilingual language practices and of what it feels like to be a student.

Chapter Six explores how the young people in this study conceptualize the classroom as an emotional space; make connections between their expertise and the students’ learning; and examine the demands of standardized testing. This chapter centers around Rustam’s case. Rustam immigrated to the United States from Uzbekistan and did his internship in a fifth grade class. During his stay at PS 129, he wrestled with the question: What does it mean to “teach like a teacher”? In Chapter Seven, I discuss the implications of my research and possible ramifications for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
FRAMEWORKS

My research and my interest have been shaped by my life experiences as an immigrant, a student, a mother, a teacher and a bilingual scholar. In examining the experience of the young people who participated in this study, I chose three interpretative frames that shaped my work: Sociocultural Activity Theory, Critical Youth Studies, and a Translanguaging approach to the understanding of language and education.

Sociocultural Activity Theory

My approach to understanding child development is informed by sociocultural theories because they provide a framework that focuses on particular cultural activities through which young people learn. This perspective has shifted our understanding of cognition from a focus solely on the thoughts of solitary individuals to a focus on the active processes of individuals in concert with others. Cognitive development is an aspect of people’s participation in sociocultural activities. From a sociocultural perspective, young peoples’ development takes a very active form, consisting of individuals changing their ways of understanding, perceiving, and thinking, with other people building on the cultural practices and traditions of communities of practice.

The theoretical anchor for sociocultural research came from the work of Lev Vygotsky. Lev Vygotsky’s cultural historical theory argued that children’s individual cognitive skills derive from their engagement in sociocultural activities. Vygotsky’s theories were conceived in the context of the post revolutionary Soviet Union and were influenced by Marxist ideas that “changes in society and in material life produce changes in ‘human nature.’” (Cole & Scribner,
He was the first modern psychologist to suggest the mechanism by which culture becomes part of individual development.

One of Vygotsky’s greatest contributions is the notion that learning does not occur in isolation. His theories helped shape a sociocultural notion of childhood in which child development is understood as embedded in the context of a child’s community. From this perspective, cognitive development occurs as people learn to use cultural tools for thinking with the help of others who have more experience with these tools and cultural institutions. Vygotsky’s cultural historical theory inspired sociocultural theory. The sociocultural conception of childhood offers an integrated approach to human development. It focuses on examining particular cultural activities in which people learn.

Thinking involves interpersonal and community processes in addition to individual processes. The study of cognitive development now attends to more than the unfolding of children’s understanding through childhood. It includes attention to how people come to understand their world through active participation in shared endeavors with other people as they engage in sociocultural activities. (Rogoff, 2003 p. 236)

Rogoff explains that a cultural-historical approach assumes that individual development must be understood in cultural historical context. In making sense of the interns’ experiences, I found useful the concept of linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires of practice: “The ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices.” (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) The interns’ individual background experiences, together with their interests, shaped how they engaged in and contributed to the classroom communities in which they participated. In this view, culture is something that people do, rather than
something that people have. Culture is not static, as individuals make contributions to cultural practices in which they engage.

Situated cognition, a branch of sociocultural theory (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999), focuses on young people’s active transformation of understanding and engagement in dynamic activities. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe how learners participate in communities of practitioners. The mastery of knowledge requires that they move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. The interns participated in a number of educational communities as students in their home countries (in school or out of school) and at the Flatbush International in the United States. They entered PS129 with a whole set of linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires of practice that they enacted in their new roles in the classrooms in which they were placed. In their new roles, there were opportunities to learn through the relationships with the children in the classroom, the teachers, and their peers who were participating in the same experience. As a teacher, I always found that whatever I do with my students prompts me to reflect on my own learning. This metacognitive process is part of what people generally do on their own, often without realizing it. As the interns worked in the classrooms and participated in the seminar meetings, this process of reflection became part of their discussions, individual reflections, and the visual representations that they created.
Critical Youth Studies

While sociocultural theories present a view of the child that includes the social aspects of learning, Critical Youth Studies provides a lens to focus on young people’s perspectives and on understanding how young people are agents in their communities, with value placed on their insights into their own experiences (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). Sociocultural theories assume agency, participation, and engagement in learning, but understood from the perspective of what adults have in mind for the young person. The critical childhood perspective also assumes agency, participation, engagement, but from the perspective of the child in activities organized and controlled by adults. This approach also understands that childhood and adolescence are historically specific social constructions, as cultural, not natural, predicates that are defined by sociocultural and historical changes (Ariès, 1962, Wartofsky 1983). For example, Ariès contends that in the medieval society, the idea of childhood did not exist. The awareness of the particular nature of childhood, which distinguished the child from the adult, was not part of the discourse in medieval society. As soon as the child could live without the constant care of an adult, he or she belonged to adult society. Due to the high mortality rate, the “adult” society was partly composed of what we would consider now to be children and youth.

From this paradigm, young people are understood as social actors who shape and are shaped by their circumstances (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). It moves away from a concept of socialization that views young people as a “defective form of adult”, who are valued for their future potential but not in their present being. Barrie Thorne (1993) conceptualizes young people as agents who are not only being transformed by their worlds, but who are also deeply involved in transforming the worlds in which they live. She critiqued the “socialization” and “development frameworks” because they presume to know the results of current social practices.
and understand children’s present only in reference to their future, as “adults in the making”. “Children’s interactions are not preparations for life. They are life itself” (Thorne, 1993 p.3). Thorne challenges the dichotomy between “adult” and “child” as a socially created division, filled with ambiguity and contradictions, that are continually negotiated. In her work looking at gender and play in the context of elementary school, she describes how children don’t see themselves as “being socialized” or “developing”, but instead, their interaction with one another and with adults extend far beyond those models created by adults.

Marjorie Orellana (2009) uses a Critical Childhoods framework to focus attention on children’s perspectives on their translation experiences. In her book *Translating Childhoods*, she examines how children’s work as translators matters for their households, schools, and communities, as well as for larger social processes. She represents children’s translation activities as work, and looks at how this work shapes children’s experiences of childhood. She also uses a sociocultural framework to understand what children learn and develop from their work as translators and interpreters. Her study examines what children learn from their everyday experiences of translation in specific translation moments, as well as through their cumulative experiences over time. At home, for example, children’s language brokering involves various roles that include tutoring and teaching younger siblings, enabling communication (e.g. answering the phone), or information management. Many children regularly read, interpret, and respond to mail and provide translation for other kinds of texts. The texts that children translate (e.g. medical forms, court summons, grade reports, instructions for medicines) are often more complex and cover a wider range of genres than the texts that children encounter in schools. Many of the children expressed a sense of accomplishment when
they translated that Orellana attributed to a sense of growth or change in position in their families or in society.

Orellana’s study provides a view on how children often take the lead when they help their parents or other adults accomplish tasks that the adults would otherwise not be able to do on their own. Orellana made the argument that it is important to recognize that the children’s work of language brokering was in the service of the public good. Rather than viewing this work as a problem, with the assumption that language brokering is a burden on children, viewing it as a public contribution opens up a greater dialogue about the social value of this work.

One of the most important implications of this approach is that it reveals education as “a simultaneously personal and ethical/political endeavor in which the pursuits of one’s identity, learning and of social transformation are seen as brought together within one meaningful life project.” (Stetsenko, 2010, p.15) In approaching this project from a Critical Youth Studies perspective, I examined youths’ connections with the educational communities in which they participated as students and in the internship at the elementary school as a dialectical relationship, with the understanding that young people’s participation in and transformation of their world is not only a vital part of their development, but also an essential force in shaping our societies.

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8 Guadalupe Valdez (2003) studied children’s language brokering practices from a different perspective. She documented the complicated cognitive processes of translation and interpretation that children perform and made a case for understanding young interpreters’ abilities as a form of linguistic giftedness that needs to be nurtured and developed in academic settings.
Translanguaging Approach

The United States has a long tradition of English-only policies in which the role of school is to “Americanize” immigrants. William Waller (1932), in his seminal work *The Sociology of Teaching*, summarized much of the ideology that has driven the educational policies that view immigrants as a “burden” that the educational system needs to face.

[It] is particularly true of the schools of a nation which, like ours, is seeking to amalgamate into one whole the representatives of many diverse cultures. The main burden of Americanization falls upon the public schools, and there is every likelihood that it will continue to be so. The schools Americanize by immersing the young in the culture and traditions of the country, by inducing them to participate as much as possible in the activities of the American arena. (p.17)

In 1968, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), was passed. In 1974, the Bilingual Education Act was renewed with a strong mandate to help children learn in their home languages while also learning English. However, this climate was short lived. In 1978, Title VII was reauthorized with amendments that excluded the home language maintenance components. Under the No Child Left Behind Act, the Office of Bilingual Education was renamed “Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Children”, eradicating the mandate to support the development of home language (Gandara et al., 2010). In this context, multilingualism is not viewed, as it is in other nations, as a natural and desirable attribute that schools should foster and support. Instead “in the United States the system for describing the language skills of not-native speakers focuses exclusively on their mastery of
English, hence terms like Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Fluent English Proficient (FEP)” (Gandara et al., 2010, p. 31).

In this study, not only were the young people who participated in the project multilingual, but also all the classrooms in which they were placed had many students who were growing up in multilingual households, regardless of program (general education, special education, or bilingual dual language). This study is framed with the understanding that bilingualism is dynamic and draws “from different contexts in which it develops and functions.” (García, 2009 p.53) In this view, language is an action and practice. It is not viewed in isolation from its use. Bilinguals use multiple language practices, drawing strategically from one linguistic repertoire to communicate with different people. I use the term languaging because it understands language as an activity, a practice instead of a structure (Canagarajah, 2011; Pennycook, 2010; García & Wei 2013). Poststructuralist sociolinguists view languaging as a social process that emphasizes the agency of the speaker in the meaning making process (Shohamy 2006). Shohamy describes languaging as “the multiple ways of representation that are not limited to words, but rather include additional ways of expression” (p. 16). From this perspective, languages are “sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity, or discrimination.” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004 p. 4)

In referring to the language practices of bilinguals or multilinguals, the term translanguaging⁹ has been increasingly adopted by scholars to describe “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages.” (Otheguy, García & Reid, p. 283) In this view, languages are not closed linguistic and semiotic systems.

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⁹ This term was first coined by Cen Williams: “in its original use, it referred to a pedagogical practice where students are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of receptive or productive use.” (García & Wei, 2014 p. 20)
Speakers select from their linguistic repertoire of meaning making and multimodal practices to engage with others and to create new spaces of interaction. Languages are part of a repertoire that is accessed by speakers for communicative purposes; languages form an integrated system, they are not discrete and separated (Canagarajah, 2011).

This understanding of language is particularly important in working with students from the International Network for Public Schools. Many of the schools use translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy across the board. For example, in a classroom that I observed a few years ago, a 9th grade teacher who was beginning a unit about ancient civilizations asked her students to record observations of ancient objects. The students observed pictures of the objects in groups and took notes about their observations and questions in their home languages. They used Google Translate to translate some of their questions that they wanted to share with the group or consulted with partners who spoke the same home language. The groups then shared their questions in English.

During the process, the teacher walked around the room, pointing students to specific features of the objects and helping them with the task of switching between English, Urdu, and French. In my experience at that school, this was not an unusual practice. Even the teachers who only spoke English were comfortable using translanguaging pedagogies in their classroom.

While in the context of the International Schools, bilingualism and students’ home cultures are viewed as resources and translanguaging is a common practice, this is not always the case in other educational settings. Angela Valenzuela’s “Subtractive Schooling” (1999) documents the experiences of Mexican students in Seguín, a large inner-city high school in Texas. The school worked toward its goal of mainstreaming students into dominant society by “subtracting” their community experiences and connections, their language, and their culture. She explains that an
important consequence of subtractive schooling is the corrosion of students’ social capital that is indicated, among other things, by the absence of networks among immigrants and U.S.-born youth. By subtracting students’ culture and language, schools negatively impact achievement, perceptions, and attitudes towards school. Valenzuela’s description of Seguín provides an example of how the notion of immigrant childhoods as “deviant” drives how teachers and administrators create a model of subtractive schooling that tries to “assimilate” immigrant children by negating their community and culture.

In my work with the young people who participated in the internship, I embraced a view that understands translanguaging as “the linguistic practices of speakers labeled as bilingual or multilingual, and to describe as well the many ways that those practices are leveraged for a variety of purposes, especially in education.” (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015). This view informed the methodology that I used throughout this study. During the seminar sessions, not only did I encourage the participants to use their home languages in their writing and oral communications with each other or, for those who spoke Spanish, with me during interviews or individual conversations, but I also, by design, created opportunities for participants to create and use multimodal texts. I wanted the young people in the group to use their full semiotic repertoire as much as possible.

In using translanguaging as a framework, I understood that the young people who participated in this study live in a world in which they create, interpret, and use multimodal texts that include images, videos, music, and sounds in their daily lives. Bezemer and Kress (2008) define a mode as “a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning” and they explain that modes “have different affordances—potentials and constraints for making meaning based on modal resources.” A systemic view of language needs to account for the fact that we
use a range of semiotic repertoires in our daily communicative practices. (García & Wei, 2014). This theoretical perspective pays attention to what young people do with their semiotic repertoires, combining multiple modes to make sense of their experiences and to communicate with others. In thinking about translanguaging as a multimodal norm of communication, we need to account for the affordances of the intertextuality\textsuperscript{10} of images, icons, sounds, and texts that become part of our everyday communicative practices.

Using translanguaging as a lens was key to exploring how young people’s linguistic ideologies shaped their understanding of teaching and learning (as I describe in chapters four and five). The seminar attempted to create a “translanguaging space” (Li Wei, 2011) in which young people could move between different linguistic systems and modalities and go beyond them by sharing their ideas and creating multimodal forms of communication (as I describe in chapter three).

My understanding of translanguaging emerges from my positionality as an immigrant and a bilingual scholar. In my professional work in schools, as well as at home, I move fluidly between Spanish and English, depending on the context and the speakers. I also use multiple modes of communication as a pedagogical tool in my work with students and in my everyday life. As a researcher, I believe that it is essential to understand the semiotic practices of the young people who participated in this study from a systemic view of language.

\textsuperscript{10} Intertextuality was a term used originally by Julia Kristeva. The concept of intertextuality understands a text not as a self contained system but as an intersection with other texts. Since then, many scholars have expanded the use of this term beyond written text.
CHAPTER THREE
PARTICIPANTS, CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted during the 2013-2014 school year with a group of high school students from Flatbush International School\(^{11}\) who participated in an internship program at a zone elementary school\(^{12}\) in Brooklyn, NY. Flatbush International School is one school in the International Network for public school; it is also a public school that is part of the system run by the New York City Department of Education. In the context of the internship, students spent between twelve to fifteen hours a week working in a classroom for nine weeks. They came to the school every afternoon and worked in the same classroom, assisting the teacher in various tasks and working with students, both individually and in small groups. They met with me once a week as a group in what we called seminar sessions.

Research Design

**Sites**

“As Michael Olneck (2004) writes, ‘Immigrants do not enter undifferentiated “American” schools. Rather they enter specific schools whose immediate contexts, histories, memories, and commitments shape their organization and practices’ (p. 386). Schools matter. For immigrant youth, schools that do not subtract valuable cultural and linguistic capital really matter.” (Walsh, 2013, p.5)

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\(^{11}\) The names of both schools have been modified to preserve confidentiality.

\(^{12}\) New York city is divided into school districts, and districts are divided into zones; each school is assigned a zone. Each child is guaranteed a seat in a public school for which his/her address is zoned.
In order to understand the experiences of the young people who participated in this project, it is important to contextualize their school, Flatbush International, not just in terms of the demographics but also in terms of the philosophical underpinnings that shape the school as part of a network dedicated to serving emergent bilinguals.

During the school year 2013-2014, 94% of the students at Flatbush International received free or reduced meals. In the 11th grade class of that year, 32% of the student population was Latin American, 20% Eastern European or Central Asian, 15% Haitian, 12% East Asian, 9% Arab, 5% South Asian, 4% West African and 2% Western European (Flatbush International Letter to prospective internship sites, 2014). The school population and design reflects the model of the International Network for Public Schools which has been recognized as successful for working with newcomers (Fine, Stoudt & Futch, 2005; García & Sylvan, 2011). The schools in the network have students from over 119 different countries, including Mexico, Yemen, Haiti, Iraq, Tibet, Ecuador, Uzbekistan, and China. Over 90 different languages are spoken at the schools, including Spanish, Arabic, French, Urdu, Polish, Fulani, Bengali, Haitian Creole, and Hindi. On average, 90% of the students in the International Network schools receive free or reduced lunch and many of the students come with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2017).

The first international school opened in 1985 at La Guardia Community College and was funded in collaboration between the NYC Board of Education and the City University of New York. In the original design, the school integrated English language instruction into all classes while supporting students’ home languages. “Students were to be taught in non-leveled, heterogeneous groups and engaged in experiential learning through career education and internship.” (Fine, Stoudt & Futch, 2005 p. 17)
In 2004, The International Network was established with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Network has developed twenty-two schools in New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Virginia. All the schools in the International Network for Public Schools share the same approach, based on the following principals:

**Heterogeneity and Collaboration:** The schools set up heterogeneous and collaborative structures that build on the strengths of every individual member of the school community. For example, students are grouped heterogeneously with respect to English proficiency level, academic background, native language, and literacy level. The teachers are organized in teams/clusters and have time on a weekly basis to collaborate to create curriculum, plan common activities, and address the academic and social needs of the same group of students. The guidance counselors and/or social workers are linked to teams of students and teachers.

**Experiential learning:** There is a strong emphasis on field trips and learning outside of the classroom. They set up collaborations with community organizations and use of other resources beyond the school walls to provide support for students and families. The schools implement programs such as internships and community service activities and organize the curriculum primarily around project-based activities that culminate in a product (experiment, research paper, art work, debate, presentation, exhibition, etc.).

**Language and content integration:** The school curriculum is organized with the belief that language skills are most effectively learned in context and emerge most naturally in purposeful, language-rich, experiential, interdisciplinary study. Therefore, every teacher teaches content and every teacher teaches language.
**Localized autonomy and responsibility:** The schools emphasize collaboration at every level between students, teachers, and principals. Having autonomy and responsibility at every level within a learning community allows all members to contribute to their fullest potential.

**One learning model for all:** All learners, faculty, and students experience the same learning model, which maximizes their ability to support each other.

(Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013)

I first learned about these schools when I was teaching a video documentary program at the Educational Video Center\(^{13}\). The students in the program earned high school credit and were referred to us by a number of schools in the city. Some of the students came from schools from the International Network for public Schools. The advisor and teachers in the schools had a strong supportive relationship with the students. In my work with students from this network, I visited various sites and I was in close communication with teachers and advisors from the schools. When I started to think about this project, I chose to work with these schools because they, as communities, have a particular approach to students’ cultures and languages that recognizes students’ engagements in their communities as active agents.

Fine, Stoudt & Futch (2005), in a study done with graduates from schools from International Public Schools Network, found three major themes in their experiences at the schools:

“-International schools create a community of cultural and linguistic differences among adults and youth.

\(^{13}\) The Educational Video Center is a Youth Media non-profit organization dedicated to teaching documentary video, media literacy and career skills to young people.
International schools enable intellectual work that is rigorous, inquiry based and culturally rooted - where revision is the key to academic success.

International High Schools encourage students to develop the skills of global citizenship and transfer their learning from International High Schools to colleges, work, families of origin, their children, and their local civic engagements.” (p.9)

All 11th graders in the Flatbush International School participated in an internship during the Spring semester of 2014. They were required to work in their internship 15 hours a week. “Internship provides students with the opportunity to explore a particular career interest, develop important workplace competencies, apply new skills they have learned, develop their English skills (and in some cases, their native language skills) in a professional work environment, and grow in confidence and maturity.” (Flatbush International Letter to prospective internship sites, 2014)

PS129, the elementary school in which the students in this study did their internship, is a public zone school that describes its mission as: “to teach our students how to maximize their potential. Our strength comes from engaging parents and the local community in the education of our children, and from our focus on the whole child: mind, body and spirit.” While only 3.37% of students were classified as English Language learners during the 2013-2014 school year, the school has a very diverse population of students who speak other languages at home. For example, in one of the pre-kindergarten classes, out of eighteen children, there were seven different languages spoken at home, including Haitian-Creole, German, Danish, Spanish, French, Bengali, and Russian, but only one of the students in the class was classified as an English Language Learner.
PS129 started a Spanish dual language program four years before this study was conducted and has added a grade every year as it progresses. In 2013, they opened a Dual Language pre-kindergarten, and they were at the time of the study serving Pre-K through 2nd Grade in the Bilingual Dual Language setting. The emergent bilinguals whose home language is Spanish and are for the most part placed in the bilingual dual language program and also worked with the ESL teacher in a pull out setting. The rest of the emergent bilinguals received a combination of pull out and push in services following the mandates of the New York City Department of Education. The school historically has had small percentage of emergent bilinguals whose home languages are mostly Arabic and Bengali. During the year when the study was conducted, the school had also emergent bilinguals whose home languages were Haitian-Creole, Danish, and Albanian who also received pull out and push in ESL services.

In Public School 129, 57% of the school’s students received free or reduced price lunch at the time that this study was conducted. The school had recently lost Title I funding, resulting in larger class sizes and the loss of several support staff. The school has a racially diverse staff. Most of the teachers who hosted the students in this study identified as Latinas or African-American, except for one teacher who identified as white.

