STORYLINES
Listening to Immigrant Students, Teachers, and Cultural-Bridge Persons Making Sense of Classroom Interactions

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As the number of immigrant students increases in U.S. classrooms, so have the challenges teachers encounter as they seek to be culturally responsive. Framed by multicultural education and sociocultural theory, this qualitative study explored how 8 fifth-grade, newly arrived immigrant students ("newcomers") from 6 different countries, their teachers in a U.S. suburban school, and cultural bridge persons made sense of a shared classroom activity. A hybrid, 3-pass, video-based stimulated recall methodology allowed the newcomers', the teachers', and cultural voices to be heard. The resulting narratives exposed participants' dynamic storylines which were utilized to bring meaning to what was observed and said. A juxtaposition of the storylines elucidated 3 lessons for teachers to employ as they move multicultural education beyond knowledge and skills to a dynamic pursuit of understanding with newcomers.

Recent data reveal immigrant youth under the age of 18 who have either arrived from countries outside the United States or have at least one immigrant parent account for nearly one fourth of the nation's children (Hernandez, Denton, & McCartney, 2007; Passel, 2011). It is estimated that in the next decade, one in every four students attending U.S. schools will be English language learners (ELLs) (Walqui, et al., 2010). Those ELLs arriving in middle schools and high schools commonly find learning the academic language and content challenging (Walqui et al., 2010). Foreign-born youth who have arrived in the past 3 years are commonly known as "newcomers" (Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, 2003). They typically enter the classroom with varying levels of English language acuity and formal schooling experiences (Kirova & Adams, 2007).While demographics are shifting, the pressures of high stakes testing and teacher accountability continue to rise.

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This context has challenged mainstream teachers as they seek to facilitate every student's learning in their classrooms.

In addressing such a challenge, multicultural education (Banks, 2007), cultural responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), and diversity pedagogy (Sheets, 2005) have formed the backdrop of research and teacher professional development. Recognizing the value of teachers connecting with their students during the learning process, these approaches seek to build understanding between a predominantly monocultural teacher population and a culturally diverse student population. Promising research such as Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti's (2005) focus on students' *funds of knowledge* and the *bridging cultures* pedagogical tools (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Quiroz, 2001), to name a few, promote understanding between teachers and newcomers to enhance classroom teaching and learning. A recent focus on the middle school years as key for immigrants' academic achievement in high school has precipitated such studies as Cooper, Dominquez, and Rosas' (2005) exploration of the pathways of learning of middle school immigrant students. As these efforts progress, however, cultural discontinuities between newcomers and teachers persist.

As Nieto (2010) noted, the present approach to addressing these discontinuities tends to result in defining culture as static, losing the essence of culture and personalities and ultimately stifling the dynamic interchange between teachers and students necessary for learning to take place. Her analysis suggests the need to explore more fully the creations of understanding between teachers and newcomers during class activities. One approach, purported by multicultural education advocates, is to expose the worldviews each person brings into the pursuit of understanding (Banks, 2006). Further reflecting the dynamic construction of worldviews in the classroom, Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe the value of an awareness that one's worldview is shaped by sociohistorical experiences as sociocultural consciousness. Listening to and gleaning insights from *all* interlocutors within shared activities is key to exposing worldviews and developing this sociocultural consciousness (Rogoff, 1990; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Despite the acknowledged necessity of listening to all students' voices, newcomers' voices remain noticeably silent in much of the research (Ball & Tyson, 2011). Additionally, although multicultural education purports soliciting insights from parents and community (Banks, 2007), adults from the same cultural origins as newcomers, who could enrich the dynamic understanding of the newcomers' cultural worldviews, are also absent.

This study sought to address this gap by providing an opportunity for teachers, newcomers, and cultural bridge persons (those who link or mediate between cultures) to be heard. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how fifth-grade teachers, newcomers, and cultural bridge persons made sense of a classroom activity by exposing their cultural storylines through video-based stimulated recall.

Although the study sought to include newcomers' parents' voices, considered crucial to such a study, their recent arrival and limited English made them reluctant to participate in research. Instead, cultural bridge persons who came from the cultural backgrounds of the newcomers and lived in the same community were recruited. These were recommended by the parents for their cultural background, their experience as a parent in the United States, and their English language acuity. Using a video-based stimulated recall approach, this study explored the culturally constructed storylines the teachers and newcomers brought into a typical learning context, with the newcomers' voices illuminated by the storylines of the community cultural bridge persons.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The multicultural education dimension of knowledge construction informed by a critical awareness of each one's worldview (Banks,

2006), and the sociocultural view of learning as a social process embedded within the sociohistorical contexts of the learners (Vygotsky, 1978), effectively frame this study. The pursuit of understanding between teachers and students is explored through the lens of storylines (Gee, 2005).