Both of my sons attended this school at the time when this study was conducted and I had been part of the school community for five years. Since my children started going to the school, I’ve participated in a range of capacities. I have been a parent member of the School Leadership

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15 According to the NYC Department of Education the ethnic composition of the school during the school year when this study was conducted, 2013-2014, was 7.8% asian, 51.8% black, 11.6% hispanic, 24.6% white, and 4.6% other.
16 In NYC, a school is required to have 60% of the students receiving free or reduced meals in order to qualify for Title I funds.
Team, have worked in a number of PTO committees, and I was closely involved in the creation and development of the Spanish bilingual dual language program.

Because I spend a lot of time in the school volunteering, and have informal conversations with school staff, they had expressed that the school has no home language support for emergent bilinguals who speak languages other than Spanish. When another parent from the school who worked at Flatbush International School proposed to include PS 129 as a site for an internship for his students, as well as those from another International School, the teachers and administrators agreed to host the students in the hope they might be able to provide home language support. As a result, PS 129 started a partnership with two international schools that began to send students to do internships during the Spring 2014 semester. I chose this site for my research because its population and the issues that face there are representative of many neighborhood schools. Also, given my long-term involvement with the school, I had access to the administration and the teachers who trusted me. In addition, I was able to host most of the research activities at the school. I see my knowledge of the community and my relationship to its members (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) as an asset to this project. (For more about the possible limitations of this relationship, see the validity section.)

Participants

I worked with seven students Flatbush International students from 11th grade who were completing their internship requirement at PS 129. After obtaining permission from the high school’s principal, I met with all the interns from Flatbush International to explain the project and invite them to participate. During that meeting I also explained to them that if they chose to participate they could withdraw from the project at any point in the research. Initially, nine
students joined the project. However, two of them decided not to continue, but they still came to visit during seminar sessions and participated in some of our discussions. Because they communicated to me that they didn’t want to take part in the study, I have not used any of the materials that they created or any of their comments during discussions. They took part in some of our discussions and while I don’t use any of their comments in my writing, there is no question that their occasional participation in our sessions contributed to shape the discussions during the seminar. I chose to keep open access to the seminar for these two young people because, aside from being part of this research project, the seminar also became a place where the youths in the group had a chance to make sense of their experiences at the school and I believed that it was important for these two interns to be able to continue to participate in our discussions when they wished to do so.

I chose a small sample size for this study because my research design emphasized multiple sources of data and an in-depth, case-based approach. The young people who participated in the group were Mayou, Rustam, Alex, Jabir, Joanna, Miguel and Ahmed. Mayou was a 16 year old at the time. When I asked her how she would like to be described, she said, “I'm from Haiti and I am black. I'm 5’-2” and I got 4 brothers and two sisters and [I’m] the 5th one and I’ve got short hair, light brown eyes, and that's very much it.” Later on, she added, “Something that is special about me is: I’m really friendly. I'm not the judging type and I'm smart. I never failed a class yet.” In her internship application, she wrote “I love kids and I really want to have new skills for being a leader and being an example for younger [kids] than me.”

Jabir is a tall, slender, smiley nineteen years old. He was born in Yemen and he moved

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17 I used pseudonyms for all of the participants except for one who chose to use his first name.
Rustam moved to the United States from Uzbekistan three years before his internship at PS129. He spent three months in 8th grade and then moved to Flatbush International School. He was seventeen at the time of the internship and described himself as someone who is kind and who always “tells the truth.” Rustam speaks four languages: Tajik, Uzbek, Russian and English. He also shared that he was taking Spanish in school. At PS 129, he was placed in a 5th grade class.

Joanna was 16 years old at the time of her internship. She came to the United States from the Dominican Republic when she was 12. She started school in the U.S in 7th grade. She lives with her mom. Since she moved to the U.S., she has gone to the Dominican Republic four times. During her stay at PS129, she was placed in a bilingual Spanish dual language classroom, but she also worked in a bilingual dual language second grade for a period of time when her host teacher was sick.

Alex came from China when he was 12 years old. He described himself as someone who likes “playing with my friends” and he said, “my favorite subject is math … I like math a lot”. At PS129, he was placed in a self-contained special education fourth and fifth grade bridge classroom. The class had ten students but he mostly worked one-on-one with one student, Jake. Ms. Parson, the teacher, had asked for an intern who spoke Chinese, because Jake spoke Chinese

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18 A bridge classroom is a class that has students from more than one grade.
with his mom and she thought it might make him feel good to have someone in the class who spoke his mom’s language.

Ahmed described himself as a “quiet person”, very shy. He is originally from Pakistan and he speaks Urdu, Punjabi and English. He worked in a fourth grade ICT class. During the course of the semester, his mother was very ill and he missed many days of his internship. While he was able to return and complete the requirements of the internship for his school, he was unable to attend about half of our seminar sessions.

Miguel loves to play guitar and sing. He is also passionate about math. When he described himself, he said “I'm from Peru...I came here two years ago and my first day of school was kind of hard because I didn't speak English and I didn't have friends, but after one month I started meeting more people and [making] friends.” Before moving to New York, he attended a private school in Peru. He was a few months from graduating from high school in Peru, but when he moved to the U.S., he had to complete three more years of high school. At PS129, he was placed in a kindergarten dual language class.

### Table 3.1
Participants and placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Languages other than English</th>
<th>Placement at PS129</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayou</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Haitian-Creole, French, some Spanish</td>
<td>Third grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabir</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustam</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Tajik, Uzbek, Russian</td>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Chinese (This is how he described it)</td>
<td>Fifth grade self-contained special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 An ICT class has a 40% of students with special needs and 60% general education students. The class also has two teachers, one of whom must be a special education teacher.
Data Collection, Data Types and Analysis

Using ethnographic methods and visual research methods, this study engaged the participants in the process of documenting and reflecting on their participation in the internship. The students participated in a weekly seminar that served as a focus group and the setting for audiencing sessions for their visual representation work (I will discuss my approach to visual methodology on page 33). The seminar met for nine sessions, each an hour and a half long. The sessions were recorded and transcribed. Not all of the young people were present for each session. Data analysis was an ongoing process that began after our first seminar meeting. After each meeting, in addition to my field notes, I wrote short analytical memos in response to journals and other artifacts that the young people in the group had created. This initial analysis informed the questions for my interview as well as some of the follow up activities that I designed. In addition, the young people in the project shared their analysis during the audiencing sessions. (See section on Collaborative Seeing on page 33)

In the context of the seminar, the youths generated visual representations of their experiences, wrote journals, and had discussions based on the artifacts that they created. Most of this data was based on activities that were part of my research design. However, the young people in the project also shared with me other data that, while it was not part of my original design, I used in my analysis. (See section on photographs in page 47) In addition, at the end of the year, the interns invited me to participate in an internship fair hosted by their school. During

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20 See journal prompts in Appendix A.
this fair, all of the 11th grade students at Flatbush International created poster boards or digital presentations for the students in 10th grade and the faculty at the school. While this was not in my original methodology, I was pleased that the youths invited me because it gave me an opportunity to see how they presented their internship experiences to their peers at the school and to the faculty.

Table 3.3
Data Collection Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth generated data prompted by me</th>
<th>Individual data</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Popplets</td>
<td>• Recordings of focus group discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Timelines (Prezi, Popplets, Power Point)</td>
<td>• Recordings of small group conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student produced maps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth generated data that they shared with me</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Internship Fair final projects</td>
<td>• One open ended interview recorded with each of the host teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photographs</td>
<td>• One open ended interview with Flatbush International School guidance counselor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One full interview with each student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Follow up short interviews with some of the students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From focus group discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From informal conversations before and after the meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From informal conversations with the teachers and their guidance counselor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From a visit to the school for the internship fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collaborative Seeing

My approach to data gathering and analysis has been strongly influenced by my participation in the Collaborative Seeing Studio (CSS). I subscribe to the idea that:

By positioning youth as media producers and interpreters of each other’s self representations in dialogue with researchers as curious and interested viewers and analysts, we advocate a need-to-know-more stance toward young people’s self and identity making through [visual] representations. We understand this dialogic relationship between adult researchers and youth participants as fundamental to the practice of collaborative seeing — an approach. (Luttrell, Restler & Fontaine, 2012).

While this approach has been used in the context of studying young people’s self and identity making, I adapted it to explore young people’s perspectives on teaching, learning, and languaging. This approach requires multiple viewing opportunities in different contexts, with different audiences, and over time (Lico & Luttrell 2011) because meaning making is understood as a dialogic relational process (Luttrell, 2010, Fontaine & Luttrell, 2015 p. 165).

This methodology was used in two different settings:

1- during seminar sessions with the youths who participated in the project

2- during Collaborative Seeing Studio sessions, as well as audiencing sessions with other CUNY graduate students and faculty.

The youth participants were involved in the analytical process through our seminar sessions, in which they shared and responded to each other’s visual representations and journals and discussed common themes. This was a key part of the methodology that embraced “working with youth rather than on youth” and making sure that the strategies of analysis enabled young
people to make sense of the visual representations that they generated, as well as the print artifacts that they created, and to teach me about their meanings. (Luttrell, 2010) This approach also helped to establish credibility/validity in my interpretations. Bringing multiple eyes to the analysis—whether it was among the young people in dialogue with each other or with me during our seminar sessions, or other researchers as we engaged the visual materials—helped to shed light on how to understand and interpret the young people’s evolving ideas about languaging, teaching, and learning.

As I will explain in the following section, I worked with multiple kinds of data and moved back and forth between them. I caution the reader that these methodologies were intertwined with each other and were mostly used in combinations, not in isolation.

Using Visual Methodologies

In my experience in working with emergent bilinguals, I’ve found that it is important to provide multiple modalities for them to communicate their ideas because many of them are not as comfortable relying solely on writing or speaking. This is why I chose to use visual methods in the research design. As a member of the Collaborative Seeing Studio, I subscribe to the belief that images don’t speak for themselves, rather, meanings are made and remade as young people use their photographs and videos for different purposes.” (Colaborative Seeing Studio, 2013)

Using digital presentation tools as part of my research design was important both for pedagogical as well as for methodological reasons. Digital presentation tools allowed the

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21 The Collaborative Seeing Studio is a group of two faculty members and four doctoral students from the CUNY Graduate Center. Their interest and projects converge around the issues of interpretation and representation in visual research.
participants to use multiple semiotic systems to express and share their ideas with each other and with me. Not only did it give me, as a researcher, access to rich multimodal data, but it also gave the young people in the project the opportunity to experiment and learn different tools to communicate their ideas. I decided to introduce the students to two online presentation tools that they used to create visual representations (Popplets and Prezi) because it was important to me as a researcher and educator that they could engage in activities during the seminars in which they learned new skills that they could use outside of the project. When I originally proposed the project to the principal of Flatbush International, he talked about the need for students to learn to use digital tools for presentations. Most of them knew how to use PowerPoint but they wanted them to learn other tools. I chose to introduce two different online tools that can they could use for different purposes outside of the seminar: Popplet and Prezi.

At the end for the school year, I found out from the school’s internship coordinator that some of the young people from the group had requested to use digital presentation tools for their school Internship Fair. In the past, the students had been required to create poster boards, but since the interns requested to use some of the materials that they had created during our seminar session, this was the first year that the school also gave them the option to use digital presentation tools.

**Popplets**\(^{22}\): The first set of youth generated data was a visual representation based on the prompt: “Tell us about your educational experiences. These experiences can be in connection to schools or other settings. Please include experiences in your home country, as well as in the US.” They created the visual representation using the mapping tool “Popplet.” This is a free

\(^{22}\) For Examples examples of Popplets, see page 59 (Mayou’s popplet), p. 94 (Jabir’s popplet), p. 126 (Rustam’s popplet)
online tool used to create mind mapping and brainstorming diagrams. Using this tool, students can arrange images and text and include links to other artifacts, such as videos, to create a visual representation. I did a short tutorial on how to create a Popplet during the first session, and I gave everyone the choice to use it or to use something else if they wished to do so. However everyone chose to create a Popplet. The students created their Popplets during the session, shared them with their peers in one audiencing session in the following seminar, and identified common themes during our discussions.

I chose Popplet over other digital tools because the project begins with a blank canvas that allows the producers not only to choose what they want to include, but also how they are going to tell the story as they create a layout. For example, while Mayou chose to use a circular layout for her poppet (see page 59), Rustam (see page 126) used a linear layout in order to organize his narrative. I analyze both of their design choices in the context of the narrative that they created in chapters four and six.

The prompt was purposely left open to allow young people to choose from a variety of educational experiences that include formal and non-formal education, as well as experiences in their home country and in the US. However, many of the young people in the group chose to use the Popplets as a means to introduce themselves to the group, rather than focusing solely on their educational experiences.

23 For more on the analysis of each Popplet see Chapter 4 for Mayou and Chapter 6 for Rustam’s
2- Creating a timeline of their participation in their internship

Figure 3.1
Ahmed’s mid-semester Prezi

Halfway through the internship, I asked the young people in the group to create a timeline of their participation in the internship. I gave a tutorial to the group on how to use a Prezi but I gave everyone a choice of using pen and paper, Prezi, Popplet, or anything else that they wanted. Everyone chose to work on a computer using Prezi or Popplet, except for one student who did a PowerPoint presentation. I chose to use a timeline because I wanted to learn from them how their ideas, feelings, and thoughts had evolved since the beginning of their internship. They shared their timelines in an audiencing session in the following meeting.
3- Mapping: During session four, I asked the interns to draw a map of their classroom or the spaces in the school where they spend time with their classes. They shared their maps and then, later on in the semester, I asked them to revisit their maps. They looked at their drawings, made a list of the kinds of activities that happen in the classrooms, then worked with a partner to create a chart, listing each activity, where it happens, and what is the feeling associated with it. After they were done, each pair shared their chart and we all discussed the themes that emerged from the charts.  

I decided to include these activities because maps can offer many representations and visualizations of what space can mean to an individual and how he/she experiences it. I wanted to learn from the youth how they view the space of the school or classroom and the individuals who were in the class. Similarly, maps provide a dialogue with experience and can capture what happens in between the creator and others. In addition, maps are important in providing another way to represent ideas that does not rely on verbal communication (Futch & Fine, 2014).

Other researchers who work with young people, using still images as well as video, have noted how audiovisual images can introduce content and topics that might otherwise be unnoticed or inadequately understood by adults (Orellana, 1999; Kaplan, 2008; Luttrell, 2010). I asked the youths in the group to create visual representations because they could raise the possibility of tapping into memories, accessing ideas, and opening dialogues about subjects that might otherwise not surface (Orellana, 1999; Luttrell, 2010; Mitchell, 2011). I found in my work that I learned just as much from observing the process of creating the visual representations and listening to the conversations or comments that the young people made to the group as I did.

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24 The methodology for a collaborative analysis of the maps was inspired by a conversation with David Chapin about the methodology he and a group of researchers used for “Privacy, territory and participation: Projects for your environment.” (ARC, 1978).
from the products themselves and the audiencing sessions. (See Chapter Six for a recount of Rustam’s process of selecting images for his Popplet.)

I used a dialogical narrative analysis for the visual representations. As Riessman (2008) explains, “Narrative analysis interrogates intention and language — how and why incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers.” (p.11) A dialogic approach to narrative analysis includes components from thematic as well as structural analysis. For example, with my first data set of visual representations, the Popplets, the focus of analysis was on what the young people said about the production of the visual representations – their intentions, etc., the content and composition of the visual representations themselves, and the conversations among the young people as they examined each other’s Popplets in the audiencing sessions to shed light on each student’s understanding of teaching, learning, and languaging in the U.S.

I analyzed the content of the Popplets and the transcripts from the students’ presentations of the pieces to examine the structure (how the visual representations are put together and how the stories are organized); the context (who were the audiences: myself, their peers in the seminar group, their peers in school, and teachers in the school); and for what purpose. This analytical approach acknowledges that the data is produced in a particular context and that the researcher takes part in this co-construction and therefore, becomes an active participant in the text (visual, print, or audio). The fact that these visual representations are shared in the context of an audiencing session with their peers also added to the analytical process the multiple readings brought by their author’s peers and by me as a participant. As Rose (2007) explains, there is no single correct reading of an image. Instead, there are multiple interpretations and those multiple interpretations become part of the dialogic narrative analysis of these visual
representations. To summarize, in using dialogic narrative analysis, I examined the content of the visual representations, the structure, and the context (who the audiences were).

**Exploring Mayou’s Popplet, an Example of Visual Narrative Analysis**

In analyzing the Popplets, the mid-internship timelines, and the students’ final presentations in their school, I focused on the production of the visual representations, the content of the visual representations themselves, and the audiencing sessions during our seminar.

I began with thinking and writing about the circumstances of the production of Mayou’s Popplet. She created the Popplet in the context of our first seminar in response to the prompt: “Tell us about your educational experiences. These experiences can be in connection to schools or other settings. You can include experiences in your home country, as well as in the US.” After the prompt, I modeled for the group how to create a Popplet and told the youths in the group that they could use images from the Internet or their own photographs if they had access to them, and that they could write in their home language and/or in English. I also offered that I could help people search for images if they wanted, but no one asked for help. All of the students in the group knew how to use Google Images, save image files, and how to insert them into the Popplets without any instruction. Having worked with students of the same age for many years, I realized that if I had done this project five years ago, the young people in the group would have needed much more technical instruction. However, this group was very tech-savvy and used each other as resources. Some of the students used Google Translate as they were writing, but Mayou was not one of them.

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25 See Mayou’s popplet Popplet in page 59.
I analyzed the content of the Popplet and its structure: how the visual representation was put together and how it was organized as a narrative. For Mayou’s piece, I used Lavov’s model of narrative structure (Riesmann, 2008) to interrogate how the story that Mayou shared through her Popplet was constructed. The following was my initial analysis:

**Figure 3.3**
**Mayou’s Popplet analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract (summarizes the point of the narrative)</th>
<th>Mayou as a child. Her process of growing. Her journey.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My beautiful self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation (provides time and place)</th>
<th>Implicit in this orientation is that the audience (the other youths in the group and myself) might not have much knowledge about Haiti. (eg., the capital is Port-au-Prince)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello, my name is Mayou […] I’m from Haiti, the capital of Haiti is Port-au-Prince.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation (provides time and place)</th>
<th>This image represents Haiti. The experiences below this image happened in Haiti.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation/Complicating Action (describes a sequence of actions)</th>
<th>“When I was a little girl, I go to school in a private school in Haiti.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Complicating Action (describes a sequence of actions) Evaluation / Narrator’s commentary on complicating action | “[When] I was in Haiti I didn’t know how to speak English because school in Haiti only want the students to speak French if you don’t have any language classes.”                                                                 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complicating Action (describes a sequence of actions)</th>
<th>“When I was a little the hardest class for me was second grade”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation / Narrator’s commentary on complicating action</td>
<td>because the book were so hard, since in second grade you should start knowing History about your country.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating Action (describes a sequence of actions)</td>
<td>“In Haiti, started in second grade every day I should memorize one chapter in each books I have because when I get to school in the morning I have to repeating a chapter of lessons in different subject.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating Action (describe a sequence of action)</td>
<td>When I came to the U.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation / Narrator’s commentary on complicating action</td>
<td>“I get to middle school it was so hard for me because I didn’t know any English but I was so happy I didn’t have any bully in my school but some of the kids were mean because they way I used to talk in French or Creole with my Haitian Freinds of French friends they always being like she is Madame François. But I guess they were jus jealous of how I talk I didn’t care what they said about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating Action (describe a sequence of action)</td>
<td>This bubble is a narrative in itself of Mayou’s first experience with schooling in the US, but it is also a part of the larger narrative about how Mayou came to be who she is now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayou is who she is as the result of all her previous experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution or coda (returns the listener to present)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="New York" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda?</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Child" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analyzing Mayou’s Popplet, I found that within this narrative of her life in relationship to her educational experiences, she embedded multiple narratives that were at the heart of how she navigated her experiences in the internship, such as her experiences with Haitian-Creole and French in Haiti and in the United States. In Chapter Four, I explore in depth these narratives in the context of her work at PS129.

While I was doing the analysis of the young people’s Poppets, I decided to bring some of the visual representations to a meeting with my colleagues in the Collaborative Seeing Studio. As I shared two visual representations from other youths in the group, I discovered that I needed to retrace the path of the images that Mayou selected for her visual representation. The two images of New York and Haiti are cultural representations that she chose over other potential avatars. In order to make sense of her process, I needed to look at the circulation of the images with the understanding that: “all images, to some extent or another, travel. Images are mobile, and how they travel matters to what effects they have.” (Rose, 2015) The circulation of these
two images and their intertextuality\textsuperscript{26} were important components of the production process of the Popplets that I began to examine. I did a search for “Haiti,” to shed light on what representations might have been available had she used this search term. I found that the first 500 images that appeared did not include images of the kind of house that Mayou used. Instead, there were images of the Haitian map, the flag, earthquake devastation, poverty, and a small percentage of images of beaches and hotels, such as the ones that are used to promote a tourist destination.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Haiti_Google_image_search.png}
\caption{Haiti Google image search}
\end{figure}

My next step was to do a reverse search on Google Images of the photograph that Mayou used as the avatar for Haiti.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{26}“Intertextuality refers to the way that meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts.” (Rose, 2007, p 142.)}
What I found led me to a much more complex understanding of Mayou’s choices of visual representation. The photograph portrays a “Haitian Gingerbread House”.27 The image was found on two websites. Both them seem to be targeted towards Haitians. One site features pictures of Haiti under the title “Magnifiques photos D’’Haiti Cherie (The Real Haiti!)”, Magnificent Photos of our Beloved Haiti (The Real Haiti). The site features beautiful images of beaches, Haitian cultural events, food, people, and buildings much like images that are used to promote tourism. There are no images of the earthquake or poverty in Haiti. In choosing the photograph of a Gingerbread House, Mayou intentionally did not select nationalistic or

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27 These houses were designed by Paris-educated Haitian architects and built as single-family residences (sometimes accommodating servants) for the Haitian elite during the nineteenth century. The Gingerbread Houses capture a time of prosperity in Haiti and have recently being declared world monuments.
geographic images of Haiti (e.g. the flag, the map) but sought images of a homeplace of grandeur.