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is defined as a concept, reform, and a process (Banks, 2007). As a concept, multicultural education is committed to providing all students an equal opportunity to learn. This, according to multicultural education proponents, requires providing space for all students' cultural, racial, and ethnic contexts to contribute to the learning process within class activities (Banks, 2007). Multicultural education is also identified as a school reform effort requiring a focus on both knowledge construction and content integration (Banks, 2006). This reform is conceived as an ongoing process, not a product, honing the teachers' critical awareness of worldviews accessed within the learning process. The focus is on the teachers' and students' dynamic pursuit of understanding within the ever-changing cultural contexts of school, curriculum, and community (Gay, 2000). This culturally responsive teaching, according to Gay (2000), involves being attentive to the dynamic and complex semiotic relationship between culture, communication, teaching, and learning within the diverse classroom setting.

Sociocultural View of Learning

Sociocultural theory is positioned to explicate the process of knowledge construction and critical awareness valued in multicultural education (Wells & Claxton, 2002).Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as a dynamic social process embedded in a sociohistorical context; in other words, he noted that each individual's social, cultural, and historical experiences were inextricable from his or her learning experiences. This active process involves mediation between an expert and a novice or in the classroom setting, between teachers and students. Wertsch (1985) identified two key theoretical constructs found in the mediational process between teachers and students: intersubjectivity and semiotic negotiation. Intersubjectivity is defined as the process in which two people seek mutual understanding through choosing words and creating "temporarily shared social worlds" that transcend the "private world" of each interlocutor (Rommetveit, 1985, pp. 188-189). Within this framework, the coconstruction of meaning becomes the connector between the known and the unknown, between the teacher and the newcomer, creating a "state of intersubjectivity" in which communication "makes sense" (Rommetveit, 1985, p. 189). Gee (2005) called this process of understanding "recognition work," or that which people engage in "to make visible to others (and to themselves, as well) who they are and what they are doing" (p. 29). Rogoff (1990) visualized this pursuit of mutual understanding as a necessary "bridge" that connects each interlocutor.

Therefore, it is considered that meaning making is negotiated in the classroom through an interactive process between teachers and students. This semiotic negotiation does not negate the private worlds or past experiences of teachers and students, but instead views these as the origin of the cultural tools or choice of words or symbols which bring interlocutors together in a shared knowledge or understanding (Wertsch, 1985). Therefore, it may be said that teachers and newcomers interpret the words and actions they encounter in the classroom by both their past cultural and social experiences and their present negotiation of meaning during the interaction.

Storylines

According to multicultural education and sociocultural theory, a vital key to the process of knowledge construction within the classroom context is the recognition of the cultural

worldviews teachers and newcomers bring into a learning encounter (Banks, 2007; Gay, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Kozulin (2003) notes the value of exploring the dynamics of understanding using sociocultural theory when taking multicultural education beyond a body of knowledge and skills. However, understanding this is complex, and adding the newcomer to the context increases this complexity as they bring into the classroom cultural worldviews and experiences typically foreign to their teachers. Both Gee (2005) and Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) propose the cultural model as an effective tool for understanding the perceptions and interpretations of the student and the teacher. Gee (2005), capturing the essence of the interaction and ongoing process of knowledge construction, defines a cultural model as a "storyline" in which a person connects situated meanings and possibilities within new encounters to describe how the world works.

The focus of this study was on the constructed storylines of three fifth-grade teachers, 10 newcomers, and six cultural bridge persons (who were from the local immigrant community) as they sought to make sense of the class activity they witnessed. Cultural analysis (Strauss, 2005) revealed the storylines each participant utilized. Listening to these storylines provided insights into their complexity and points out the necessity of participants hearing each other's worldviews while seeking to reach a state of intersubjectivity, or understanding, during their learning process.

METHOD

As researchers have noted, when cultural worldviews are introduced, it is important to provide a cultural voice to the study (Strauss, 2005). To explore the pursuit of understanding between teachers and newcomers, this qualitative study employed a multivocal approach effectively utilized by "The International Mathematics and Science Study" (Stigler, Gallimore, & Hiebert, 1999). It invoked the voices of newcomers and their teachers. In order to appropriately frame the cultural perspective heard in the newcomers' voices, the voices of persons who came from the cultural context of at least one of the newcomers were also summoned (Strauss, 2005).