As I illustrate in the following chapters, I did reverse Google searches for all the images that the young people included in their Popplets and timelines. I also used Lavov’s model of narrative structure to interrogate how the stories that the young people in the project shared through their Popplets were constructed. In Chapter Four, I will discuss in depth how Mayou’s Popplet introduced important themes about her educational experience: her private schooling, school language policies, pedagogical practices in Haiti, and her experiences with language discrimination in the United States. This narrative of her life in relationship to her educational experiences embedded multiple narratives that were the backdrop for how she navigated her experiences in the internship.

Photographs:

While I did not ask the interns to take pictures for this project, during the course of the semester, they documented their experience by capturing images of themselves and the kids. All of them had phones with cameras, and many of them took photographs as part of their regular routine, to document and share their lives with others. Towards the end of the semester, they also took photos so they could use them for their final internship presentation in their school. They often brought those images to the sessions to share with their peers and with me or to include in some of the visual representations that they created. As a researcher, I believe that it is important to recognize and build on young people’s own interests and forms of representation,
so towards the end of the semester, I asked them to each bring two of their images to write about and share with the group.  

Between the images that they shared with me and the ones that they used in their final presentation, there were forty images. Because the number of images that each intern took or shared varied from one to another, and as it was a small sample, I did not use an extensive content analysis of the images that would provide a systematic way of looking at them. Instead, I chose to analyze the images in conversation with other narratives that the youths produced (group discussions, presentations, journals, etc.).

Since I do not have permission to use photos of the students in the elementary school (PS129), I cannot share any images that include the children’s faces. However, I will share some of the journals and discussions that we had about the images that they brought to the seminars.

Field Notes, Interviews and Journals:

During all the seminar sessions, I participated, observed, and took field notes immediately after each session. All the sessions were recorded and I transcribed them. It was important to me to do my own transcription because it informed my evolving thoughts about the youths’ experiences. In my transcriptions, I did not edit participants’ speech to conform to the conventions of standard written English. However, when incorporating excerpts into the final chapters, I sometimes lightly edited them for clarity.

28 This approach to ethnographic research that emphasizes the need to build on young’s peoples interests to create a space in which young people share their experiences was inspired by Luttrell’s work in “Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds.” In the book, Wendy Luttrell describes how she took the lead from the girls in her research in designing improvisational activities because she recognized that they enjoyed performing and used as a form of storytelling and a way of understanding themselves.
I also conducted one open-ended interview with each youth and their host teacher. While I was mostly focusing on the interns’ experiences in doing the internships, it was useful to get the teachers’ observations about the young people in their classes. I found that they had insights on how the work of the interns impacted their students and themselves. For example, Ms. McGraw, who worked with Jabir, talked about how having him in her class had influenced her work with the families of her students and given her a chance to reach out to them (see Chapter Four for a more detailed account of this relationship.) In addition, I conducted a few short follow up interviews with some of the interns, mostly to clarify questions that came up as I was writing memos and doing initial analysis.

Each intern wrote a journal entry at the beginning of each session. I offered the choice to audiotape the journals instead of writing, since I was aware that for many of the youths, writing English was a struggle and I wanted to make sure that they were able to fully document their ideas and thoughts. However, everyone chose to write. (See Appendix A for list of prompts.) It was important to me that the youths in the group could use their full linguistic repertoire, so I also gave them the option to do their journals in their home language, and share sections of them in English with their peers, but only the Spanish speakers chose to write in Spanish occasionally. Even though I had assured the other youths that I could get translations of their journals later on, I think that only the Spanish speakers felt comfortable using their home language in a journal because they knew that I could understand their home language. Everyone except Mayou chose to write using the computers when they were available. Many of them used Google Translate to help them translate their ideas from their home language to English (except for Mayou). They also used the spell-check tool. As a result, I found that in some typed journals, they chose words that the spell check suggested that sounded like other appropriate words. In those cases, I chose
to make changes to the journals included here when I thought that the term used was most likely a result of choosing the wrong word offered by the spell-check or by Google. But overall, I tried to preserve, as much as possible, the youths’ original writings. Similarly, I preserved participants’ original speech as much as possible, making only small changes to the transcripts of the interviews and conversations to ensure participants’ meanings came across.

While I gave a prompt at the beginning of each session for the journals, including some free writes, I found that the interns did not always respond to the prompt, but instead wrote about what was in their mind in relation to their work during that week. For many of them, the seminar was a place where they processed their experiences. So while as a researcher, I sometimes had questions that I wanted to explore, I also believed that it was important for the young people in the group to share the issues/ideas that came up from their experiences and guide the dialogue as they shared their journals. For example, Rustam and Alex, who were placed in upper grades, brought up the issue of testing in their journals during the week when kids were studying and taking New York State tests. This resulted in a lively discussion in which they explored their ideas and experiences about testing along with what they observed in the classrooms where they were placed. (See Chapter Six for an analysis of the discussion and journals.)

During the course of the seminar, I had organized the data that the interns generated in the seminar. I also wrote interpretative memos with my initial analysis in response to the journals after each seminar.

To analyze the journals I adapted James Gee’s Framework, rendering the journals into strophes and stanzas (Gee, 2014) “each stanza is a group of idea units about one important event, happening, or state of affairs at one time or place, or it focuses on a specific character, theme,
image, topic, or perspective” (Gee, 2014, 80). Gee uses the term “stanzas” because, as he explains, the units are somewhat like stanzas in poetry. (For an example on of this analysis see Chapter 3.)

**Case based analysis and cross case analysis**

After the semester was finished, I reorganized the data generated by each youth in different data sets: journals, excerpts from discussions, visual representations, and interviews. I looked at each individual youth’s experience as the “case.” My research design emphasized multiple sources of data and an in-depth, case-based approach that looks closely at a small number of individuals. I chose this approach because I believe that as educators, we need to learn about young people’s understandings of their own practices in order to foster learning experiences that are informed by these practices.

I wrote short profiles for each one of the participants to support the case-based analysis and I also documented common themes across all the participants (cross-case analysis), writing memos that zero in on emerging themes throughout the process.

I identified themes that were common across the interns. In this dissertation, I highlight exemplar stories and images from three participants, Mayou, Jabir and Rustam that illustrate the breadth and depth of these themes. For example, through Mayou’s case study, I explore how the interns disrupt the adult/child and teacher/student binaries of classroom hierarchy. This was a theme that was present in many of the other intern’s narratives of their experience. While the focus is on Mayou’s narrative, I chose to also interweave some narratives by other youths that spoke to the issues that were raised. So, when I examined the
disruption of classroom binaries, I included Joanna’s narrative of forming relationships with the students who are not subject to those binaries.

Validity

The issue of validity is controversial. Different paradigms of research utilize different concepts of validity and come up with diverse and sometimes contradictory ways to address it. I will not attempt to summarize all the different positions, but I will say validity was approached as an ongoing process of validation by engaging frequently in reflexive writing exercises that described and analyzed my choices, emergent theories, and my relationships with the participants. I also utilized various data types to build a rich case study in order to triangulate my findings.

My study does not attempt to make generalizations about how newcomer students, as a population, experience internship opportunities in schools. My findings can be understood in the context of the students’ educational experiences and institutions in which the students in the project participate, and the individual narratives about processes of teaching, learning, and languaging that emerge from them.

Two important questions that I had to address on an ongoing basis during the process through reflective writing were:

How do I identify myself? (woman, Latina, mother, immigrant, teacher, researcher, adult, etc.)

How do these identifications shape my relationships in the field and shape what I saw and interpreted?
These questions have a particular impact, given that I have long term experience with the schools from which the students came and a long term relationship with the site where they were doing their internship. Guba and Lincoln (2008) talk about reflexivity as: “the process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher, the ‘human instrument’” (p. 278). This process allows the researcher to locate themselves within the processes of research itself. It forces the researcher to think not only about the choice of research problem, but also about the relationship with those who will be engaged in the research process and about the multiple identities of the researcher. In this regard, Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) explain that “Research in the critical tradition takes the form of self-conscious criticism — self-conscious in the sense that the researchers try to become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research, as well as their own subjective, intersubjective, and normative reference claims” (p. 406).

A traditional view of research may see my relationships and experiences with the schools as a roadblock that creates “blind spots” in my ability to understand and interpret how young people experience their work in the school. For example, since I have known some of the teachers for many years, my experience could influence my understanding of their relationship with the interns. Throughout the process of doing this research, I addressed my relationships to the school through reflective writing. Overall, I see my familiarity with the school as an asset that provided me with nuances in my work as a researcher. It also allowed me to have full access to the school, something that is difficult to obtain in public school settings.

I also need to make explicit that, as an adult working with young people, I bring in a particular lens and there is an unbalanced power relationship between adults and youth. Adults in our society have more power than young people in most institutional settings and youth often
feel obligated to tell adults what they think they want to hear. This is why I chose to work with the youth in the context of a group seminar. I wanted to create a space where I could hear and observe things that might not be said if I were asking them directly. In her research with children, Orellana noted that “group interviews were generally more productive than individual ones because the higher ratio of young people to adults helped to adjust the imbalance of power; and when kids talked with each other, they allowed me some of the best insights into their perspectives.” (Orellana, 2009, p. 136)

I found, in working with the group of young people who participated in the group, that they often questioned and challenged each other to think deeply about the work that they were doing in the classroom, as well as about their evolving ideas about teaching and learning. I believe that having young people work in a group helped balance (somewhat) our relative power differences. In addition, their active participation in the analysis of the data through seminar activities helped provide insights that I might not have otherwise had. For example, in Chapter Five, I share excerpts of two separate discussions where Jabir presses Mayou and Rustam to learn more about the background of their students. In these conversations, he pushes them to think about what it means to form relationships with the children in their classes. Their discussion provided me with nuances about his philosophical understanding of the need to learn about the cultural and linguistic background of the students. While I was in the room during these discussions, the questions were, in both cases, driven by Jabir’s, Mayou’s, and Rustam’s reflections and responses were addressed to Jabir. Throughout the process, I learned not just from the responses that they gave each other, but also from listening and noting what kinds of questions they asked each other, and when they pressed each other to think deeply about an issue, as Jabir did with Mayou and Rustam.
A particular strength of this study was the multiple kinds of data that allowed me to triangulate the collected data from the audiencing sessions during the seminar, visual representations, participants’ individual journal entries, collaborative analysis, peer observations, and my notes as a participant observer. The most important piece in thinking about validity for this project came from my work with the Collaborative Seeing Studio, whose methodology emphasizes participation and collaboration with young people in the research process (Luttrell 2010; Mitchell, 2011). As I described earlier in this chapter, in this model, young people are positioned as producers and interpreters of their own and each other’s work. They are expert analysts of their work. This methodology calls for multiple audiences that bring various interpretations into the analysis. These multiple interpretations were part of a continuous dialogue in which I engaged with the participants, as well as with my peers through the process of collaborative seeing.
CHAPTER FOUR
USING LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL REPERTOIRES OF PRACTICE TO CHALLENGE BINARIES IN THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Mayou is a 16 year old Haitian eleventh-grader who always had a bright smile, even when she shared that she wasn’t feeling well or was having a hard day. As I mentioned in chapter three, when I asked her how she would like to be described, she said, “I'm from Haiti and I am black. I'm 5’-2’’ and I got four brothers and two sisters and [I’m] the 5th one and I’ve got short hair, light brown eyes, and that's very much it.” Later on, she added, “Something that is special about me is: I’m really friendly. I'm not the judging type and I'm smart. I never failed a class yet.” (Mayou, personal communication, April 9, 2014) In her self-description, Mayou chose character traits that she values and made identity claims. Later in this chapter, I will contextualize and explore the layers of meaning of her self-presentation, and examine how they impacted how she engaged in the internship and the world of school and friends. Mayou was the only one in the group of young people who picked a name for herself for this research project; everyone else told me to pick the name myself. She explained that she chose Mayou because “it actually has a great definition behind it (...) It's like a lot of positive things connected to me in real life... like when I want something I really go for it... I don't let nothing stop me ...” (Mayou, interview, February 2, 2015)

Mayou came to the U.S. in 2010. She is one of seven children and she joined her mother who was living here with two of her brothers and two sisters, leaving her father and two older siblings behind. She came into middle school in the 8th grade. After a year in middle school, she transferred to Flatbush International for high school. In describing her journey, she explained: “My mom was here first. She actually moved here in 2008 and she sent to pick us up. Before I
was really excited to come... but at first, when I realized that I'm going to leave my dad behind, I was kind of sad also. So it’s kind of both sides, happy and sad...” (Mayou, interview, February 2, 2015)

As I discussed in Chapter Three, during our first seminar, Mayou created a Popplet in which she shared with the group her experiences in both the Haitian and US educational systems.
Figure 4.1
Mayou’s Popplet

- **Hello, my name is Mayou. I live in Port-au-Prince. The capital of Haiti is Pau Port.**

- **When I was a little girl I go to school in a private school in Haiti.**

- **In Haiti, I didn't know how to speak English because school in Haiti only wanted the student to speak French if you don't have any language classes.**

- **When I was a little the hardest class for me was second grade because the books were too hard, since in second grade you should start knowing history about your country.**

- **In Haiti, I started in second grade every day I should learn one chapter in each book. I alive because when I get to school in the morning I have to repeat a chapter of lessons in different subjects.**

- **When I came to the US I got to middle school it was so hard for me because I didn't know any English but I was so happy I didn't have any bully in my school but some of the kids were mean because they used to talk in French or Creole with my Haitian friends or French friends they always being like she Madame francis. But I guess they were just jealous of how I talk I didn't care what they said about me.**

- **Now I'm 16 years old and I am a respectful teenager, funny, friendly my parents and teachers teach me these things since in my younger age and I can also say that I'm mature because when it came to be serious I am serious.**
During the course of her internship and our seminar meetings, Mayou referred many times to the narrative that she had shared in her Popplet. She created this visual representation during our first session as a group. The prompt that I gave at the time was: “Tell us about your educational experiences. These experiences can be in connection to schools or other settings. You can include experiences in your home country, as well as in the US.” In her story, Mayou walked the viewer through the experiences that shaped who she is now, “A respectful teenager, funny, friendly…”

Mayou’s Popplet, as a visual representation, tells many stories that came up during our conversations and provides the backdrop for how she navigated her experiences in the internship. I will return to those pieces later, but in my initial analysis, I chose to examine it as one narrative in which she placed herself at the center. Mayou selected the image of a little girl as her avatar (using a stock image because, as she told me during the session, she didn’t have an image of herself at the time) and wrote “My beautiful self.” The girl is looking straight at the camera and smiling. I wondered why she chose the image of a girl to represent herself instead of a young woman. Perhaps it was because her story starts with her schooling experience as a young girl in Haiti. Or perhaps in choosing a child who is looking straight at the camera, she chose an avatar that represents innocence, frankness, and a world devoid of conflicts. In her first journal, which Mayou wrote on the same day that she created this Popplet, she described children (in general) as little angels, calling up a conception of the “innocent child”, children who are “angels” and pure in essence.

In her Popplet, Mayou included only two images besides the one of the little girl: one of Bank of America Tower, representing the United States (or New York), and one of a Haitian Gingerbread House, representing Haiti. The photographs are on opposite sides of a page, as if to
introduce the viewer to the two worlds to which she belongs. The Popplet tells Mayou’s story, focusing on her school experiences. She starts in Haiti, moving through the bubbles clockwise until the present time in New York. Her two worlds are described below each image, using text bubbles to explain her experiences. In selecting a Gingerbread House\textsuperscript{29} to visually represent Haiti, she chose an iconic image with historical meaning. These houses were designed by Paris-educated Haitian architects and built as single-family residences (sometimes accommodating servants) for the Haitian elite during the nineteenth century. The Gingerbread Houses capture a time of prosperity in Haiti and have recently been declared world monuments.\textsuperscript{30}

During the session when the youths in the group created their Popplets, most of them searched Google Images as a first step. Gillian Rose (2015) discusses how “all images, to some extent or another, travel. Images are mobile, and how they travel matters to what effects they have” (Rose, 2015). In analyzing the visual representations that the youths produced, I tried to retrace the paths that they followed in finding, appropriating, and repurposing visuals in order to tell their stories. In retracing the steps that Mayou might have taken, I found that while these Gingerbread Houses are featured in some prominent websites about Haiti, they do not appear early in a Google search for the word “Haiti.” Instead, the images of Haiti that appear are of the map, Haiti’s flag, the aftermath of the earthquake, and a few images of hotels and beaches as

\textsuperscript{29} The most prominent Gingerbread houses are in a 1.5 square kilometer area southeast of downtown Port-au-Prince. These houses were included in the 2010 World Monuments Watch (Langenbach, et al., 2010).

\textsuperscript{30} In making a case for why the houses qualify as world monuments, the World Monuments Fund Earthquake Mission Report states: “These houses, with their unique Haitian style and native architects are symbolic of Haiti’s hard fought independence. While this architecture incorporates elements from abroad, it can truly claim to be indigenous, setting it apart from the mostly colonial architecture in the rest of the Caribbean.” (Langenbach, et al., 2010, p. 19)
tourist destinations. In selecting a Gingerbread House, Mayou rejected many readily available images of Haiti and perhaps chose this house as an icon of Haiti that connects with a time of prosperity in the country. These houses were built mostly for the country’s elite and are now occupied, in large part, by descendants of those families or used for government and other public institutions. The general images of Haiti that usually populate mainstream media are images of poverty and destruction (especially after the 2010 earthquake). Perhaps Mayou used the photograph of the Gingerbread House to speak back to these images, as a form of resistance to the popular representations of Haiti as an impoverished nation in crisis. In doing so, she was also choosing to represent Haiti with an image of wealth, but a different kind of wealth than that represented by the Bank of America Tower, the avatar for the U.S./New York. The photograph of the Bank of America tower, taken from a low angle to emphasize the stature of the building, evokes wealth and power of a modern society, whereas the Gingerbread Houses evoke wealth and power rooted in the historical heritage of Haiti.

In building her Popplet, Mayou created a narrative about her life. She began by orienting the viewer to who she is, with the picture of a black girl as her avatar, introducing her the audience to where her story begins, in Haiti, with the image of a Gingerbread House and a brief explanation that Port-Au-Prince is the capital. This explanation takes into account that the audience may have very little knowledge about Haiti. As viewers follow the clockwise sequence of the Popplet, they encounter important themes and key moments in her educational experience: her private schooling, school language policies, pedagogical practices in Haiti, and her experiences with language discrimination in the United States. All are formative experiences

31 When I did the Google search I went through the 500 images that appear in the first page of the search.
that helped make Mayou into who she was at the moment of producing the Popplet (during the first week of the internship). Within this narrative of her life in relationship to her educational experiences, Mayou embedded multiple narratives that were the foundation of how she navigated her experiences in the internship. In the following sections, I will explore some of these narratives in the context of what she shared about her work at PS129 during the seminar.

**Language and Schooling**

Mayou has a multilingual background and from an early age, was interested in learning languages. She grew up speaking Haitian-Creole at home and learned French in school. She understands and speaks some Spanish that she learned from Dominicans in Haiti and from friends in the US:

Mayou: Ever since I came here in December 2010, I did not know how to speak English, but I felt like I understand it. Since I get here, I just take a test, like a state test. So I passed and get in 8th grade without knowing how to speak English. So when I get there, I take like some Regents in 8th grade and I passed them. So I went to International High School because I didn't know how speak English...

Ivana: Did you do the test in Creole?

Mayou: In English... I did understand the writing but not talking.

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32 I chose to use the the term “Haitian Creole”, the term used by NYC Department of Education. However as Spears and Berotte Joseph point our in their book *The Haitian Creole Language*, there are a number other names for used to refer to the same language: “French Creole”, “Creole” (kreyòl in Haitian-Creole) and “Haitian.” Mayou used the name Creole (kreyòl) as most Haitian Creole speakers use and so did I in conversations with her. However in writing about the language I chose not to use creole because there are other languages that are also called “creole” such as the languages of Martinique and Guadeloupe among others. (Spears, 2010). For more about the history and naming of Haitian Creole as a language, see Spears & Berotte, 2010.
Ivana: How did you learn to write in English?

Mayou: ‘Cause I remember when I was in Haiti at age 7, I got an older brother and he was in 12th grade. He had some English book and all the time I go into the book. Since then, I understand... and they had like translation between Creole and English. Since that, I do remember some of those words… and when I take the test, they gave me two books, one Creole and one in English.

(Mayou, interview, April 9, 2015)

Mayou’s interest in languages drove her to self-teach English from her brother’s book and Spanish from “going to a place with a lot of Dominicans” when she was home in Haiti. Mayou is the fifth child in a family of seven. Having an older brother who was studying English in school gave her access to his materials so she could teach herself the new language. She used her basic knowledge of English to navigate two versions of the Regents’ Test in 8th grade, choosing to answer in English instead of Haitian-Creole.

During the seminar and in our conversations, Mayou described the complexities of how languages are valued and how language practices have different implications. In her introductory Popplet, she wrote:

When I came to the U.S., I get to middle school. It was so hard for me because I didn't know any English but I was happy I didn’t have any bully in my school but some of the kids were mean because the way I used to talk in French or Creole with my Haitian friends or French friends they always being like she’s like “Madam français”. But I guess they were just jealous of how I talk I didn’t care what they said about me. (sic.)
Mayou says that there were no bullies in her school, yet she was teased for speaking languages that were not English. She chose to describe the students’ attitudes towards her speaking French and Creole as “jealousy.” In her analysis of her experience, she is aware that people place different values on languages. She explained in her interview that they probably thought that she felt that she was “better than them”. Students made fun of her bilingualism, using an epithet, “Madame François”, that signified the high status of her languages. Even though the students mocked her, Mayou’s reading of their behavior was that her linguistic background was perceived by them as more valuable than their own. In her story, she recognized that languages can have a hierarchical status in different societies and, in the context of her school in the United States, French and French-Creole were perceived as having the same high status. Languages can be used as symbolic instruments to set up hierarchy. As Shohamy (2006) points out: “It is through language that group memberships are determined, leading to categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’, inclusion and exclusion, loyalty and ‘foreignness’, ‘have’s and ‘have-nots’.” (p. 22) In Mayou’s description of her first experience in schools in the United States, she is not only recognizing the linguistic hierarchies and understanding how language can be a marker of group membership, but she is also establishing her own status. Instead of feeling put down by her peers teasing her, she chose to interpret it as jealousy and took pride in her multilingualism. In Mayou’s account, her peers in eighth grade in the United States didn’t distinguish between French and French-Creole - and regarded them as having the same status. However, Mayou described and critiqued the different status of the languages and the language policies attached to them in Haiti. Mayou grew up speaking French-Creole at home and French in school:
Mayou: In school you don't really... they doesn't really want you to speak Creole... ‘cause they like say French give us freedom so like we have to speak French and not Creole...

But I think that's truly a bad idea...

Ivana: To just speak French?

Mayou: Yes.

Ivana: Why do you think that?

Mayou: ’Cause Haiti is like... they come up with their own stuff... they doesn’t really have to speak French ‘cause “French give us liberty.” So... we have to be us and French have to be theirs.

(Mayou, , April 9, 2014)

Haitian-Creole is spoken by most Haitians (Funk, 2012). Estimates of how many Haitian speak French range from 5% to 10% of the total population (Zephir, 2010; DeGraff & Ruggles, 2014). However, in Haiti, the language of schooling is still mostly French. In 1976, the Minister of Education, Joseph Bernard, led an education reform to make Haitian-Creole a medium of instruction for the first four years in Haitian schools. The Bernard Reform was instituted in 1979, and suspended between 1982 and 1987 (Dejean, 2010; Gibson, 2011). The reform activities began again in 1987, under the supervision of the “National Pedagogical Institute,” and the Ministry of Education reported that all public schools were applying the reform curriculum. However, to this day, in most private schools, the instruction is in French and about 80% of students in primary education are enrolled in private schools (Locher, 2010; World Bank, 2015). Many of the private schools in the country are run by non-profits and religious institutions, some
of which offer tuition subsidies\textsuperscript{33} to students. Even in the public schools, instruction in Creole has been weakened by insufficient materials, lack of training for teachers, and ambivalent attitudes towards the changes (Dejean, 2010; Gibson, 2011). Under the 1987 Constitution, adopted after the overthrow of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s dictatorship, Haitian-Creole and French have been the two official languages. Michael Degraff (2013) explains that “though French and Kreyòl are the country’s two official languages, most publications, print media, official transactions, courts, etc., continue to favor French over Kreyòl…Meanwhile the majority (i.e., those who speak Kreyòl only) still cannot fully enjoy their linguistic rights and cannot gain access to quality education.” Given that most children attend private schools, French continues to be the main language of instruction even when the teachers themselves do not speak French fluently (Degraff, 2013).

In an interview, Mayou explained “in school in Haiti they mostly like work in French. If actually they saw you speaking Creole you gonna get in trouble.” (Mayou, interview, February 25, 2015). Mayou experienced first hand a monoglosic approach to schooling in which her home language practices were forbidden. Her school privileged French as the language spoken by the politically powerful Haitian elite. In Haiti, this practice has benefited those who speak French at home, limiting the educational opportunities for those who are being educated in a language that they do not understand. Research has shown that only 10\% of Haitian students who enter the first grade finish school. (Degraff, 2013)

Mayou critiqued that policy when she said: “’Cause Haiti is like... they come up with their own stuff... they doesn’t really have to speak French ‘cause ‘French give us liberty’. So... we have to be us and French have to be theirs.” She is also expressing an implicit understanding

\textsuperscript{33} The World Bank funded a tuition waiver program. According to them, in 2012, 80\% of the primary age students were enrolled in schools.
of the centrality of language choice in education. As Heller explains, “Language is central to institutional processes of symbolic domination, since conventional language practices serve to establish the normality, the everydayness of institutional processes.” (Heller, 1995, p.37) I did not ask Mayou during the interview what she meant by “the French give us liberty.” Her statement is puzzling, given that Haiti (called Saint Domingue at the time) was a French colony until the slaves revolted in 1791 and declared independence from France in 1804. The international community did not recognize Haiti and the country remained isolated. In 1825, France finally recognized Haiti’s independence but imposed severe economic burdens known as “the debts of independence.” I grew up in Argentina, and for most of my early schooling, Spain was referred to as our “Mother Country,” but the darker aspects of colonialism were glossed over. It may be that her Haitian schooling presented the relationship to France in a similar light. However, in her statement, Mayou makes an explicit critique of the language policy of her school that imposes French as the medium of instruction and prohibits students from using French-Creole in school. Embedded in her critique is an understanding that the policy is an expression of Haiti’s relationship to France as a colonial power.

Mayou rejected the idea that Haitians have to bow to the cultural heritage of France by accepting the imposition of French as the language of schooling. Language policies and the educational policies that are linked to them have always reflected the power struggles between

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34 According to Spolsky (2004), the language policy of a given community has three components: language practices; beliefs or ideology; and language intervention, planning and management. Language ideology is what people think should be done. Language practices are what people actually do. Interventions, planning, and management include efforts to modify and influence practices. Spolsky explains that language and language policy exist in a highly complex, interacting, and dynamic context. Many non-linguistic factors account for any attempt by persons or groups to intervene in the language practice and the beliefs of other persons or groups. He also explains that “language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority.” (p.8)
minorities and dominant groups (McGroarty, 2001). In the case of Haiti, there was a government mandate to use French-Creole in school, which Mayou’s school (along with most private schools) chose to ignore. Mayou critiqued this choice in the context of a larger struggle for a Haitan identity, “So... we have to be us and French have to be theirs” while acknowledging both sides of the identification struggle.

In her current life, Mayou navigates multiple discursive spaces and she provided a meta-analysis of how she adapts her language practices by using different language repertoires depending on each situation. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) discuss how “Languages can be used as sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity, or discrimination.” (p. 27) Mayou reflected on her language practices in various settings as she articulated the tensions between including or excluding people in different communities and her concerns about maintaining her French-Creole.

Ivana: So you speak Creole at school?

Mayou: Not any more... because most of the time, when I'm in the table...

Sometimes if there is some Haitian sitting at the table with me and I start speaking Creole... then I say, does not really fair because like other kids, like Chinese friends, I got a lot of Chinese friends, if they speak Chinese, I get mad ‘cause I don't speak Chinese. So I feel the same way ‘cause they don't really speak Creole and I don't want them to feel bad...

Ivana: But you speak Creole here at PS129?

Mayou: Yes... I still want to speak Creole because I don't want to forget my language ... Like I got my cousin and she come here when she was like nine and she
doesn't really speak Creole no more. I don't want that to be me. I want still speak Creole...

In this segment, Mayou expressed her understanding that language practices can set up boundaries between people as well as created communities, depending on the situation. At the beginning of the seminar, Mayou described herself as “friendly.” In the previous excerpt, she explained how she enacted her friendliness by making sure that other people are included in her conversations. García (2009, p. 82) describes how language “is capable of generating imagined communities and constructing particular choices (Anderson 183:33). Language, then, has much more than a semiotic and symbolic function; it also has a rhetorical function, used to discursively construct identity and solidarity.” Mayou illustrates this by how she chooses not to speak Creole when she is in a multilingual group of friends at school, using English as the common language because she is afraid of excluding others and she feels comfortable protesting if her friends use a home language that she doesn’t understand. However, at PS129, she chose to speak Haitian-Creole with the one Haitian student in Ms. Chen’s third grade class. In describing this practice, she highlights the fact that she doesn’t want to lose her Creole, as her cousin did.

At PS129, Mayou was placed in a class with a boy, Jodesten, who was an emergent bilingual from Haiti. She described her surprise upon discovering that Jodesten was from Haiti and spoke Haitian-Creole:

Mayou: He didn't know that I spoke Creole. He thought that I was African or something (laughing). When I come to him… and I was like: “Do you speak French?” Because [he] don't understand, I thought he speak French. I didn't know that he was Haitian... I heard him say something in Creole. I said like: “Hold on, you speak Creole?”
He was like “Yes, I'm Haitian.” I was like “Ok, ok” and start speak Creole

Ivana: Who was he saying something in Creole to? To himself?

Mayou: He just like… that happens to a lot of Haitians… and especially me… sometimes you are talking it just like you are in English and you jump to Creole.

(Mayou, interview, April 9, 2014)

At the beginning of her narrative, Mayou describes how both she and Jodesten made assumptions about each other, based on race and language use. He thought that she might be African, and she thought that he spoke French, maybe because he was struggling to communicate in English. Mayou tells a story in which Jodesten’s fluid language practices connected them in the context of the classroom. Even though, up until Mayou arrived, there was no one else in Ms. Chen’s class who spoke Creole, Jodesten translanguaged using Creole and English, perhaps talking to himself while making sense of the schoolwork. While moving fluently between languages is a practice that is common to most bilinguals, Mayou described this practice as something that “happens to a lot of Haitians.” After a pause, she made a connection to herself: “and especially me.” In stating her metalinguistic awareness of how bilinguals move fluidly through their language repertoires, she created a community within the classroom with Jodesten: “sometimes you are talking it just like you are in English and you jump to Creole.”

Mayou was pleased to find out that there was someone in the third grade class from her country, not only because they shared a common language, but also because they shared common cultural practices. On the first day of our seminar, she wrote: “I’m working in there is a little boy named Jodesten his funny and his a Haitian boy so we are from the same country,

35 I am using the word bilingual, with the understanding that, in reality, many speakers are moving between more than two languages and like Mayou, are multilingual.
sometimes when he finish do his work early he always want me to give joke or him give one that’s something all Haitian like to do.” (sic.) (Mayou’s Journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

Like many of the other youths in the group, Mayou made a personal connection to a student based on her understanding and knowledge of the student’s cultural background. Mayou talked about “giving him a joke” which I first understood as joking around, or connecting in a playful manner with the students. When I asked her later on what she meant by “giving a joke” she explained: “It's like... in Haiti... that's all we do at night ... always talking... even though we don't have much electricity but is like never bored 'cause we are always making some joke and playing every night before dinner... is like we always doing something.” (Mayou interview, June 10, 2015) She knew that Jodesten sought her company and she understood how to use her cultural and linguistic practices to create a lighter atmosphere, something that connects them both to their home country.

During class time, Mayou used Creole to communicate with Jodesten. She explained that: “He understands more when I speak to him in Creole.” Sean Grosjean talks about how “bilinguals acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people.” (p. 29) While no one else in Ms. Chen’s third grade class spoke French-Creole, Mayou understood that it was important to use French-Creole with Jodesten in order to help him participate in the class discourse, to access content, and to socialize. Ms Chen, the classroom teacher, described her practice:

I noticed it did help with the one student who was Creole because he was able to better understand. It did help me when I did the lesson because when Mayou was here for the lesson, then she was able to explain to him exactly what he needed to do, and then she
would look in the workbook and if he didn't understand she was able to explain to him in his language. I do think that she was an asset when she came to Creole, but not only with him … She was able to help other students that were English speaking, so it was great.

(Ms. Chen, interview, June 23, 2014)

In Mayou’s description of her language practices, she made a distinction between choosing not to use Haitian-Creole, so as not to exclude people from the conversation, and speaking Haitian-Creole with Jodesten, so as to include him in the classroom discourse. In both of these narratives, she uses her bilingualism as a means to connect with others and to remain connected to her own identity. Perhaps her worries about “forgetting” Haitian-Creole also contributed to her bringing it into the language practices of Ms. Chen’s classroom. In translanguaging between Creole and English, Mayou made sure that Jodesten (who, like her cousin, is probably eight or nine years old) doesn’t “forget” Creole and that she, herself, continues to access her home language. Li Wei (2011) explains that:

The act of translanguaging can be transformative in nature because it creates a social space for the multilingual language users by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, and their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience. (p. 1223)

Li Wei calls this a “translanguaing space,” a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging. Mayou’s elementary schooling in Haiti had forbidden the use of Haitian-Creole, but Mayou’s language practices at P.S.129 were embedded in her language ideology: the belief that Haitian-Creole should be valued and used in schools
and that Haitians should preserve their home language. In the above narrative, Mayou describes how Jodesten invites her to share their cultural resources by joking around in Haitian-Creole.

Language is used by both of them as a means for agency and resistance (Pablenko & Blackledge, 2004). Agency, in that Mayou, as “a teacher assistant,” makes the decision to translanguage using Haitian-Creole in working in classroom activities and during breaks. Resistance, in that she is aware of the power of a dominant language in a society and she wants to make sure that she and Jodesten maintain their language and heritage.

After a few weeks in the internship, Mayou decided to extend her work with Jodesten after school. Jodesten was the only emergent bilingual in the ESL program whose home language was Haitian-Creole. Mayou also began to help Ms. Howe, the ESL teacher, work with a small group of emergent bilinguals during after school. Ms. Howe recounted, “It was really nice because Mayou spoke Haitian-Creole and Jodesten was in the group and he is the only one in the group who speaks another language[other than Arabic]. Everyone else speaks Arabic. He was like ‘I have someone special here with me too... I have someone from my country as well’”. As Ms. Howe pointed out, Mayou’s presence in the classroom and in the after school program brought in a shared cultural repertoire and, for Jodesten, a sense of belonging to a community.

**Breaking the Binaries**

*I think that having the high school students here and having the elementary school kids see someone from their country... it's different from having a teacher in the room. Just having an older teenager or adolescent... anyone who is older working with them and helping them with their work from their country, I think that that had a big impact on them. It's different from the teacher teaching a lesson. I think it makes them feel included in the school and included in the city and respected... (Ms. Howe, interview, June 18, 2014)*
Schools have a particular social order in which adults and children have different social positions and authority. (Mayall, 2002) In the first two journals of her internship, Mayou described herself a “student teacher.” This is in contrast to most of the other interns, who didn’t give themselves titles that described their classroom roles at the beginning of the internship. In describing herself as a student teacher, she positioned herself as someone who has authority over the children in the class.

Mayou came into the school with an anthropological lens. Like many of the interns, she shared that one of the reasons that she chose to work in a school was that she was curious about how elementary schools are in the US. In her first journal, Mayou also talked about wanting to go to a kindergarten class because she wanted to “see how it feels to be a teacher of kindergarten kids.” However, she was very clear in her initial interview that she doesn’t want to become a teacher. “I want something interesting to do like traveling and stuff. I love traveling… so I want my job to be about traveling…” (Mayou, interview, April 9, 2014)

Naming is important in establishing a particular status in the context of a school. It is key to setting up relationships between individuals and defining the boundaries and power differences between them. In this short narrative from her journal about her first day in Ms. Chen’s class, Mayou depicts how her status in the classroom was asserted by the teacher. In the story, she described the interplay between her, the children in the class —who initially thought of her as one of them, as indicated by their use of her first name—and Ms. Chen, who as the adult in the room has the power to establish Mayou’s place in the hierarchy of the classroom.

I remember
when I first get to the class
the first day all the kids were calling me Mayou
and Ms. Chen was like “since when she is your friend”
and all the kids was like Ms. Mayou,
I was laughing
because the kids took a long time to say it
and when they finally said it
it sound funny.36

(Mayou’s journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

In Mayou’s re-telling of Ms. Chen’s public affirmation of her status as different from the kids in the class, by informing them that she is “not their friend,” there is a mix of pride and astonishment about how it sounded to be called “Ms.” She depicted it as “sounding funny,” implying that this was a new title that she had never been given before.

The use of the word “Ms.” set her apart, creating a distance between her and the children in the class, highlighting a status difference. In other journals, she described the students as “like my friends... because they like chatting around with me... every time they finish doing their work always early they always telling me to come talk with them...” But, in choosing the word “like,” she still maintained that initial status difference between herself and the kids. She developed a relationship of closeness and friendship with the students, but as a “student teacher,” she has a different position in the classroom, established by the teacher, Ms Chen.

While none of the other young people called themselves student teachers at the beginning of their experience, many of them also pondered on their status over the course of the internship, and began to use that name later on. Miguel shared in a visual representation how he became

36 For the purpose of analysis, I have organized Mayou’s journals into lines and stanzas inspired by James Gee’s (1986) framework for discourse analysis. The break between the lines means that I see the speaker taking a new topic.
“the right hand of the teacher” during the 3rd week, and how the kids called him “like he was another teacher.” Being the right hand of the teacher promoted him to a higher status in the classroom. However, in Miguel’s description, this is something that he earned by having more experience and by being able to help the kids in his class (see Miguel’s Prezi presentation in appendix). Joanna often referred to the children in her class as “her little friends,” but she also shared, with a smile, how the children tried to make sense of her role in the class as they asked her if she was a teenager while calling her Miss. In our society, we use a person’s age to distinguish between people and create age-based social groups (James & James, 2008). In the context of schooling, adults have the power to create and reinforce the rules, set up structures, and decide on the routines for the everyday life of a classroom. In entering the elementary school classroom, Mayou and the rest of the interns had to figure out where they fit in the hierarchy of the school as they navigated their understanding of their status in schools. These hierarchies are socially constructed and their position negotiated with the teacher and the children in the class. The children in Joanna’s class asked her if she was a teenager as a way to place her in the hierarchy of the class and to make sense of her position. They were aware that there are generational systems of power (James & James, 2008) and that age, in school, determines one’s status. Miguel had to earn his position by becoming “the right hand of the teacher” and the children in his class also had a role in helping him to be “like a teacher” by calling and asking for help.

All the interns entered the classroom with a new title, Miss or Mister, as a representation of their new status. Yet their blurry positioning challenged the binary student/teacher relationship and as they worked in the classrooms, they co-constructed their status with the students and the teachers in the room. They perceive themselves and were perceived as an “in between” category
that bridged the world of adults and children and that had concrete implications on what they brought to the class and how they interacted with the children. For example, toward the end of her stay at PS129, Mayou chose to teach a lesson in her class. She was the only one of the interns who asked to teach a lesson. She had shared with Ms. Chen that she wrote poetry so she did a lesson in writing poetry. She planned her lesson with Ms. Chen, shared her own poems and then took the students to the school garden so they could take notes and use them to write their own poems. Ms. Chen reflected on the impact of the activity: “she shared the poem that she wrote and that made the kids more confident like: ‘I can do this.’” As Ms. Chen explained, Mayou’s ‘in between’ status helped Ms. Chen’s students to relate to her and to gain confidence to write their own pieces.
“She’s like the best student you can ask for”: Self-reflection in working with children

The constructions of adulthood and childhood are made in relationship to each other and not as autonomous realms. For Mayou, there is a value in fulfilling the expectations that adults have of children. She identified herself as someone who fulfills those values and brought them to her work at PS129. In the last bubble in her Popplet — which was also the point at which she started to work at PS129 — Mayou wrote, “Now I am 16 years old and I am a respectful teenager, funny, friendly, my parents and my teachers teach me those since in my younger age. And I can also say I am mature, because when it come to serious, I am serious.” In her statement, she stresses the role of adults in helping her to become who she is. However, in the context of her work at the school, she brings to light a complex understanding of how children’s socialization is mediated by other children who are active participants in the process.

During our 3rd session, I asked everyone to write about one student or a group of students in the class. Mayou chose to write about Shamiha, a student who embodies many of the values that Mayou ascribed to herself. The following is a rendering37 of Mayou’s journal:

“Shamiha”

Shamiha is a little girl in my class,

I think she is 8 or 9 years old.

She looks like a Indian little girl

cause of her hair style.

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37 In order to examine the interns’ journals, I adapted James Gee’s Framework, rendering the journals into strophes and stanzas (Gee, 2014). “Each stanza is a group of idea units about one important event, happening, or state of affairs at one time or place, or it focuses on a specific character, theme, image, topic, or perspective.” (Gee, 2014, 80) Gee uses the term ‘stanzas’ because, as he explains, the units are somewhat like stanzas in poetry.
But I think she’s Pakistan.

Shamiha is the quiet kids in class
even all the kids are talking, but
for her she always has something to do.
When the teacher give work to do in class
she always being the first one to be done.
and she always make her brain work.

I don't say that the others doesn’t make their brain work also
but her!
She is really different
She is a good example of how a leader should be
and if the other kids in class look after what she do
they will do better than they doing.

Shamiha have a good attitude with all her classmate
But when it come to do what she have to do
She make it happen
and get over it.