Context and Participants

This study took place in a U.S. Midwest suburban school district in which 90% of the teaching force was Caucasian and female. In contrast, the student population in the district had recently changed from predominantly Caucasian to 36% Caucasian, 31% Hispanic, 21% Asian, and 12% African American. Whereas middle school has been noted by researchers to be a particularly challenging academically and socially for newcomers (Cooper et al., 2005), this study focused on the fifth-grade newcomers who were experiencing their first formal schooling in the United States and were identified by the school district as English language learners. At the time of this study, the school's newcomer population represented more than 12 countries.

The school administrators chose three fifth-grade teachers for participation in this study. Mrs. Jakes, Mrs. Lees, and Mrs. Arnold (pseudonyms), were selected due to their past histories of having newcomers from multiple countries in their classes. Each teacher was a Caucasian female who spoke only English. All three teachers reported that their only experiences outside the United States consisted of short vacation trips to holiday spots such as the Bahamas, Mexico, and Europe. Each had at least 3 years of teaching experience, and each had at least three newcomers in her fifth-grade class.

Of the 10 newcomers in these fifth-grade classes, 8 from six countries assented to participate. These newcomers (the names are all pseudonyms) included three girls: Mira from Albania, Anida from Mexico, and Marta from Puerto Rico. The five newcomer boys included: Emir from Bosnia, Hugo and Juan from Mexico, Ceadel from the Philippines, and Bialy from Poland. Of these eight, Mira, Bialy, and Anida had attended a U.S. school for 2

years. Marta, Ceadel, and Emir had attended a U.S. school for 1 year. For Hugo and Juan, this was their first year in a U.S. school (see Appendix).

All eight newcomers had attended formal schooling in their country of origin before arriving in the United States. In their current school, each one participated in the school's pull-out English as a second language program. Six of them—Mira, Ceadel, Marta, Emir, Hugo, and Anida—reported that they spoke only their language of origin with their parents; however, all reported speaking English with their friends.

To include the necessary cultural voices in this study and to compensate for the reluctance of the newcomers' parents to participate, one immigrant from each of the countries represented by the newcomers was recruited from the local community based upon the recommendation of the newcomers or their parents. Six cultural bridge persons who were mothers of school-aged children and who arrived in the United States as adults, consented to participate (pseudonyms): Ardita from Albania, Gracia from Mexico, Jealene from the Philippines, Ania from Poland, Elisa from Puerto Rico, and Tahra from Serbia. Each was unrelated to the participants. All had a high school education, spoke English, and had lived in the United States for a minimum of 3 years.

Procedures

This study incorporated three types of inductive data collection: classroom observations, questionnaires, and multiple video-based stimulated recall interviews. The researcher conducted preliminary observations of each classroom to experience the typicality of the activity in each setting and minimize the observer effect (Bogdan & Biklin, 2003). Questionnaires collected participants' background information including their migration history, schooling experience outside the United States, and language use. The newcomers' and teachers' initial perceptions of the videotaping process were also recorded.

The teachers had arranged a 90-minute block for a literacy lesson involving the full class, and two cameras captured the activity during that time. The lessons were a part of each teacher's plan to prepare students for the state testing, and none was altered for videotaping. Three videos were created, one from each class. As it was necessary to create a tape short enough to sustain the attention of the viewer and still capture the classroom activity, the teachers and researcher edited each tape into a 10-minute uninterrupted view of each class's activity (Strickland, 2006, 2010; Urdan, Kneisel, & Mason, 1999).

Mrs. Lees' Class Activity Video Excerpt

In the final edited video of Mrs. Lees' class, she is facilitating a class discussion of Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea using a social studies text introduced the day before. The newcomers in her class, Juan and Hugo, arrived 6 months ago from Mexico. They sit at their desks with their books open. Mrs. Lees directs the class to review the story. The subsequent class discussion is captured on tape.

Mrs. Arnold's Class Activity Excerpt

In the final edited video of Mrs. Arnold's class, she begins her lesson by turning her students' attention to a story about a track star, Wilma Rudolph, who conquered a physical disability to win a gold medal at the Olympics. The newcomers, Ceadel from the Philippines, Marta from Puerto Rico, Mira from Albania, and Bialy from Poland, were present during the day of the filming. The subsequent class discussion is captured on tape.