For me,
She’s like the best student you can ask for

(Mayou, Journal Entry, Seminar 3)

In the first stanza, Mayou tries to orient the reader to who Shamiha is by providing some
markers: age, gender and ethnicity (although she shares that she is not sure about Shamiha’s
background). In the second stanza, Mayou compares Shamiha’s classroom behavior to the “others” in the class, remarking on the fact that she “always” exhibits what she considers positive classroom behaviors. Mayou describes Shamiha’s ability to follow rules (being quiet when others talk); work ethics (“the first one to be done”); academics (“makes her brain work”); and social behaviors (“Shamiha has a good attitude with all of her classmates”). After presenting some evidence of how Shamiha is unusual, in the middle of the stanza Mayou emphasizes that she is special: “but her! She is different from the others.” Then, she continues to layout evidence of how she is unusual. It is only at the end of the stanza that Mayou introduces herself, and establishes a relationship to Shamiha in proclaiming her “the best student you can ask for”. In this piece, Mayou sets Shamiha apart from the group as being unusual, and being different makes her “the best student you can ask for.”

In this journal, Mayou articulates the understanding that children learn from each other and not just from adults. In her telling that Shamiha “is a good example for the class,” she is recognizing that children model various behaviors to each other, challenging the idea that children have a peripheral participation in the community of the classroom. Instead, they are central members of the community who learn from each other in their interactions.

Mayou’s portrayal of Shamiha includes many of the traits that Mayou ascribes to herself. In her application to the internship, Mayou wrote that she “wanted to be a leader and an example to the kids”, similar to the language that she used to paint her portrait of Shamiha. She presents Shamiha as an archetype of “the best student you can have”, someone who is quiet, who follows directions, gets her work done, and gets along with others. Mayou identifies modeling as an important part of how children learn from each other and the adults in the class. Just like
Shamiha, she is aware that she came to the school with a set of accepted school practices that made her a “good model” for the students in the class.

Archetypes of students are often embedded in the discourse of teachers, students, and administrators in schools. Using archetypes to describe themselves and to identify with the children in the class was not unique to Mayou’s experience. In contrast to Mayou, Joanna described herself as a “naughty” student, but as did Mayou, Joanna used this archetype to guide her work with a girl in her own class. When I asked the group to write about a student or group of students in the class, Joanna chose a child who did not “follow the rules,” Agnes. She also continued to write and talk about her during the semester.38

Today I’ll be writing
about a little girl in the class
that I’m in called Agnes.

Agnes is a really smart girl,
she likes to sing a lot,
she also has green eyes
and curly brown hair.

She has a rare personality
that catches my attention,
I think is because she’s pretty naughty
and I considerer myself a pretty naughty girl
when I had her age.

38 After her internship was finished, Joanna returned the following year with a new group of interns to introduce them to the school. During the meeting, she spoke about her work with Agnes and how she helped Agnes, who was a naughty student, by paying special attention to her.
One of the things that I do with her
is keeping an eye on her once in a while
because she’s always doing things that might get the teacher upset
and I don’t want her to get in trouble.

(Joanna, Journal Entry, Seminar 3)

Joanna described Agnes as a child who is “independent,” a quality that Joanna regarded as important. During the interview, she talked about wanting to become more independent when she gets to college. In her final presentation during the internship fair, she wrote that she learned “how to be more responsible and independent at the same time.” However, in Agnes’s case, independence\(^{39}\) and naughtiness come hand in hand, and Joanna took it upon herself to try to keep Agnes “out of trouble”.

Not listening to the teacher is an act of rebellion in elementary school and Agnes stood out to Joanna as someone who resisted authority. Just as Mayou portrayed Shamiha as “different” because she followed the rules of the class, Joanna focused on Agnes because she was unusual in that she did not follow the rules. When Joanna took pictures to use in her final presentation, she took one of the children in the class sitting and listening on the floor. She

\(^{39}\) Throughout the interview, the theme of her “being bad” kept reappearing. I suspect that when Joanna described Agnes as being more independent, she also meant not always doing what the teacher and other adults want her to do, just like herself. However, independence could have additional meanings. At the end of her internship, she wrote that she had become “more responsible and independent.” In Joanna’s past experiences, independence was connected to breaking rules and was therefore, not being responsible. In the context of her role during the internships, perhaps it took on a new meaning that didn’t conflict with being “responsible.”
shared the images with the group during the seminar and explained that she wanted to show to other students in her school how the kindergarten children were capable of behaving like “good students.” Listening to instructions was an everyday routine in Joanna’s high school classes, as well as in the kindergarten classroom. She had a special interest in Agnes because she is “muy traviesa” (very naughty) and did not always follow those routines, challenging the expectations of the kindergarten classroom.

In her writing, Joanna positioned herself as someone who understood Agnes and was on her “side” (as a student), keeping her out of trouble with the teacher. “One of the things that I do with her is keeping an eye on her once in a while because she’s always doing things that might get the teacher upset and I don’t want her to get in trouble.” Joanna placed herself in a “border” as someone who understands the child, since she has experience with the consequences of getting teachers upset, but also has the agency and power in the classroom hierarchy to help Agnes so she won’t have to deal with those consequences and can keep her “out of trouble.”

Both Mayou and Joanna walked into the school with a set of experiences as students in many other classrooms. Their previous understandings might have helped build the archetypes that guided them in creating portraits of the children and positioning themselves in relationship to them. Young people may choose archetypes in order to establish that they belong to a group or to resist school culture (Willis, 1977), and they may also identify at different times with different established groups, through engaging in specific cultural practices (Lambert, 2013).

Joanna and Mayou used these archetypes as cultural tools to shape their work with the kids. Joanna saw herself as a student who actively resisted the norms and found herself drawn to

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40 Even during the course of the internship, Joanna’s school didn’t allow her to go on a field trip with the kindergarten class because she was caught cutting class.
Agnes, who also defied authority. As someone who inhabited the border between student and teacher, she could sympathize with Agnes, but also find ways to engage her in the routines of the classroom.

**So I Learned to be Patient…**

While Mayou entered the school positioning herself as the kind of student who follows the rules, “never fails a class,” and had clear ideas of how a “model student” should behave, by the end of her internship, she also reflected on how the children in the class challenged her initial assumptions. When the internship was done, Mayou’s school hosted an internship fair in which each intern shared his/her experience with faculty and other students who would be choosing a placement the following year. Mayou created a Prezi. The following is the text from the first slide of her Prezi:

My first week there was kind of hard because I have to learn all the kids names and help them around. I think it was hard because it was my first experience with all these little children at the age seven through nine. Before that I thought most of them were trouble maker but they show me I was wrong in a couple of weeks. When I get to know the kids very well they wasn't bad kids, only one of them was acting nasty in class to get the other kids attention. I always try to talk to her to stop [her]from doing what she been doing in class to get the other kids attention, she started listen to me and stop doing what she was started. (sic.)

In this slide, Mayou acknowledged that she came in to the class with assumptions about the students that they later taught her were incorrect. She wrote in her first journal: “My first day
there PS129 was ok because the kids were nice to me and they were respectful… is not everywhere you go and you see kids in that are like them are respectful to everybody.” (Mayou, journal entry, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014) In reading her piece, I wondered why she expected the kids to not be respectful. Perhaps her initial experience in a U.S. classroom in middle school, in which other students made fun of her for speaking French and Haitian-Creole, created the expectation that the kids would not be nice to her. In writing for the school fair, she went a step further, and described the students as active agents in her development in that they “showed” her that she was wrong.

Mayou also depicted one student as “acting nasty,” making a distinction between “being nasty” or “bad” and “acting nasty.” She provided an explanation for why the student was not behaving in an acceptable manner: She wanted attention. (This is often what parents and teacher might say about kids who are not “behaving.”) The resolution of Mayou’s story is that she addressed the issue by giving the student attention and as a consequence, got the student to listen to her. Mayou was acting from a particular place in the hierarchy of the classroom, a place where her attention was on demand, and she could choose, or not, to address the “need for attention” of a student. When I asked Mayou at the end of our first interview if she wanted to share anything, she said: “What I learned from the internship is like I get really patient now… before I wasn't. If I want something I have to get it now…. So I learned to be patient. Like if the kids, when they're calling me around, I'm like: “patience”.” And she added laughing: “Look who is saying patience!” (Mayou, interview, April 9, 2014)

Mayou placed value in learning to become patient, but she was also establishing her role in the class as someone whose attention is wanted by the children. As someone whose attention is in high demand, Mayou’s choice to take the time to work with a student who didn’t fit her model
of “the best student that you can have” was also a choice to take responsibility for the overall well being of the classroom community. This short narrative was in the first slide of her public presentation to her teachers and peers. In that same slide, she also included a picture of the school logo, as if to introduce the school to the audience. It is significant that she chose to begin her presentation using a problem solving-narrative (Bruner, 1990): She talked about how her views of the students had evolved and shared a short narrative with a main character, a “problem student” who challenged the classroom order by “acting nasty” and how she, as a student teacher dealt positively with her. The story of a teacher who reaches out to a student and who is able to transform the student’s behavior by providing the attention that the student needs/wants is an “archetypical teacher story” that can be found in popular media. Jerome Brunner describes our capacity to render experiences in terms of narratives as “an instrument for making meaning that dominates life and culture.” (Bruner, 1990, p.74) This archetypical teacher story was a tool that Mayou used to learn to be “patient” and to guide her interactions within the world of the classroom, as well as a device for organizing and narrating her experience in order to share it with the larger community of her school.

In entering the classroom world at PS129, Mayou, like many of the other interns, came with a set of experiences and beliefs from previous educational settings and about herself as a student. Those experiences informed how she chose to use language in the classroom, how she fostered relationships with the students, and how she navigated her work with the children. However, in the process of working with the children, Mayou and the other youths in the group reflected on their own positioning as students and in their new role as somewhere in between teachers and students. In Mayou’s case, she was also flexible in revising the assumptions that
she came in with about the students and about herself (as someone capable of becoming patient) and thoughtful in reflecting on how those assumptions shifted over time.
CHAPTER FIVE
BROKERING RELATIONSHIPS THAT EXTEND THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

“It's really important for the students to see themselves in other people.” (Ms. McGraw, personal communication, June 20, 2014)

Jabir moved from Yemen to the United States to live with his uncle when he was fifteen years old. He moved with his mother, a brother, and a younger sister. When I first met Jabir, he was nineteen years old. He had come to PS129 with a group of students for an introductory visit before deciding to stay for an internship. Jabir’s group met with one of the kindergarten teachers, Ms. Shaw, and his advisor from his school. Ms. Shaw gave the group an overview of what they might do if they chose to do an internship at PS129. When she asked everyone why they wanted to do an internship in the school, Jabir answered that he had little cousins at home and he liked playing with them and taking care of them. He wrote something similar in his application: “I like working with kids, I have cousins learning with me in my house.” Later in the semester, when I asked him during an interview why he chose to work in a school, he said, “I wanted to learn how is the school here, the kindergarten and the third grade. (...) I wanted to see how is the school between the high school and the third grade and the kindergarten...” Jabir’s school offers many different options for internships, with businesses, non-profits, and public entities. In my past experience with interns from International Schools, I found that some chose a site for their internship because they wanted to explore a career choice, but many others just wanted to try a new experience or had other reasons. Jabir provided two reasons; on one hand, he likes to spend time with young kids, based on his experience with his own little cousins; on
the other hand, he views it as an opportunity to learn more about how the school system works in the United States.

When I asked how he would describe himself to other people, he said: “I like to do. Like go to school and learn more stuff (...) You don't know [everything], you have to learn from other people and you have to learn from different people different way...” (Jabir, interview, April 8, 2014) He portrayed himself as someone who likes to always be busy. After school, he works with his uncle in a deli for five or six hours a day. On weekends, he works ten to twelve hour shifts at the store. He explained:

I don't like staying home. When I stay home, I’m bored, I don't do homework. I don't do anything. If I don’t have a lot of homework, I can't do anything, if I don't have a lots of things to do... [I was like this since] I was like ten years old, I work... I was always like that... Work, and then go to school, and then do some stuff after school. (Jabir, interview, April 8, 2014)

Jabir is proud of his work ethic. He started working when he was ten years old in his father’s supermarket in Yemen. In our interview, he told me, “My father said when I was a little kid: use your time, don't be lazy for anything.” He sets himself apart from his brother “because see, my older brother… he is lazy, he don't like do anything if he goes to school, he don't do the work. He don't like [to] help my mom…” (Jabir, interview, April 8, 2014)

Jabir’s active participation in his household economy by working first with his father in Yemen and now with his uncle is not only a need, but also a legitimate social practice within his community. His experience working alongside adults is part of a child-rearing practice that understands children as active agents in supporting and sustaining their families and places
educational value on learning to work. As other scholars have shown, beliefs about what children of different ages and genders are capable of and should be expected to do vary considerably across sociocultural contexts (Berrol, 1995; Rogoff 2003; Orellana, 2001). In western industrialized countries, children have been excluded from the division of labor (Zelinzer ,1985; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998 ). “Instead, they have been positioned both ideologically and in practice in schools; childhood has been scholarized; the proper activities of children are as learners, not as workers.” (Mayall, 2002, p. 64) Work is seen as a burden to children that gets in the way of legitimate child work, that is, schoolwork. These conceptions of childhood have been rooted in the ideological struggles that have shifted from the "economically useful" to the "economically useless" but "emotionally priceless child" (Zelizer, 1985). This view of childhood has ignored the fact that many young people engage in productive lives and that “Children's labor helps to change the developmental possibilities of their childhood spaces by ensuring their access to resources.” (Orellana, 2001) While the internship is set up as a program that provides students with an experience in a work environment, Jabir already came to PS129 equipped with nine years of experience working in the family business.

Jabir described moving to the United States to live with his mother’s family. His uncle moved to New York 40 years ago. His father stayed behind with one of his brothers. Yemeni emigration to the United States increased after 1962 when the Yemeni revolution replaced the Immamete leadership with a republic and was followed by changes in American immigration policy in 1965. New York City has been one the major centers for Yemeni immigration.

41 The data collection for this study was done before the country spiraled into civil war in 2014. I found out later that after the unrest started in Yemen, Jabir’s father and brother had to join the rest of the family in Brooklyn.
In a study about the Yemeni community in New York City, Staub (1989) documented that many Yemenis owned small grocery stores, candy and news shops in Manhattan or Middle Eastern restaurants close to the Atlantic Avenue section of Brooklyn (Staub, 1989), which is relatively close to PS 129.\textsuperscript{42} Today, there is still a vibrant Yemeni community around Atlantic Avenue (Robbins, 2017). It is not uncommon for families to travel back and forth between Yemen and the United States and for new family members to join them in Brooklyn. In the school year 2014-15, 45\% of Arabic speaking emergent bilinguals in New York were born in Yemen. In the district in which PS129 is located, 15.77 \% of the emergent bilinguals are Arabic speakers (the second largest language group after Spanish), while citywide, they make up 2.65\% of public school students. Jabir described better access to education as his mother’s main motivation to move to the United States: “my mom, she like me to come to this country ...more education here... It’s not about the money. I think in the Middle East there is more money... but they liked the education here.” (Jabir, interview, June 10, 2015)

During Jabir’s stay at PS 129, he first worked in the kindergarten classroom to which he was assigned, but later on, he decided to join the ESL teacher and also help after school once a week. He soon became very popular with the Arabic-speaking boys in the school. Often, after we would finish our seminar meetings and he had left for the day, the children from the ESL after school class would come to the room where we met, asking if Jabir was still around. During our meetings, Jabir always had incisive questions for the other youths in the group and for me. He often persisted with his questions when he wanted someone to think or reflect on a particular topic. He was always interested in finding out about the other young people’s experiences in their classrooms and wanted to learn about the children in the other classes.

\textsuperscript{42} For more historical backgroung about the Yemeni community in New York see *Yemenis in New York City: The Folklore of Ethnicity* by S. Staub (1989)
Kindergarten is So Hard

“My class is good, but you know, kindergarten is so hard.”

(Group discussion Seminar 1, March 11 2014)

In looking through Jabir’s journals, visual representations, and transcripts, I found many references to things that were hard, followed by how he managed to overcome these hardships. I was intrigued by this recurring element in his narratives because I understand that “speakers [or in Jabir’s case, producers of visual and written texts] construct events through narrative rather than simply refer to the events.” (Chase, 213, 2010). When he presented his Popplet during the seminar, his narrative centered on events that were “hard” in his educational journey.

**Figure 5.1**
Jabir’s Popplet

My name is Jabir
I am from Yemen.
I want to talk today about school when I was a kid in my country.

This is my country.
My school in my country in Yemen.

This is Yemen when I start learn about Arabic.  
Is too hard like learn Arabic.
After four years I had to write and read in Arabic.
This shows you about the Arabic.

This is when I am 15 years old, I move with my mom to the U.S.
And then when I start going to school in Brooklyn.
The first day is too hard…
... like...
The first year is too hard because I didn't speak English...
(Group discussion, seminar 2, March 16, 2014)

The first two strophes in this narrative orient the listeners to Jabir’s background and Yemen as the place where his journey begins. In the third strophe, Jabir introduces the idea that learning to write Arabic is “too hard.” This was not the only time that he described how literacy in

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43 According to Alexander Funk, an educated Arabic speaker typically has command of two distinct varieties of the language. “Modern standard Arabic” is typically used in the media and in other written, formal contexts. In less formal contexts, an Arabic speaker may use his/her home language, a colloquial dialect. Funk describes these groups as ‘constituting a dialect continuum’ as opposed to a single language. The Arabic alphabet is used throughout the Arabic-speaking world.

44 To accompany the text “about after 4 years I started speaking Arabic well,” Jabir used the image of the Ministry of Education of Yemen.
Arabic is difficult. Yet, every time that he talked about the difficulty of learning Arabic, he showed a sense of pride. Jabir often used the expression “too hard” in his speech and writing. As someone who learned English as an adult, I am aware that it took me a while to figure out the subtleties of my new language. (It is still an ongoing process.) There are words for which the exact meaning does not exist in the other language. In order to understand Jabir’s use of “too hard,” I consulted a friend whose home language is Arabic and who is bilingual in English. He explained: “We don't actually have a common word in Arabic for the concept of ‘too much’ of anything. So when encountering ‘too’ in another language, native speakers confuse it with the equally untranslatable (into Arabic) good-better-best continuum. In this context [when he uses] ‘too hard’, he is not saying ‘so hard that I will never be able to do it, make it easier.’ but most likely ‘harder that what I have seen before, and I welcome the challenge.” (Nasrallah, personal communication, September 29, 2014.) This explanation helped me understand why, when Jabir described some of the experiences that had been “too hard,” it was mostly with a sense of pride in his ability to overcome those challenges.

During his stay at PS129, Jabir often talked about how teaching “was too hard.” A few times when I stopped at his classroom, Ms. McGraw, the teacher with whom he worked, would say, “He is so great. I keep telling him he should become a teacher.” Jabir would always shake his head and say: “It’s too hard…”

In my analysis of Jabir’s journals and our seminar discussions, I found that he very often used the word “hard” to describe teaching or the work that teachers do in the classroom. During

45 While in the Popplet, Jabir wrote about speaking Arabic, but when he described the Popplet orally, he talked about reading and writing. I also asked him during an interview if he learned Arabic in school, thinking that he might have spoken another language at home, but he said that he meant reading and writing in Arabic.
one of the seminars, I asked him:

“How is it going?”

He said: "It's hard."

I followed up; “What is hard about it?”

"My uncle has 3 kids but is not as hard as this. Ms. McNeill is a good teacher but is hard."

(Seminar 4, field notes, April 1 2014)

Almost every time that Jabir spoke or wrote about teaching as being “hard,” he would follow with a comment about how the teachers in his class were “so nice,” “awesome,” or “doing very well with the kids.” My initial reading of Jabir’s statements about how teaching is “hard” was to place it in the dichotomist discourses presented in the popular media. On one hand, teaching is described as a “plum” profession, compared to other forms of work, and is often portrayed as an unskilled profession that anyone can do without much training or need for preparation. On the other hand, there is a discourse about teaching as a heroic profession, where teachers are champions who can help students overcome difficult handicaps, such as poverty and other social ills.

However, in Jabir’s initial statements, he seems to be genuinely surprised by how difficult it was to work with kindergarteners. He was revising his initial assumption that teaching would be similar to his experience of taking care of his cousins. He enjoyed playing with them and to some extent, maybe he had assumed that working in a classroom would be similar. Whenever he talked or wrote about how “hard” it was to work with kindergarteners, he accompanied his statements with assurances for the reader (me) or the listeners (me and the other youths in the
seminar) that the teachers in his class are very skilled and do a good job, regardless of the
difficulty of working with kindergarteners.

Placing Jabir’s description of teaching as a “hard” activity in conversation with his other accounts provided me with a more complicated and rich understanding of his stance. Jabir often spoke of other things that have been “hard” in his life but that he managed to have success with. He described himself as someone who likes “to do,” who in essence welcomes a challenge. He spoke without any prompts about how tough it was to learn Arabic and how, after many years of studying it, he can read and write in Arabic. He also talked about how difficult it was to first come to the U.S. and to a new school. Paradoxically, placing teaching into the category of things that are difficult also placed it in the list of things that he sought to accomplish and to learn.

However, the more I explored how Jabir articulated his discourse about teaching, I started to notice many more nuances in his understanding of teaching and what makes teaching challenging. Midway through their internship, the young people in the group created visual representations of the timelines of their experience in the school. Jabir chose to create a Prezi.46

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46 Prezi is a cloud-based storytelling and presentation software tool for presenting ideas on a virtual canvas.
At the time that Jabir was creating this visual representation, he didn’t have many pictures from his class, so most of the images that he chose to use (including the one above) were from pictures that he found on the Internet.

The image that he selected to represent teaching shows a classroom in which children are engaged in an activity along with a male adult. While both teachers in the class in which he was placed were women, he chose an image with a man, perhaps as a representation of himself in the classroom. The picture, which shows a man doing an art project with children, may represent a philosophical statement about Jabir’s views on teaching as a social activity in which students and teachers are engaged together. When I did a reverse search in Google images, the suggested search terms that google provided for this image was “working with children”. I tried other search terms such as “learning,” “teaching,” “classroom” and none of them provided images similar to this one. The only search that did was “learning with children.” In the text, he alluded
to the fact that children are all “different” and that they all think “differently.” Perhaps ‘thinking’ differently also refers to an idea that children ‘learn’ in their own way. When Jabir presented his Prezi to the group, he explained:

Is too hard to teach these kids because all the kids is different from everyone… Think different way… Everyone is different language and start new… like learn English and sometimes the teachers teaching how to with math and art and [literacy] and all the subject in one classroom… and [there is only] one teacher… two teachers actually.

(Seminar 6, group discussion, April 29, 2014)

Jabir’s presentation points to his understanding of the complexities of teaching, having to be in tune with the different backgrounds and needs of the children. He also identifies as a difficulty that one (or two) teachers have to be able to teach all subjects, rather than being experts in one area only. Later on during the same session, he talked about what he would want to share with others about his experience in the class: “About the kids… (smiling with pride) how the kids changed a lot because the teachers so nice, Ms. B and Ms. McGraw… also the kids start reading and writing … is better than before…” (Seminar 6, group discussion, April 29, 2014)

In this statement, he is observing how regardless of how “hard” it was to work in a diverse classroom, the children in the class have “changed” and now they are able to do things that they are expected to do in school, such as reading and writing (which presumably, they couldn’t do when he first started).

Towards the end of their internship, I asked the group to share one or two pictures from their class. Jabir chose two images. One of them shows him playing bingo with a small group of
kids. He had asked the teacher in the class to take the photo so he could use it for his final presentation at his school.

**Figure 5.3**
_Jabir’s Classroom Photograph_ 47

When he showed it to the group, Jabir explained:

-The first picture is playing bingo with some of the kids because they are learning more math.

Someone in the group asked him, “How did the kids do?”

Jabir laughed, amused by the memory of playing with the kids and said, “Is good. But is too hard for them … because they are big numbers like after 12, [they] can’t count…”

47 This image has been cropped to shield the identity of the children in it.
“So what did you do?”

“I play with my fingers. How many it is… (pointing to his fingers) Look is here in the big chair (pointing at the picture and laughing), I have… I have…” (He said, as if asking the kids for a number.) (Seminar 8, field notes, May 13, 2014)

This exchange happened towards the end of Jabir’s stay at the school. In this interaction, Jabir talked about how this particular task was ‘hard’ for the kids. He described what specifically was difficult for them and modeled the strategy that he used to accomplish the task. There was a shift in his discourse. Instead of talking about how teaching the kids small additions is a ‘hard’ task, he instead revealed an understanding that if the small number additions are challenging for the kids to process, he, as a teacher, has a battery of strategies to help the students, which he in turn, modeled to the seminar group. In the process of spending time in the classroom, Jabir shifted his focus from how “hard” it is to teach, to the process of learning as a journey that is not always easy for the kids and that he, as a “teacher,” could participate in and be able to guide them.

Jabir was not alone in his quest to figure out how to work with the kids. As they spent more time with the children in their classes, the interns developed their own practices in the classrooms. During the seminar meetings, the youths would often talk informally about the students in their class and share anecdotes with each other, much like teachers conversing in the lunchroom, brainstorming how to work with students and laughing as they shared “funny” anecdotes about individual kids. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a “community of practice” as a set of relations among persons, activities, and the world, over time. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge because it provides the interpretive support
necessary for making sense of its activities. For the young people in the project, the seminar meetings supported a community of practice in that it gave them a forum to share and make sense of their work in the classrooms. The following is an excerpt from one of these discussions that started with Jabir sharing his experience with a kindergartener in his class:

Jabir: Sometimes the kids ask you a question and they go away. “Come back, finish your work” (laughing) “and he said ‘No, no, no, you finish.’” (laughing) “Come back, I can't finish it for you.”

Alex: The same with me yesterday too. This kid lay down his head on the table.

Mayou: On the table? (laughing)

Alex: I said “do it like this”... he said “you do it”... (laughing ) He is like...[he] stop listening to me and sat.

Ivana: Was this Jake?

Alex: Yeah... and then I try to talk with him and he is like, “I don't care.” and I sit there and after five minutes, he get up and start working again. (As he was telling this story, Alex was laughing, amused by Jake’s reaction.)

(Seminar 4 field notes, April 1, 2014)

Alex, who had been placed in a special education self-contained classroom, worked mostly with one student, Jake, during his stay at PS129. After the internship ended, I learned from Alex’s host teachers that Jake is on the autistic spectrum. Alex did not know this while he was working with him.

While initially, their dialogue might sound just like anecdotes about children who didn’t
want to do the class work, placing this conversation in the context of the relationships that they had built to that point gives us a window onto how Alex’s response to Jake’s refusal to work was strategic and grounded in his experience in working with him. Alex had written in his journal about the same anecdote that he shared with the group. In his journal, Alex provided an insight for why Jake didn’t want to work:

Back to Jake, this week he is 4th grade too so he has to take all that test too, because this test is for 3, 4, and 5th grade. He don’t feel like work again yesterday, like yesterday when I here and I was go work with him. Like normal day I come too, when the teacher give him the work and I work with him. We was start at the begining, when we start him just lie down on the table and not work. And I tell him to sit up and keep work he just don’t care it, and I try all the way to get him back to work but no one is work, so I wait. After few min he sit up and back to work. And anything he don’t know he ask me. (Alex, journal entry, Seminar 5, April 19, 2014)

Earlier in this journal Alex had talked about how the kids had spent time outside playing, which he believed would help them to relax. When they came back to the classroom, Jake didn’t want to work. Alex had an understanding that he was tired. Perhaps he also believed that Jake needed to relax. His approach to working with Jake was to not pressure him and to wait until Jake was ready to get back to work. Perhaps his waiting was a sign of respect and understanding for how Jake was feeling, or maybe he recognized that Jake needed to do things in his own time.

Both Alex and Jabir used different strategies with their students, rooted in their personal experiences as students and in their knowledge of the kids with whom they were working. When Jabir pointed out that teaching is “hard” because all children are different, this statement is
rooted, as we will see in the following section, in his belief that it is necessary to learn about each child and his/her background.

“I want to know more…”

While Jabir focused on how teaching was a difficult task because the students are all “different” and have different needs, his response was to try to learn more about the students in his class, something that he brought up several times over the course of our seminars. During one of the sessions, I had asked everyone in the group to write about one student or a group of students in the class. They shared what they had written with a partner and had a chance to ask each other questions about their journals. The following is a transcript of a dialogue between Jabir and Mayou. Mayou had just finished describing a student in the third grade class in which she was doing her internship.

Jabir: “Where she is from?"
Mayou: “Don't know exactly, she is like Indian but I think she is from Pakistan...”
Jabir: “Why did you didn't ask her where she is from?”
Mayou: “’Cause I didn't even get closer that much.”
Jabir: “You have to go close to her.”
Mayou: “Yeah, I'll try…”

Jabir: “No. You have to do.”
Mayou: “Ok. I'll try.”
Jabir: “When?” (He presses playfully.)
Mayou: “Tomorrow...”

(Seminar 3, group discussion, March 25, 2014)

While Jabir’s original question was about the country of origin of the child that Mayou chose to write about, he soon started to press Mayou about her need to “get closer.” In pressing Mayou to form relationships with the students, perhaps Jabir was expressing his understanding of the importance of understanding children’s backgrounds in order to integrate the cultural/academic/psychological dimensions of the child in teaching. Maybe his playful urgency in the interaction reveals a deeper philosophical stand that for a teacher getting to know students is essential to building a relationship in which children feel valued. As members of a community of practice, Jabir and Mayou were learning, thinking, and building new knowledge together about how to work with the children. This was not the only time that Jabir brought up with the rest of the group the need to get to know students. In another occasion during seminar discussion, when Rustam described a student in his class, Jabir asked him if he knew where the student was from. When Rustam replied that he didn’t ask, Jabir looked surprised:

Jabir - How long have you work with him?

Rustam - Two or three weeks.

Jabir looked shocked and said disapprovingly- “You don’t know where he is from?”

Rustam, tried to defend himself - “I'm trying to help... like if they ask some questions I can go, but I not ask such specific questions about where they are from, their experience...”
Jabir: “I ask everyone in the class. I wanna know…”

(Seminar 3, field notes, March 25, 2014)

While Rustam was navigating his relationship with the students by answering their request, Jabir, emphasized his “need to know more” stance towards the children. As we’ll see later in Chapter Five, they both focus on different means to build relationships with the students. Moreover this short interaction can be set in dialogue with sociocultural perspectives that have highlighted the importance of drawing on students’ cultures, native languages, and communities to involve students in the lives of schools and classrooms. In response to Rustam’s lack of knowledge about a student in his class, Jabir was at first surprised and then expressed disapproval. This reaction speaks to the priority that he placed on the need to appreciate and understand the cultural differences and linguistic backgrounds of the students with whom the youth interns were working (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll et al., 1992; Paris, 2012).

The International Schools, the network of schools to which Jabir’s school belongs, are generally set up as educational communities with heterogeneous and collaborative structures. It is part of their intentional design to create a community of cultural and linguistic differences among adults and youth and they “regularly draw on student experiences and cultures to involve students in academic discussions.“ (Lee, 2012) Jabir entered the internship with a relational repertoire of practices —ways of engaging in relationships stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices in various settings at his school, home, etc. In Jabir’s experience, finding out where other students are from is probably the initial locator to begin to understand who they are and what their previous experiences might have been. It is possible that his high school experiences have influenced the value that he places on getting to know the students, drawing from his own understanding and perhaps the practices of some of his teachers.
His approach to building relationships with students is in dialogue with what Django Paris calls culturally sustaining pedagogy.48 Paris (2012) explains that, in the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, a cultural sustaining pedagogy “seeks to perpetuate and foster — to sustain —linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling.” (p. 93). As Paris points out, there has been a push to create a one size fits all, homogenous approach to education that does not take into account that every student comes to school with a whole set of experiences and understandings. As he had pointed out in his visual representation, in a discussion towards the end of the program, Jabir told other interns in the seminar that what made it “hard” in kindergarten is that the kids are “from every country ...many countries ...is [their] first year in school” (seminar 8, transcript). Perhaps in his eagerness to learn more about the students and where they come from, there is also a deeper understanding that knowledge about students’ backgrounds and experiences can be used as a pedagogical resource (Gonzales, Moll & Amanti, 2005). While he talks about how the diversity of the kindergarten classroom is what makes it “hard”, he responds by emphasizing to the other interns the importance of learning about the students.

48 Django Paris proposed the term culturally sustaining pedagogy as an alternative to the term “culturally relevant pedagogy.” While it embraces the principles that Gloria Ladson-Billings of “a culturally relevant pedagogy that would propose to do three things—produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order” (Ladson-Billings, G. 1995, p. 474). He claims that the terms “relevant” and “responsible” do not explicitly do enough to support the “linguistic and cultural dexterity and plurality” necessary for success and access in the demographically diverse U.S. Paris, proposes the term cultural sustainable pedagogy as “both naming and conceptualizing the need to meaningfully value and maintain the practices of their students in the process of extending their students’ repertoires of practice to include dominant language, literacies, and other cultural practices.” (Paris, 2012, p 95)
This kid is from my country

[Ms. McGraw] said that kids is from my country... He is happy because the same language... and sometimes he didn't understand. He just came to me and he started asking me: “Explain to me more” and some of that stuff ... And the other kids too. She is careful, Ms. McGraw she explain two or three times and the kid didn’t understand. Then he comes to me, “Explain to me one more time.”... I explain him and I tell him. (Jabir personal communication April 8, 2014)

PS129 has a small population of students whose home language is Arabic. Many of them are from Yemen, just like Jabir. While in the school, there are a number of teachers, teacher assistants, and other school personal who speak languages other than English (mostly Spanish), at that time, there were no adults in the school who spoke Arabic. Jabir was placed in a kindergarten classroom in which there was one boy, Anes, whose home language was Arabic. His placement in that classroom was not a coincidence. Both the kindergarten teacher and the ESL teacher in the school believed that having someone in the class who spoke Arabic would help Anes. In his stay at PS129, Jabir developed a strong connection with Anes.

At the third seminar meeting, before we started our session, Jabir showed me a picture of himself and Anes in the kindergarten classroom. This image showed Jabir embracing Anes affectionately. They were both looking directly at the camera, Anes laughing and Jabir smiling. Jabir showed the image to me and to the other students in the class and explained that this was “his student”. He also returned to this photograph multiple times during the seminar. He used it

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49 In the school year 2015-16 the principal was a able to hire a para-professional who speaks Arabic.
when I asked the group to write a journal about one student in the class, when he created a timeline of his experience in the school, and in a poster that he created for his final presentation during a school internship fair. When I visited his school to participate in the final internship school fair, the same image of Jabir and “his student” was enlarged in the center of a bulletin board next to the office where there was a display about the internship program in the school. As Jabir spent more time in the class with Anes, he took pride in Anes’ progress and accomplishments. In one of his journals, he shared: “The student [Anes] it's knowing to writing and reading it's not very well but trying to do the best.” (Jabir, journal entry, Seminar 5, April 9 2014)

For the first five weeks in the internship, Jabir mentioned Anes in every one of his journal entries. In each of them, he describes Anes as “the kid who is from my country”. He didn’t include his name until week five. While he explained in some of the journals and in our discussion that he “helped” all the kids in the class, he often came back to the work that he did with Anes. In one of his journals, Jabir wrote:

One kid in the classroom
he is from my country

its good way too talk with him in my language
but some times when he is confused about something he didn’t know what he needs to do then he tell me in Arabic can you please help me for these questions.

Then I sitting after school with this kid and two girls
to helping them with some homework.
(Jahir, Journal entry, Seminar 2, March 18, 2014)
In this journal, Jabir talked about how it is a “good way” to communicate using “his language.” He used “my language” which connotes closeness to Arabic. It is not just a language that he is able to speak, but it is a language that he owns. While Jabir can speak and write in English, English is a language that he uses, not “his language.” In using “my language” instead of Arabic, something that he did often, Jabir was perhaps signaling that there is an emotional connection to speaking his home language, and it is not just a practical choice. It also differentiates Arabic from the classroom teachers’ language, English.

In his work with Anes, Jabir highlighted his understanding that he has an expertise that the teachers don’t have in the classroom. By speaking Arabic, he could “help” Anes to fully participate in the classroom activities. In the above journal segment, Jabir described how Anes reached out to him in Arabic when he needed help. When he writes “its good way to talk to him in my language,” Jabir acknowledged that being able to use Anes’ home language facilitated his ability to reach Anes. It is not just a tool for communicating what is going on in the class. While in many schools in the United States, there is still a monoglossic view of language that privileges English in the classroom and frowns upon the use of students’ home languages in schools, the school that Jabir attended embraced flexible bilingual practices. From the moment that he entered the classroom, Jabir used multiple discursive practices in Arabic and in English to work with “his student.”

Jabir drew strategically from his linguistic repertoire to communicate with Anes, moving fluidly between Arabic and English. He used his own bilingualism as a resource and understood that he brought into the classroom a skill that the teachers didn’t have. When he described the work of Ms. McGraw in the classroom, he explained, “She is careful, Ms. McGraw she explain
two or three times and the kid didn't understand. Then he comes to me, ‘Explain to me one more
time’... I explain him, and I tell him.”

In his journal, he wants to make sure that the reader understands that Ms. McGraw “is
careful.” (She tries to reach Anes multiple times.) Jabir wants to convey that he is not criticizing
Ms. McGraw for having difficulty communicating with Anes. He points out the obvious, that he
has the advantage of speaking Anes’ home language. In his work with Anes, Jabir described
translanguaging, choosing to move fluidly between English and Arabic, depending on what they
were doing. Ms. McGraw explained in an interview that she never gave any direct instructions to
Jabir on how to work with the students. She would often model an activity for the whole class
and Jabir would then work with the children, using similar strategies and navigating between
both languages with Anes. In his description, Jabir talks about explaining concepts in Arabic,
but also that he helps Anes to speak English. He understood Anes’ struggle in a classroom
where no one else spoke his home language: “He can’t speak to the teachers and they can’t
understand him.”

Schools are particular communities of practices. The design of an internship program
assumes that the interns are entering the elementary school classroom as peripheral participants
who are gaining access and understanding the community through their growing involvement as
they became full participants and members of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The
internship is based on an apprenticeship model, with the understanding that young people are
transformed by their engagement in dynamic activities as they participate in communities of
practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In a letter to the internship sites, Jabir’s high school laid
out their expectations:
Internship provides students with the opportunity to explore a particular career interest, develop important workplace competencies, apply new skills they have learned, develop their English skills (and in some cases, their native language skills) in a professional work environment, and grow in confidence and maturity. (Flatbush International, Request for Interns, 11/12/13)

The letter also states that “the interns should use the internship as a learning experience, and to observe, ask questions, and complete extensive school assignments related to the internship.” Jabir’s (and Mayou’s) experiences complexify that model, adding translanguaging practices into the mix in ways that make adults and young people partners in building relationships. The internship is set up as an apprenticeship with the assumption that the adults are the experts and the youths are the novices. However, in regards to language use and Jabir’s ability to use translanguaging in the classroom, he challenged this model. In Ms. McGraw’s classroom, he had expertise that the teacher and assistant teachers did not have.

Orellana (2009) has documented how translating work is an example of a domain in which the assumption that adults are experts and children are novices is challenged. Jabir takes the lead in working with Anes in using his home language and his common cultural background to teach him new concepts and to explain classroom tasks, as well as to form a personal connection to him. This is something that the other adults in the room struggled to do without his help. Ms. McGraw, his host teacher explained: “sometimes is hard to reach children that speak another language or just have a different culture than you. I was able to better understand the cultures of my kids and better understand my parents. It really help me bridge that relationship between myself and my parents and not only that ... between myself and my children, which is very important to me.” (McGraw, personal communication, June 20, 2014)
As Ms. McGraw pointed out, Jabir’s work in the school extended beyond the classroom. Jabir helped Ms. McGraw communicate with Anes’ mother when she came for pick up. Anes’ father worked in a deli across the street from the school, so Jabir often brought Anes’ work over to show him: “He actually had a great relationship with a parent who owns the store across the street. He could identify with one of my students because his parents own a store [and] the other student’s parent own a store. So he would go across the street and tell the father the progress that his child was making. He would explain to him the goals that I had for the student and ask for any questions that he had for me. So he would kind of be my liaison.” (McGraw, interview, June 20, 2014)

Scholarship in current educational research on families and schools has demonstrated the value of genuine, collaborative relationships between home and school and suggests that teachers should familiarize themselves with the communication modes and cultural contributions of children and their families (Epstein, 1995; Epstein 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992; Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Some districts have made attempts to institute policies that would help forge relationships between families and school. For example, most recently New York City Department of Education allocated forty minutes of teachers’ time to be set aside each week for communication with students’ families. This is a small step towards acknowledging the time and work that teachers need to invest to forge relationships with families, in the face of a broader lack of support to help schools and teachers foster those relationships.

As Ms. McGraw describes, despite the fact that it is important to cultivate closer relationships with parents, she faced challenges that Jabir helped her navigate, not only by facilitating communication with the parents by translating, but also in helping her understand
cultural practices and parents’ expectations. Valdez (2003) pointed out how the work of children translator is often close to the work of community interpreters in that, not only do they transmit accurate information between parties, but also that they “serve as advocates for members of the minority community and engage in explanation and cultural brokering.” (p. 26) Jabir was not only providing the means for communication by translating, but he drew from cultural and linguistic resources to establish a good relationship between Anes’ family and the school. He was not only doing language brokering, but also was brokering new classroom practices and using his relational repertoire to build a relationship between the teacher and the families.

After a few weeks, he was also aware of how much his expertise was needed in the school. The ESL teacher in the school, Ms. Howe, mentioned to Jabir that she could use help in an afterschool math program that she was running with a group of emergent bilinguals. Jabir needed to work more hours for his internship, so he decided to join the group, although he could have chosen to make up the hours in other ways. Most of the students in the group spoke Arabic, with the exception of one student who spoke Haitian-Creole.

The after school math program met on Mondays and Tuesdays. Our seminar met on Tuesdays, so Jabir could only help on Mondays. In an interview, Jabir described how the students asked him to come both days:

When I meet you on Tuesday I go talk Ms. Howe and everybody tell me, “Why don't you come today? Why don’t you come help me?” Because …Monday I help them a lot. Like she explains, Howe, a lot… But the kids don't understand what she is saying. (Jabir, interview, April 8, 2014)
Jabir is aware that in the school, there is a lack of expertise and resources to address the needs of the Arabic students. He viewed his work not just as transmitting the teachers’ instructions, but in addition, to figure out ways to reach the children in his group and to teach them concepts that they didn’t understand. In the same interview, he recounted how he explained the math concepts in Arabic and “they did well after.” Jabir’s choice of working with the students after school was also embedded in a deeper concern for the Arabic students as a group and a recognition of how language choice and attitudes are inseparable from relations of power and language ideologies (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). For example, during one of the seminars, one youth, Ahmed, had shared his work with an Arabic speaking child in his class. The following is an excerpt from the session:

Jabir: How is the Arabic boy?

Ahmed: How is the Arabic...?

Jabir: How is he doing in class?

Ahmed: He's good, he nice...

Jabir: He's good?

Ahmed nodded.