Mrs. Jakes' Class Activity Excerpt

In the final edited video of Mrs. Jakes' class, she begins her lesson with a class discussion of a story about the poaching of rhinoceros in East Africa and the Middle East. The class is seated in groups of six. Emir, from

Bosnia, sits at his desk at the back of the class in one group, and Anida, from Mexico, sits at her desk at the front of the class. The class discussion is captured on tape.

A video-based stimulated recall approach was used in which each participant (newcomers, teachers, and cultural bridge persons) watched the 10-minute video of their classroom activity and narrated responses privately to the researcher (Op't Eynde, De Corte, & Verschaffel, 2001) either at the school or at their home. This was done three times to minimize the researcher's assumptions, which can overwhelm the cultural voice of the participants (Strauss, 2005), and to allow the participants to become familiar with the process of narrating with little prompting. These viewings provided the researcher with opportunity to member-check the collected data, as well as to clarify any questions or confirm interpretations of what was recorded. It was typical to use only one or two questions at the beginning to provide clarification while controlling for researcher bias. Each narration was transcribed verbatim. Forty-eight usable narratives (Juan and Hugo chose to stay together) resulted from the combined recordings of the newcomers, the teachers, and the cultural bridge persons' participation.

Data Analysis

In keeping with qualitative research, data were analyzed throughout the collection process. The data analysis was conducted in three phases guided by the work of the cultural ethnographer Strauss (2005), which captures the multivocal, dynamic, culturally constructed storylines of the narrators. The first phase consisted of multiple readings of all 48 transcripts. Indicative phrases and words were systematically coded. The second phase involved multiple uninterrupted readings of the coded transcripts. During these readings the researcher noted her personal interaction with the data and coded the transcripts, noting what came before and after the spoken thought and what might be assumed by the speaker when he or she said it (Strauss, 2005). Unlike typical discourse analysis in which lexical semantics are noted, in this cultural analysis protocol, the contiguity of thought is particularly noted and coded. The contiguities of thought reveal the storylines each participant brought to the interview. The third phase consisted of the juxtaposition of transcripts across cases. At this point disconnections of participants' storylines emerged.

The researcher utilized several strategies to assure the trustworthiness of the data. First, as the narratives were collected, the researcher took the findings, initial interpretations, and questions to the participants for clarification and feedback. Second, throughout this analysis, in recognition of the difficult task of analyzing non-Western appraisals, the researcher implemented Strauss's (2005) process of exposing cultural assumptions and meaning in narratives. Third, two expert qualitative researchers provided an inquiry audit at each phase of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Locating the voice of the researcher was also important. This researcher brought to the study decades of experience living and working in countries and cultures outside the United States. Her experience in entering cultures unfamiliar to her and listening to parents, children, and educators on location for the purpose of gleaning personal understanding, while facilitating understanding between people from different backgrounds, encouraged participants to trust the researcher and openly share their thoughts.

FINDINGS

The participants' narratives of classroom activities set the context for exploring the storylines they constructed to make sense of it all. The phrases "get it" or "understand" and the behavior of "raising the hand" were found to be prevalent throughout all the participants' narratives, situating the exploration for this paper. Aggregating the narratives by groups—newcomers, teachers, and cultural bridge persons—provides an effective venue for expos-

TABLE 1
Getting It: Newcomers

Newcomer	*Narrative Quotation*
Mira (Albania)	[The teacher is] *making her* [newcomer] *understand* like if she picks another person who raises their hand … if they help [newcomer] so she can understand it much better like me.… She [the teacher] *makes us understand*.… She helps us *make the things more understandable.*[1]
Emir (Bosnia)	She's [the teacher] nice and she lets us do something if we like.… She lets us do anything we want and so the others *that didn't get it right she* explains it more to them.
Anida (Mexico)	[I would] like *understand* more things cause it's going to be harder and um, I wants to have—to have a nice teacher.
Hugo and Juan (Mexico)	I was *understand* a little bit English just a little, not that much, but a little.… Sometimes she asks us if we don't understand—if *we don't understand* she [the teacher] helps us.
Ceadel (Philippines)	When I *don't get a question* on a homework sheet, I ask them [friends] and they—if *they don't get it* they ask me too and I give them the answer. I help them out.
Bialy (Poland)	Like when I *don't get something* or like when I don't get something she help me. And when I have a question on sometimes (pause) … [my teacher] always, like, helps me out.
Marta (Puerto Rico)	Now this how can I explain her that she just stood there so she could—*but I didn't get it*.… We talk about those words and then she was going to give me a meaning but *sometimes I know* what it means but I don't know how to express it.