(Seminar 3, group discussion, March 3, 2014)

In the discussion, Jabir looked pleased to hear that the “Arabic boy” was doing well, even though he had only heard about him through Ahmed and had not met him in person. Jabir identified and cared for the Arabic-speaking students in the school, even without having met them. He was familiar with what it feels like to be in a school community in which none of the adults are able to understand their home language. As García points out, language “is not a
simple identity marker, but is capable of generating imagined communities and constructing particular loyalties” (García, 2009, p.82). In Jabir’s case, Arabic is a vehicle to construct a group identity and solidarity. His solidarity is perhaps also based in a deeper recognition, understanding, and critique of the social inequities that Arabic speaking students face in the school system, as shown in the following field notes:

Jabir asked me, “They are taking test like the Regents?” 50 I told him that it was something like that. 51 He replied, "I hate the Regents." I asked if he had done some yet and he said yes, and told me some of his scores and that he still had a couple of Regents to pass.

Jabir said that he didn't understand why, but when he did his first test, the teacher came to the room and started asking "Who speaks Spanish?" and handed out a Spanish test, “Who speaks Bengali?” and handed out a Bengali test. When Jabir asked for an Arabic test, the teacher said he was sorry, there are no translations in Arabic. Jabir said: "I said what the ...?" (he stopped and didn't finish his sentence) “Why everyone has their test in their language?”

50 The Regents Exams were originally honors exams used to evaluate college readiness, but to fulfill the NCLB requirements, New York State began requiring that all students pass the tests in order to receive a high school diploma (Menken, 2008). These kinds of high stakes tests impact negatively the graduation rates of emergent bilinguals. “In New York, 41% of ELLs are able to meet the English Regents graduation requirement after 4 years, as compared to 76% of English-proficient students. Similarly, 52% of ELLs are able to meet the Math Regents graduation requirement after 4 years, as compared to 77% of English-proficient students (New York State Department of Education, 2008b). This means that the many ELLs who do not pass the tests after 4 years are barred from graduation.” (Menken, 2010) As a result, while the graduation rates have gone up for all students in New York State, the graduation rates for emergent bilinguals are, instead, going down. (Menken, 2010)

51 I realized later that my response was a little too vague. The students at PS129 were taking the state mandated test for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade during that week. However, later in our meeting, the interns who worked in those grades brought up the test again.
After, he talked about how “it’s hard if you don't know some of the words.”

(Field notes, April 1, 2014)

In our short conversation, Jabir expressed frustration and the feeling that there are inequalities between speakers of other languages and Arabic speakers and the understanding that some languages are privileged over others in the NYC educational system. According to the New York City DOE:

Students who are unable to understand the math, science, and social studies State tests in English may take versions translated into Chinese (traditional), Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, or Spanish. When tests are not available in the student's native language, the test may be translated orally to the student. ELLs who have been in the United States for less than one year are not required to take the New York State ELA test in their grade, but must start taking ELA tests after their first year. (NYC DOE b)

It is surprising that there are no translated versions of the tests in Arabic, given that in New York State, students whose home language is Arabic compose the third largest group of emergent bilinguals (3.9%), after Spanish and Chinese, (New York State Department of Education) and in New York City, they are the fifth largest group (4.2%) (NYC DOE website, accessed 3/26/15).

There are many studies that have made a strong case that content-area tests administered to emergent bilinguals in English are unlikely to render a true portrait of what the students know because language impacts the results. Many researchers argue that is not legitimate to give content area tests in English to emergent bilinguals and that the results of the tests should not be used for high stakes purposes, such as determining high school graduation or grade promotion.
(Menken, 2008, 2010; Solórzano, 2008). When Jabir said it’s hard if you don't know some of the words, he was expressing his frustration with a policy that tested his content knowledge in a language that he was in the process of learning. In the beginning of his narrative, he also questioned Arabic speakers’ unequal treatment in comparison to students with other home languages. In “The Making of Citizens,” David Buckingham talks about how “Children develop ‘political’ concepts at a very early stage, through their everyday experiences of institutions such as the school and the family: notions of authority, fairness and justice, rules and laws, power and control.” (Buckingham, 2000, p. 178) Jabir’s story builds a bridge between his personal experience of having a hard time with the language and his understanding of himself as part of a larger group defined by a shared language (not a shared nationality). Perhaps his efforts to work with the Arabic-speaking students after school were not only rooted in his awareness that he had an expertise that was needed, but also in his understanding of the inequalities that speakers of a minority language might face in the larger school system.

While current policies, such as the emphasis on English-only instruction, implementation of narrow decontextualized language and literacy programs, and data driven instruction that is mostly based on standardized tests, have not been geared toward sustaining the languages and cultures of longstanding and newcomer communities in the United States, Jabir’s practices in the context of the internship speak back to these trends.

In an environment that pushes for the standardization of teaching and denies that teachers, as people, bring different experiences into the classroom, Jabir’s practices that supported the students, parents, and teachers at PS129 emerged from his experiences as an immigrant, as a student in Yemen, and as a student in New York. In the context of the seminar, as a member of a community of practice, he pushed himself and his peers to learn about the students in their
classrooms in order to work better with them. He also chose to identify with and support the small community of Arabic speakers, a community that he understood does not have equal language rights in New York City. Jabir used his agency in transforming the practices of the classroom, drawing strategically from his linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires of practice, to communicate, negotiate and build relationships between teachers, parents, and students.
CHAPTER SIX
NEGOTIATING THE MUTUALITY OF CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Rustam moved to the United States from Uzbekistan three years before his internship at PS129. He spent three months in eighth grade when he arrived and then moved to Flatbush International High School. He was seventeen at the time of the internship and he described himself as someone who is kind and who always “tells the truth”. When he described his family’s decision to move, he explained: “no good jobs... [There is] work on markets, or shopping, clothing, [but] it doesn't pay what you want. We [were] still living good in my country but after [getting the] green card they said, ‘Ok, we got to move...’” (Rustam, interview, June 10, 2015)

Rustam speaks four languages: Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, and English. He learned Tajik at home, and Uzbek and Russian at school in Uzbekistan. He also shared that he was taking Spanish in school. Rustam was proud of the fact that he speaks four languages. In his initial Popplet, he used three of his squares to talk about language. At PS129, he was placed in a 5th grade class. There were no students in the school who spoke Tajik, Uzbek, or Russian, so he didn’t have a chance to use them, but he explained during the seminar that at his high school, he had many friends with whom he spoke those languages regularly.
The prompt for creating the Popplet was: “Tell us about your educational experiences. These experiences can be in connection to schools or other settings. You can include experiences in your home country, as well as in the US.” During the seminar, I had repeated the prompt a few times and then I let everyone work as they wanted. Rustam chose to use a linear arrangement for his visual representation, organized around three themes: his home country, his life in the United States, and learning languages. He began by walking the viewer through his journey. The selection of images is also part of a process of self-representation. Rustam was aware that images create meaning and in choosing one photograph from his country, he was not simply describing where he came from, but he was also creating a particular representation of Uzbekistan. He chose to begin by orienting the viewers with conventional symbols to represent a country, the flag and a map of Uzbekistan. Flags are some of the strongest statements of national identity; their images bear a special relationship to the nations they represent in that they distinguish them from one another, reaffirming their identity and boundaries (Cerulo, 1993). The map orients the viewer to where his country is located. The third picture that he included was a
picture of Samarkand, the city in which he was born. In his presentation, he described
Samarkand with pride: “This is Samarkand. [This] is [a] place to travel for natives [of the]
country and for anyone who travels. In Samarkand, most people who travel there, they watch the
insides... the walls are like books.” (Seminar 1, group discussion, March 11 2014)

**Figure 6.2**
*Image from Rustam’s Popplet*

Samarkand was added in 2001 by UNESCO to its World Heritage list. In his description,
Rustam is most likely referring to the fact that the city, which had a central position on the Silk
Road, was known for being an Islamic centre for scholarly study. Just like Mayou, who used a
historical building, he chose to represent Uzbekistan with an image of the powerful cultural
heritage of his country. While Rustam only used one photograph of Uzbekistan in his Popplet,
he spent most of that first session looking through images of his country. After our first session,
I wrote:

Rustam found many images from Uzbekistan and he called me several times to show me
various historical buildings. He also found images of a festival that they celebrate in the
spring and showed me pictures of the dresses and hats that women wear during the
festivities. It seemed to me that there was a little of homesickness and longing for his
home as he was browsing and finding photographs on the Internet. However, he didn't
use most of the images that he found; instead he shared them with me or with Jabir, who was working next to him. (Field notes, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

Rustam spent a long time poring over images to find the right one that would construct a specific view of his country. If images construct views of the social world, Jabir, Mayou and Rustam all chose to represent their countries with powerful buildings. Mayou’s and Rustam’s buildings were connected to the history of their countries. Jabir used the Ministry of Education, as he talked about learning Arabic. In watching Rustam pore through the images of Uzbekistan, it dawned on me that his process of creating this Popplet was also a means for deciding how he was going to represent his country and what was he going to share about his story. But in Rustam’s case, not only did he choose a building connected to the history of the country, but he also picked a building that represents his particular minority group, Tajiks, in one of the most important Tajik historical and cultural centers, Samarkand. Tajiks speak Tajik, a variety of Persian, an Indo-Aryan language. According to the last Uzbek census, in 1998 they made up 4.8 percent of the population of Uzbekistan. Unlike most other minority groups in Uzbekistan, Tajiks are indigenous to the region. However, they are also a minority that continues to suffer discrimination from the Uzbek government (Minority Rights Group International).

In the second section of his Popplet, he locates himself in his current life in New York by showing images of himself in the U.S., visiting relatives at a car dealership and a picture of himself at a park where he plays basketball with his friends. His only explicit description of learning in his Popplet was in the last portion, in connection to the four languages that he knows. He explained to the group:
I speak four languages, like Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, and English. Tajik is my own language. My second language is Uzbek, then Russian... my fourth language is English.

This is an alphabet of Uzbek, [here are] some letters. (pointing at the letters) Most of them are similar like English, because is like Latin, but some of them are different because the sounds are different like “ssshai” …like “grra”…

(…) We have English language in my country. I was learning three months before I came here. By now I live in here three years, so I learned [to] speak English talking with new friends... In my country was like learning with a book ... taking a book and translating to native language … reading English and translating in my language, Uzbek. (Rustam, Seminar 2, group discussion, March 18, 2014)

Rustam’s listing of Tajik first and describing it as “my own language” is important in the context of Uzbek politics. Samarkand was a center for cross-cultural exchange for hundreds of years, and Tajik was the lingua franca, but now Uzbek is Uzbekistan's exclusive nationwide state language. In the late 1990’s, many Tajik schools were closed and Tajik books were destroyed (Minority Rights Group International). Government policy requires the use of Uzbek in all dealings with officials, in street signage, and in business and education. Russian is still spoken widely and is recognized by the Uzbek government as “the language of interethnic communication” (Sadykov, 2013). Rustam described Uzbek and Russian as the languages that he learned in school in Uzbekistan. In the United States, he continues to use them to socialize with other students in school. When he talked about English, he made a distinction between his learning English from a book in Uzbekistan and how he has learned it in the United States: “I learned [to] speak English talking with new friends”.

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Every time Rustam spoke in the seminar about the fact that he speaks four languages, he got admiration from the other students in the class and questions about how he learned each language. Although he struggled in some academic subjects, the four languages that he spoke were a source of pride. Learning languages was something about which he felt successful and accomplished and being multilingual was an important part of his identity.

**The Role of Expertise**

In his first week at the internship, Rustam made connections between his own learning as a high school student and what the students were studying. There was a sense of security in finding out that he had some expertise in what the fifth graders were studying:

> I do try to look what are fifth graders right now trying to learn that I saw they really enjoying of English lessons and learning about new literary elements, which is very nice because in our International High School, I learned that last year when I was 9 and 10 grade.

 If they learning now, they really become smart students in their future and I think they don’t worry about the future when they get the Regents.

(Rustam’s journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

But after his second week in the fifth grade classroom, he wrote in his journal: “In this week I feel good but I think I’m not really teaching them of the subjects because now some students are confuse about subject, maybe because of the wasting time, or I don’t know.”

(Rustam’s Journal, Seminar 2, March 18, 2014) I asked Rustam in an interview towards the end of the semester about what he meant when he talked about the students “wasting time.” He responded, “It’s not so much wasting time, because they don’t waste time. Sometimes they can’t listen, they try [to] say many things. (...) Many of them talking from the back, one of them
talking from the front... is impossible to listen... so I mean that.” (Rustam, interview, May 8, 2014). Cristina Igoa (1995) described how in her work with newcomers, “Fun games, chatter and laughter were unheard for some. They were confused by the American way and misunderstood fun activities ‘as wasting time’”(p. 155). Her students who came from more traditional schools were more comfortable when she used more traditional approaches. In her book, she shares how one of her students from Ukraine responded after she used a more traditional approach to teaching in her class: “At last, I feel I am in school, I feel like I am a student.” Perhaps, like Igoa’s students, Rustam at first read the classroom’s ‘more chaotic’ discussion as a waste of time and not conducive to learning because students were speaking at the same time and not in an orderly manner. It is also possible that he was also paraphrasing his teachers at his own school, or the teacher in his internship classroom telling the students to “not waste time.” However, when I looked at his journals and comments, I realized that his journal and other comments about wasting time were from earlier in the internship. The interview in which I asked Rustam about his journal happened closer to the end of the internship. It’s possible that he was getting used to the atmosphere of the classroom and revising his understanding from those first weeks. By saying: “they don’t waste time,” he changed from his original interpretation, with a more nuanced critique of classroom discussions.

I also was struck when I read Rustam’s second journal by how he took ownership for the students’ academic work in his class. In our second meeting Alex, another intern, also had written about needing to “work harder” with the students, taking personal responsibility for the students’ academic work, even though both of them had only spent two weeks in their classes.

Last two week in class they were learning about the angles.
I was working with Jake everyday.
But today they have a Quiz on the angle.
He fails it.

I can’t say the score.
That is privacy.  

I think I have to work hard with him for it.
(Alex’s journal Seminar 2, March 18, 2014)

In this short narrative, Alex describes how he worked with Jake for two weeks, teaching him geometry. During our sessions, Alex had mentioned multiple times that his favorite subject was math, also referring to it in his initial Popplet about his educational experiences. This was an area in which he felt confident. The fourth line of the narrative is short and dramatic: “He fails it.” This is the only place where Jake is the subject. In the next two lines, Alex becomes the subject of the narrative, making himself accountable and remarking that he needs to work harder. I suspect that one reason for why Alex took personal responsibly for Jake’s quiz score is because math is an area in which he saw himself as an “expert” and in which he felt he could contribute to the classroom and teach others. He links success in learning to effort, working hard, but this effort is a joint endeavor, on the part of the teacher (himself) and the learner.

For Rustam, in his second week at the school — similarly to Eric — he felt that his expertise didn’t seem to be enough as he wrote about “not really teaching them of the subjects”

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53 I didn’t follow up on what Alex wrote in his journal, that he couldn’t tell the score because it’s private. I wondered if this is something that Ms. Parson talked to him about or if it is something that he was aware of from his past experience in school with test scores. Either way, he was conscious that in his new role in the class, he had access to information that other students in the class didn’t have and that therefore, he needed to be respectful of students’ privacy.
and how “some students are confused.” Later in the internship, Rustam shared how he felt that he was finally able to “help” the students by making a connection to his own knowledge:

In this week the students are start to practicing the test I can say that I did help with the essay questions about English, How to start to begin with as many details to make sure connect to the conclusion and controlling idea, both is important because what they can say about the story theme.

(Rustam’s journal, Seminar 4, April 1, 2014)

In his journal, not only does he emphasize that he was able to help the students, but he describes in detail his knowledge of how to structure an essay, to demonstrate to the reader that he has expertise in this area. In his midterm timeline, he also wrote, “I have to teach them not just help them to do work, but explain how to solve problems like in Math, English, Social Studies.” In this entry, he is no longer feeling that he is “not really teaching them of all the subjects” as he did in his second week. He distinguishes teaching from “just helping,” in that teaching involves being able to explain and therefore, having an expertise. Both Rustam and Alex held themselves responsible for the students’ learning, and they view their own effort (“working hard”) as an important factor in the students’ academic performance. They also recognize and value their own expertise in their ability to work with the children in the classroom and “teach them”, not just “help them.”

Learning to Write, the Tests, and the Future

Rustam started his internship at PS129 two weeks before the state mandated testing began. Rustam and all the other interns were familiar with high stakes testing, given that they had to take the state Regents Exams in order to graduate. Much of his experience with the

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54 While in many of the other schools that are part of the International Schools consortium, the students are exempt from having to pass all the New York State Regents Exams in order to
class was impacted by the looming presence of the test for which the students were preparing to take. In his first journal, Rustam spoke of learning in the context of the fifth graders’ “futures” and how what they study now would help them when they got to high school. This was a recurrent theme in his journals and comments, but while he talked about their future as high school students and the things that they might have to face, such as the Regents Exams, he did not talk about their future after high school or about his own future after high school.

A short conversation with Rustam during our third seminar was enlightening. He talked about how he had expected the students at PS129 to be different and to be facing different challenges from the high school students who he knew, but he found that: “We are the same… like we talk to each other, follow directions…” Then he added: “The 5th graders learn how to write essays, it’s helpful for them, because … now is very good time to learn better.” Then he made a connection to his and his peers’ experiences coming to high school in the U.S. and being required to perform similar tasks: “but in eleventh grade... some students came one year ago, so they don't know how to write an essay... They became challenged. But now [in 5th grade] is the most good time to learn better.” (Group discussion and field notes, March 25, 2014)

graduate, at the time that this study was conducted, Sunat’s school was not exempt and all the interns needed to pass the Regents as a requirement for graduation.
This picture of the fifth graders’ argumentative essays posted on the wall was the first image that Rustam used in the Prezi for his final internship presentation. The fact that the students were learning to write argumentative essays in fifth grade was significant in Rustam’s experience. It came up in many of his journals and discussions and had many layers. This was something that he and his peers in high school struggled with, but it was also an area in which he had familiarity and had some expertise, so he felt that he could help the students.

Much of the current discourse around schooling is about preparing students for “the future”, versus thinking about learning as something that happens in the present and is a significant element of the everyday life of children. Although Rustam thought of the 5th grade students as future high schoolers and gauged their current learning as important for their future schooling, he didn’t explicitly consider their futures after high school. In working with the 5th
grade class, he saw the similarities in the curriculum with his high school. He stressed the connection between the present and the future -“now is very good time to learn better” - by bringing into his discourse the experiences of other students in his high school who were struggling to learn to write essays for the first time.

The internship coordinator of Rustam’s school talked about how Rustam “was proud of his work too... he said he learned academic stuff with reading and writing because his language is not that strong. I think he definitely learned some things that kids learn in 5th grade. It was probably helpful to him, since he struggles with school.” (Getz, interview, August 11, 2014)

There is a dialectical relationship between teaching and learning. As Rustam helped the fifth graders with writing, he strengthened his own skills. It also helped him understand the demands that he was facing as a high school student.

His concerns about the “future” were very much related to the testing that the students would have to face in high school. While some of the other interns questioned testing and its value, Rustam always came back to the fact that the students would have to do Regents Exams later on in high school and that learning testing skills would help them. In his two and a half years in public schools in the United States, Rustam had learned the importance that testing has on the lives of students.

The influence of high stakes testing in shaping education has grown in the last decade. “Successful schools” are often defined by the test scores of the students (Apple, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010, Ravitch, 2013) and not by the kinds of communities and relationships that they foster between students, teachers, families, and administrators, or the kinds of learning that go on in them. This emphasis on testing is deeply connected to a conception of children as
‘becomings’. Education in this paradigm is “preparation for global competiveness, higher education, or the workforce. They view students as ‘human capital’ or assets.” (Ravitch, 2013 p. 34)

Rustam has a sister who was in 4th grade at the time of the internship. During our fifth seminar, Rustam and Jabir had a discussion about the tests and Rustam brought his sister’s experience to the discussion:

Jabir: Did the third graders write an essay in their exam?
Ivana: They did, last week.
Jabir: That's hard... That is too hard… How can you write an essay if you don't know how to write?
Rustam: Because we are doing in eleventh grade… that's why is in the third grade...
Because it’s starting right now.

Jabir: From ninth to twelfth grade, you can write an essay but third… no...
Rustam: It is good because they are starting now. Because if they get to eight or like seventh grade… they feel comfortable …and they can do it better.

[…]

Rustam: My sister says that she got to do it. She is fourth grade and she did something, like different like comparing contrasting of the article… something like that... but she could [do it]. (Seminar 5, group discussion, April 9, 2014)

While his concern for the 5th graders was about their future as high school students, it was also based on Rustam’s observation of how his peers —all of them newcomers to the country —
struggled with some of the tasks that they were asked to do for this test, tasks which many of them were encountering for the first time. Rustam responded to Jabir’s concern that asking third graders to write an essay is “too hard” by explaining that his sister was able to do it, and if one does it enough, then he/she will be able to do it by 11th grade and be up to the challenges that his peers face. It’s essential to note that the task of writing an essay might be difficult for newcomers, not only because they are in the process of learning English, but also because language and culture influence how academic writing is structured. Writing demands the use of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and rhetorical conventions that are very different from conversational language. In my personal experience, academic writing in English was a struggle. It took me a long time to understand how to write essays in English, because I was used to Spanish writing conventions, in which, for example, the author doesn’t give away his/her main idea at the beginning of an essay, as is common in English. The writing style that I learned in Spanish is also less direct and more florid than is typical in English academic writing. Fu (2009) explains that:

Learning to write in a new language is a lifelong process of transformation because it involves not only learning a new set of language skills and vocabulary, but also constantly forming new ways of thinking and expressing and creating divergent discourse to express bi/multilingual perspective. (p.120)

Rustam is learning to become a bilingual writer. While his home languages will always be part of his identity, as well as funds of knowledge and tools for thinking and expressing his ideas (Fu, 2009), the immediate challenge that he is facing, in the context of the Regents Exams, is that his writing must meet the particular stylistic and structural demands of the test. Rustam referred to his experience with his sister and the 5th graders to make sense of his own experience as a high
schooler, and to understand the requirements of this new educational system that he was trying to navigate. Jabir, on the other hand, questioned the validity of the demands of the system as inappropriate and divorced from the realities of the children’s lives.