Note: [1]Italics placed by researcher to highlight the phrase/words of focus.

ing the storylines within and among the groups as purposed by this study. When juxtaposed, these aggregated storylines exposed a multidimensional view of the pursuit for understanding between these fifth-grade teachers and newcomers with the newcomers' approach illuminated by the cultural voice of the cultural bridge persons.

"Getting It" Storylines

As the participants began to describe what they were seeing in the videotape, the phrase to "get it" or "understand" was frequently voiced. The following describes the storylines explicated from the semantic context of the narratives as revealed through the cultural analysis protocol (Strauss, 2005). Three cultural models emerged in each participant group with a telling difference in emphasis of one over another.

Newcomers' Storylines

As the newcomers narrated the activity they witnessed in their classrooms, each without exception mentioned "getting it" or "understanding." Two cultural models emerged from their descriptions of getting it. First, descriptions of the teacher's expectations or roles were paired with their talk around getting it (Table 1). For example, as she watched the teacher leading their class discussion on the video, Mira (Albania) described the activity this way: "She [the teacher] makes us understand.… She helps us make, make the things more understandable." Bialy (Poland) also stated, "When I don't get something, she helps me."

Second, two newcomers talked about the limitations of their English language skills while they pursued understanding. Marta (Puerto Rico) described her difficulty with getting it as a struggle between knowing and speaking while the teacher "stood there." She stated that "sometimes I know what it means but I don't know how to express it." Hugo and Juan (Mexico) also noted their limited English when describing their participation in class. They explained it this way: "I understand a little bit English just a little, not that much but a little."

Cultural Bridge Persons' Storylines

The cultural bridge persons also persistently commented on "getting it" in the classroom as they watched the class at work on the video. As they talked about this, however, they framed their view of the newcomers' pursuit of understanding within a cultural system which augments the newcomer's storylines (Table 2). For example, Ardita (Albania), commenting on Mira's answers during the class discussion noted, "She is, like, trying to get everything to make it … so she could get the right answer." Similarly, Jealene (Philippines) stated, "That's how you get points.… You're going to get it, you're going to get the right answer." Gracia (Mexico) described understanding as "what the teacher wants." She goes on to state that the teacher's goal is understood to be "working independently." Tahra (Bosnia), watching Emir, described getting it as understanding how Bosnia was different from America and how Americans needed to understand this difference. This is reflected in her statement, "She [the teacher] must know just this boy [Emir] need [*sic*] time of teaching how this system in America work. He must know just take care of self, no watching what other kids doing." Throughout the cultural bridge persons' narratives, this model of a cultural system is notably paired with newcomers' relational approach to understanding, exposing their view of the American system.

Teachers' Storylines

The teachers' storylines also were constructed around descriptions of their perceived role of facilitating the newcomers' understanding or getting it. However, their descriptions were embedded within the cultural model of language acuity, marked by their discussion of the obstacle of the newcomers' limited English language skills (Table 3). For example, Mrs. Jakes, while watching the newcomers during the class activity, commented on what she saw this way: "They [newcomers] can't understand

TABLE 2
Getting It: Cultural Bridge Persons

Cultural Bridge Person	*Narrative Quotation*
Ardita (Albania)	Oh, okay. And she wants to be involved. See, she gets her hand up. So she wants to be involved. She wants to answer stuff. That means that *she's got it*. She's heard. She's paid attention to what is going on.
Tahra (Bosnia)	I think he don't know how everything working in America.… and they much working for just for him or her, she, you know?… She [the teacher] must know just this boy need time of teaching *how this system in America work*. He must know just take care of self, no watching what other kids doing.
Gracia (Mexico)	If I can see them *at least just understanding what the teacher wants* … working independently, that they can read and know what they have to do, that would be my goal even if they are not number one in the class.
Jealene (Philippines)	That's how you get points … if you understood it of course you're going to *get it,* you're going to get the right answer during the test or during the quiz or whatever.
Ania (Poland)	I think *he don't know* who's this hero [story character] is and he sit now and I listen. Two *kids know something*. That's it for the whole class. What I think she have to tell kids who she is, what she doing, why we have this lesson. Or, I don't know.
Elisa (Puerto Rico)	*They seem like they are understanding* what she's asking them because there's a lot of hands up. You know, the kids are raising their hands when she asks the questions.… For me, because I always lived in Puerto Rico, I always like English and so I knew I liked the meaning of some of the words.… The thing is, I see her like a normal student. I mean, *I think she's understanding* what the teacher is asking her.

like the other kids can understand because of the language." Mrs. Arnold, while watching Marta hesitate to answer a question, stated, "She doesn't have all the vocabulary like they do and she doesn't always understand."