Rustam’s discussion with Jabir sheds light on a number of contradictions that are central to how we think about teaching and learning, particularly in relationship to emergent bilinguals. While writing is a thinking and communicative tool that can help to deepen reflection, expand reading comprehension, and reinforce language skills (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983, Fu, 2009), for teenage newcomers who have to face standardized tests shortly after arriving to the country, writing in English instead becomes a hurdle to overcome. Rustam and Jabir’s discussion illustrates how young people understand, internalize, reject, and or question the purpose of writing and, embedded in this, the purpose of schooling.

“Teaching like a Teacher”: The Classroom as an Emotional Space

From the beginning of the internship, Rustam took personal responsibility for how the students performed in class. He rarely mentioned the host teacher, Ms. Santillan, in his journals or during the meetings, although he seemed to have a good relationship with her and included a picture of Ms. Santillan in the cover of his final presentation at school, hugging him, and looking at the camera smiling. In his class map, he included himself but he did not include Ms. Santillan.
In this map of the class, Rustam is a central character. He drew himself in red, contrasting with the students who are in brown and blue, blending in with the classroom environment. A student is calling him and he answers that he is coming. He represents himself as someone needed by the students who are seeking his attention. The absence of the teacher in this map highlights his central role in the classroom.

I originally asked the interns to create a map of the classroom/school to explore how they experienced the space and their work in the school. In looking at the images that they created, I was reminded of Claudia Mitchell’s (2011) proposed analytical framework for working with images that notes the presence of absence and focuses on what is absent as part of a broader discourse. While the original conception of an internship program is that young people enter a community of practice in which the teachers are the mentors, it is significant that in Rustam’s image making, as well as in his accounts of his experiences in the classroom, his host teacher has
a secondary role. He draws himself as taking an active role as an essential member of the classroom community. This is consistent with his sense of responsibility for the students in the class. In his first journal, he wrote about being responsible for the students’ emotional well being: “I start some sharing with some fifth graders of my experience that when they asking me some questions because they need to know who I am and what I feel. I always try to be respectful because I do not want to make feel the fifth graders sad or bored. I want to teach them like a teacher…” In his view, taking care of students’ emotional well being involves sharing his experiences and opening up to them. He viewed his work in the classroom as building relationships, where students got to know him as an individual. There is mutuality in the brokering of these relationships in that the students need to know who he is and what he feels, but also in that he is aware that students have feelings as well.

Other students focused on their relationship with the students. Mayou described the classroom “as a family”: “In the class that I’m working in, there are students that are from the United States, Jamaica, Trinidad, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Pakistan, so when all of these kids are in the class, they doesn’t care what race the others are from because they share everything they got and they act like sister and brother.” (Mayou’s journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014) In talking about the students not caring about “what race the others are” and describing the classroom as a family that bridges not only various cultural background but also different races, she is acknowledging the diversity of experiences that students bring to the class. In conceptualizing the classroom as a family, Mayou was always in tune with the emotional life of

While they all chose to represent the space in different ways, out of six interns who drew maps, only two of them included their host teachers in their drawings. Since in this study, I focused on the interns’ experiences, none of the prompts for the journals or visual representations asked specific questions about the teachers. However, as I analyzed their data, I was surprised by how infrequently they talked about the teachers in most of their narratives.
the class. In one of the seminars, I asked each intern to review the maps that they had created and make a list of the activities from their classes. In Mayou’s list, she included: arguing, crying, allergic reaction, dancing, sleeping, singing, playing, fighting. Mayou viewed the classroom as a place where the relationships between the students developed and evolved. For example, in the conversation about her list with the rest of the group, she shared, “I like the thing they have for agreement… when some of them ‘agree to disagree’. Is like they come up with an agreement to stop.” (Seminar 8, group conversation, May 13, 2014)

While other interns talked about their relationships with the students, they also described the classrooms as emotional spaces for them. For example, Joanna commented, “Me gusta el internship, es una relación sana con los niños, no tienen malas influencias.” (I like the internship, it is a healthy relationship with the children, they don’t have bad influences.) In this quote, Joanna appraises her relationship with the students in the kindergarten class as “healthy”. In earlier conversations, she had shared that she had been caught cutting class to be in the school hallways with her friends. In working with the kindergarteners, she doesn’t have to face the choice of doing the “right thing” at school and having “bad influences” lure her to break school rules. Like many of the other interns in the seminar, she often brought up how the children in her class would always come and hug her and want her attention. After the vacation break, she wrote about how, “Coming back from spring break was awesome. I missed all my lil friends.” (sic.)

Megan Bowler (1999) argues that we need to develop more creative alternatives for the role of emotions in educational practices. She describes how the relationship between a person and his/her educational experience is “fraught with different emotions and histories” (p.2). She emphasizes that emotions need to be brought out of the private and into the public sphere:
“emotions are a site of oppression as well as a source of radical social and political resistance.” (xx, Bowler 1999) She calls for a pedagogy that explores the emotional dimensions of our cognitive and moral perceptions. This understanding of teaching and learning defies the current policies that evaluate teachers’ work based only on academic progress of their students and that conceptualize classrooms as places that need to be “managed”. Each intern had their own particular understanding of the classroom, where people of various ages form relationships. Rustam was concerned for the emotional well being of the students; Mayou conceptualized the classroom as a family in which members cry, play, and fight; Joanna defined it as a “healthy space” for herself. However, they all conceptualized it as an emotional space.

For Rustam as well as the other interns, there was a mutuality in how they negotiated their work in the classroom. Rustam understood that it was important for students to learn about him and feel that they could ask questions in order for him to forge relationships with them. Both he and Alex tapped into their expertise in academic subjects, but they also learned as they were participating in the class community. They questioned their abilities to teach based on how the student performed. The looming presence of the standardized tests, and their impact on their own lives and on the students they were working, shaded how they made sense of their experiences. As they forged relationships, they were in tune with the emotional life of each classroom and their own connection to it.
CONCLUSION:
A SECOND ENTRANCE TO SCHOOL

“The first day I go into the classroom is like when I come to America the first day of school.”

(Alex’s journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

A few of the interns compared their experience in entering the classrooms at PS129 with their first entrance to school in the United States. There were feelings of confusion, nervousness, and the uncertainty of knowing where they would fit in the classroom community.

Alex’s first journal entry narrates his newcomer experience in Ms. Parson’s class:

Hi my name is Alex, my first week work at PS129 is good. The first day I go into the classroom is like when I come to America the first day of school. In the classroom no one knows me before and I feel nervous and this is the first time to work. I put down my stuff then I just stand there I don’t know what I should do. Then the teacher Ms. Parson she tells me to work with a student Jake. Ms. Parson she gives the work for me to work with Jake.

That day they [were] learning the line, point and angle. They have to find the acute angle, obtuse angle and right angle on the textbook. The whole day they learn about the angle, like find the angle, measure the angle, the 3 different ways to name the angle.

At the last day of last week I already work with this class student for 4 days. We know each other little more. This class student is good and nice, I like working with this class student.

(Alex’s journal, Seminar 1, March 11, 2014)

While the interns entered the school with previous knowledge about schools, they came in with the idea that they were expected to “work” in the classroom. This was an added layer to their anxiety in finding the classrooms different from what they had experienced in their home countries and in high school in the U.S. During an interview, I asked Alex about this first journal. He repeated the story that he told in the Journal, but added, “I was nervous about my English.” In Alex’s experience, this was his first time working. There was a difference in his
role and expectations, in that he viewed his responsibility as someone who needed to contribute to the classroom with his work, and he was worried that his mastery of English was “not good enough.” His narrative starts with the uncertainty of what to do in this new setting. The mood in his narrative changed when Ms. Parson directed him to work with a student. As it turned out, on his first day, the class was working on geometry. Alex prides himself on being good at math. In his first Popplet he had expressed his love for math. There is a sense of relief in the third strophe of his journal, in which he talks about all the different ways in which the students are learning about angles. While school might have looked different from what he knew, the content of schoolwork—in this case, math—was something that he felt confident about.

For many of the interns, teaching was something that required expertise. In entering the school community, most of them found that they had “expertises” that informed their classroom practices. Some tapped into their knowledge in the content areas or in the languages that they spoke. Yet, there was other hidden knowledge that shaped their practices, such as the understanding of how it feels to be a student.

Ahmed’s description of his entrance to the internship was similar to Alex’s. During the fifth seminar, the interns created a visual representation of their experiences so far in the school. Ahmed had generally been a very quiet participant and had shared with me that he often didn’t feel comfortable speaking English in large groups. So I didn’t press him, I just left it up to him to share his ideas whenever he wanted to. He had missed the first session, so I didn’t have any writing from him from his first week in the internship. However, I knew from his school counselor that during the first week, he wanted to switch internships and was unhappy, but by the second week he had decided to stay. Here are the first two slides in the Prezi that he created
during the seminar in week five, in response to my request to create a timeline of his experience in the internship:

**Figure 7.1**  
Ahmed’s Prezi, slides 1 and 2

![Ahmed's Prezi slides 1 and 2](image)

When he first showed me his Prezi, I was surprised. Ahmed struck me as someone very private, yet in this visual representation, he used his Prezi to bring us (the other interns and me) into his emotional space. I had chosen to use visual methodologies, because I knew creating visual representations would provide a forum for the interns to share their ideas without having to rely on oral or written language only, but Ahmed’s Prezi was a revelation in that I didn’t expect him to open up to share how vulnerable he felt with the whole group.

In the first two slides, he used, as his avatars, two older men with formulaic expressions, like the ones used in institutional signs, such as in hospitals. The first image expresses Ahmed’s feelings of confusion and not knowing what to do—similar to what Alex expressed. However, in his second image, about the second day, he describes watching and spending “the whole day with silent.” Cristina Igoa (1995), in her book *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child* about her work with newcomers, talks about the “silent period”:
There is one characteristic of the uprooting experience that appears to be shared by all immigrant children irrespective of nationality, economic status, family stability or any other factors, it is the silent stage when the children experience the school cultures different from their own, and when their inability to communicate with peers is caused by a language or cultural difference. (p. 38)

When Ahmed came to PS129, like Alex, he didn’t feel confident about his capability to communicate with others in English. In his final internship presentation, he listed as one of the challenges his “language problem.” When I asked him about it, he said just two words: “Speaking English.” He also had described himself as a quiet, shy person. In his first entrance to the internship, Ahmed perhaps had to re-live his entrance to school in the U.S., going through a “silent period” where he sat and observed, trying to make sense of the world of the classroom. However, his silent period didn’t last long. In the following slides, he shared the changes in his emotional temperature:

**Figure 7.2**
Ahmed’s Prezi, slides 3 and 4
There is a switch in the images that he used, from the grey, human dreariness of the hospital-like images to represent his confusion and silence, to the bright colored emoticons that represented his feelings of happiness. Like Alex, he conceptualized the internship as “work”. By the second week, he understood the “work” that he needed to do in the class and that made him comfortable. Alex’s teachers guided him by sending him to work with a specific student, but in Ahmed’s experience, the children in the class guided him and created a space for him by calling him when they needed help.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the young people in this project entered the classroom with a blurry positioning that challenged the binary student/teacher, adult/child relationships of the classrooms. Finding their role and space in the classrooms was a co-constructed enterprise with the students and the teachers in the room. For many of the interns, their relationship with the children, who asked for their help and attention, was the most significant factor in carving out their space. Challenging these binaries also provided a platform for the youths to form relationships with the children in the classroom beyond of those constraints.

For his Prezi, Ahmed chose a theme called “Stepping Stones.” The background of this theme is a desolate landscape. His journey starts in the water, a place where he might be submerged, but by the middle of his internship - when he created the Prezi - he is almost reaching the land by stepping on the stones. His first two steps are represented by the first two days, but later he starts jumping from week to week. Perhaps because when one is confused and silent, time moves more slowly, but when one feels more comfortable and useful, time moves more quickly.
One of the things that is left out of much of the current discourse about teaching is the emotional dimension of teaching (Day & Leitch, 2001; Hargreaves, 1998). Teaching, according to current educational policies, is conceptualized as an isolated profession in which a teacher’s role is to transfer knowledge efficiently. For the young people in the project, the journey of entering an elementary school in the United States was an emotional and intellectual journey that involved exploring and understanding their feelings and ideas about other educational spaces in which they participated in their home countries and in the U.S. The young people in this project conceptualized their work in the classrooms as a human activity that required them to become emotionally involved. As I discussed in Chapter Six, Ahmed and the other interns viewed their
classrooms as emotional spaces where people build relationships and they represented them as such in the images that they created, their journals and their discussions.

**Visions of school**

During the internship, some of the students took pictures that they planned to use in their final presentation for their school’s internship fair. During one of the seminars, I asked the interns to bring one or two pictures that they’d like to share with the rest of the group or with me. Only five of the interns were present during that session and some of them shared images that I’ve discussed previously. Both Rustam and Alex had taken pictures of the kids making Mother’s Day presents. Rustam explained how much pleasure he got out of seeing the students in the 5th grade class enjoy dancing or arts and crafts. He explained that he took the photos because he had never done those activities in elementary school. He also used the images in his final presentation at the internship fair in his school.

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56 As I explained in Chapter Three, because the number of photographs that each intern took varied from one to another, and it was also a small sample, I did not use an extensive content analysis of the images that would provide a systematic way of looking at the images. Instead, I chose to analyze the photograph in conversation with other narratives that the youths produced (group discussions, presentations, journals, etc.). However, when I went back to look at the images, I found that the largest group of images that they had taken was related to art activities (15 pictures of kids dancing, doing art projects, or student art works).
Alex also chose to share a picture of the students making Mother’s Day cards:

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57 This image has been cropped to shield the identity of the child who is holding the card. The original image showed his face smiling at the camera.
In his journal, he wrote about this picture:

This my picture and that's last Friday
and everyone is making a card for mothers day
and write the thing they want to thank for their moms.

Or some taken care by their grandma
so they write to their grandma.

They just make the card by color paper.
Everything is just by themselves
and put some heart in it
like put a different shapes to make it beautiful.

This picture is like just like making a card for parent
we never did that in school before.
Even in China or here
we never like do that on mothers day or fathers day
like making a card to the parents.
That's the first time I saw that people ...
the students make a cup for their parents for mothers day or fathers day.
(Alex’s journal, Seminar 8, May 13, 2014)

During the session, Alex shared this image of one child looking at the camera and showing his card. He had also taken other images of children working and making cards. As with Rustam, what drew Alex’s interest was that it was an activity that he had never encountered in his previous schooling, that was unfamiliar. His journal provides some insights into Alex’s
meaning making process. In the second strophe, he places the image in the context of his knowledge of the children’s lives, not all of whom have moms at home to take care of them; some are in the care of grandparents. In the last strophe, he is putting his image in conversation with his experience in two educational systems, in China and in the United States. What makes this activity worthy of a picture is the fact that up until then, card making was not something that belonged in school. In taking the photo, he is guiding the viewer’s gaze to what he perceives as unusual and different, yet pleasurable. The initial audience for this photograph was other students in his school and teachers.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

Creating a “translanguaging space”, using the pedagogical power of visual narratives.

The idea of translanguaging space embraces two concepts, namely creativity and criticality, which, in my view, are fundamental but hitherto under-explored dimensions of multilingual practices (...) These two concepts are intrinsically linked: one cannot push or break boundaries without being critical; and the best expression of one’s criticality is one’s creativity. (Li Wei, 2011, p. 1223)

I began this work with the understanding that narratives are powerful tools because they allow us to engage with young people’s experiences. The seminar was designed as a translanguaging space in which young people could use their full semiotic repertoires to create and share their narratives. In this context, the visual representations (Popplets, maps, and Prezis) and the discussions that they generated during our seminar sessions were often in conversation with their past experiences as sense making devices to understand schooling and to school themselves in how teaching and learning works in the U.S.
The narratives that the interns shared highlight that, while the internship was a space for the young people in the project to make sense of schooling, it was also a place for them to enact their understandings and beliefs about teaching, learning, and languaging. For example, Mayou and Jabir rooted their linguistic practices in their critiques of language policies in their countries and in the United States. They enacted a particular language ideology in translanguaging as part of their classroom practices. They used translanguaging to construct a group identity and solidarity based on a deeper recognition, understanding, and critique of the social inequities that the speakers of their home languages face here and, in Mayou’s case, in their home country.

Using visual methodologies to create a translanguaging space in which young people use their multimodal communicative practices was both a research and pedagogical decision. It came from the theoretical understanding that, in their daily lives, young people use their full semiotic repertoires in their communicative practices and that, in order to foster creativity and criticality, the methodology should reflect their practices.

These methodologies are powerful pedagogical tools that can be adapted and incorporated by educators, in particular those who work with emergent bilinguals, who are often learning a language as they are navigating a new system. The multimodality of the narratives that young people created and shared with each other allowed them to express their ideas and feelings and springboard discussions and analysis that we might not have had otherwise. At a time when it is particularly important to engage and inspire young people to have critical dialogues about languaging and learning, I believe that these tools should be adopted by educators in school and after school programs to develop pedagogical spaces that leverage the communicative practices of students. For teacher educators, is also important to design translanguaging spaces where pre-service teachers reflect on their emotional journey as
pedagogical practice. Experiencing these spaces first-hand can help bring to light the
transformative power of leveraging students’ full semiotic repertoires as creative and critical
tools for learning.

Breaking the Binaries: creating opportunities for young people to be agents in our
educational communities

While the original intent of this study was not to assess the International Schools’
internship program, I believe that this is a model that policy makers and schools should learn
from. It provides a possibility for young people to participate and make an impact on multiple
communities of practice, as well as a platform for them to reflect on and analyze their previous
experiences and generate opportunities for critical dialogue.

The young people in this study enter a community of practice with a set of linguistic and
cultural-historical repertoires of practice that shaped how they engaged and contributed to the
classroom communities in which they were placed and became agents of change. After I
completed my research, I’ve continued to help two International Schools to place students at
PS129 during the spring semester every year. The year after I collected the data for this seminar,
one of the kindergarten teachers approached me and said that she had a student who spoke
Arabic in her class and who was in such distress that he tried to run away from the classroom
during the first two months of school. Her student had since settled in, but since she knew that
the internship program was starting in the spring, she asked if I could try to find an intern who
spoke Arabic for her class. As I was doing the placements, the internship coordinator from one
of the schools contacted me and said, “I’m sending Mohammed. He wants to try, but he is not
sure whether he’ll want to stay. He doesn’t know what he wants to do…” I placed Mohammed in the kindergarten class and told him I would check in with him at the end of the week to see if he still wanted to stay. The day after I placed him, I went to pick up my daughter from pre-k and saw Mohammed walking in the hallway with the kindergartener holding hands. Mohammed told me, in passing, “I’m staying, Ms.” The teacher in the class sent an email later in the month thanking me for the placement. Since Mohammed was only required to come to the internship on Wednesdays and Thursdays, she said that her kindergartener asked every day, “Is today Wednesday or Thursday?”

I have helped from time to time to do tours for prospective parents in my children’s school. I’ve often had to answer questions from concerned parents of pre-kindergarteners about whether the older kids (fifth and fourth graders) will ever “mix” with their children, or if the children from the middle school located upstairs are “allowed” to walk in our hallways. Their assumption is that older children might be a threat to the younger ones. We have created a school system in which children are segregated by age, governed by binary relationships between students and teachers, and there are seldom opportunities to share the space and learn from each other. I believe that there is much to be explored about what happens when those binaries are broken and young people of all ages take part in the same classroom communities.

The young people in this study drew on a variety of linguistic, cultural, and relational repertoires and used them strategically as resources and tools in brokering new classroom practices. They leveraged their own experience and understanding of what it means to be students to better work with the children in their class. Mayou and Joanna used their views of

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58 At PS129, the fourth and fifth graders participate in a number of activities in which they work with younger children.
themselves as students to make connections with the children in the class. Alex and Rustam tapped into their understanding of the children and what it feels like to be a student and to face the demands of testing. Jabir helped bridge the family and school relationship by using his home language and cultural understanding of the Yemeni community.

While state and federal policies call for standards-based reform and accountability based on standardized testing, they do not account for some of the relational aspects of teaching and learning that were central to the journeys of the young people in this study and that are vital to the everyday experiences of teachers and students in schools. We need to think about building educational communities that break the binaries of the adult/child relationship, and leverage the cultural, linguistic, and relational wealth of knowledge that young people can offer.

At a time when immigrant students and their families are under attack, the narratives of the young people who participated in this study challenge the assumptions that view them only in terms of deficits. By using their full semiotic repertoires to “see each other” and to “be seen” through the narratives that they created and shared, they provided a framework for understanding the complexity of their experiences, ideas, critiques, and contributions to the educational communities in which they participated.
Appendix A: Student Journals Prompts

Describe what it was like to work in an elementary school classroom.

Describe the languages in the classroom where you are placed. What languages are present? Who speaks them and when?

Describe a student or group of students in the class.

Describe your work in the school this week.

Describe one significant moment during the week and explain why was significant.

Chose two pictures that you took during the course of the internship and tell us about them.

Reflect on your experience at the Internship.
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