A third model emerged within the teachers' narratives, which was what she considered to be the necessary knowledge as demonstrated by the students who were not newcomers. For example, Mrs. Arnold noted that she helped Marta get "all the vocabulary," "like they [other students] do." Mrs. Lees saw the newcomers as needing "the basics." Although she does not define these, she describes the students not knowing the basics as the "lower kids" in contrast to those who did know the basics. Mrs. Jakes aimed to help newcomers "because they can't understand like the other kids." She stated that what they needed to understand was defined by the state achievement tests. This model invoked by the teachers included a definition of what is to be known as defined by the majority of the children and the state assessments. Within this model the teachers did not mention the newcomers' cultural knowledge base they may have brought into this learning context.

"Raising the Hand"

To further explicate the cultural models of getting it in each group, the semantic context revealed a commonly mentioned behavior, raising the hand. Each of the three groups of participants focused on and commented on this activity as an indication of whether or not the students were getting it.

Teachers' Storylines

More than 50% of the teachers' narratives focused upon the student behavior. They particularly concentrated on the behavior of hand raising. For example, Mrs. Jakes stated, "I'm happy that the three of them [newcomers] know because they have their hands raised. That tells me that they know the answer." Mrs.

TABLE 3
Getting It: Teachers

Teacher	*Narrative Quotation*
Mrs. Arnold Newcomers: Bialy (Poland) Ceadel (Philippines) Marta (Puerto Rico) Mira (Albania)	And even simple words with Marta are difficult for her. I have to think of different words.… She doesn't have all the vocabulary like they do and *she doesn't always understand* how things are used in context in the sentence.… And she (Marta) also has a thick accent, so sometimes I'm thinking even our accent is difficult for her because I know it's hard for me to understand her clearly, so, I'm thinking she has the same problem with us.
Mrs. Jakes Newcomers: Anida (Mexico) Emir (Bosnia)	I guess my role as a teacher is I just feel like I need to work with them and just spend time with them until they get it and sometimes I have to give them alternative assignments like in reading and spelling … because *they can't understand* like the other kids can understand because of the language. So, I need to provide for them in a way that they can understand with the English. *My goal for them is to be able to understand* what they are supposed to be able to do on the state achievement tests for this particular lesson which is basically to be able to read it, and highlight parts that they think are important to the extended response question. I feel like it's finally clicked.… That was my goal.
Mrs. Lees Newcomers: Juan (Mexico) Hugo (Mexico)	There are so many gaps there.… I think the fact that you just assume they know the basics, and when they don't know those basic words they're missing everything if they don't have that.… I should have probably drawn a picture so they could see it better … for all the lower kids who *didn't understand* what a landmark was.… If they can't respond, then I never know if it's because of the language or the—or if there's really truly—sometimes I think there might be a little bit of a processing problem going on.… I just *assume they are going to understand* the concept until you're in front of them.

TABLE 4
Raising the Hand: Teachers

Teacher	*Narrative Quotation*
Mrs. Arnold	They understand the classroom and *how to just raise your hand* and wait.… I'll even call on the kids that *don't raise their hand*. I do know this that I call on the newcomers more even—because I know that there is a gap in communication, language, so I call on them more even.
Mrs. Jakes	And I'm very—I'm happy that the three of them have their *hands raised*. That tells me that they know what … know the answers.… I think she wants the kids to know that she can *raise her hand* and participate, but then when she does, it doesn't come out because I think at that point then she realizes that "Uh-huh, I don't know if I have the right answer and I don't want the other kids to think that I don't have the right answer."
Mrs. Lees	Juan looked away several times and I thought he wasn't paying attention, but then he would *raise his hand* and he would have it right. There *he's got his hand up. Their hands were up* so much that day. It was so good. And *they raise their hand* all the time now.… Oh, and then here he goes. Yeah. He's pretty sure about this one I think. He's pretty—he keeps *his hand up*. It seems like he's really wants to answer this one.

Arnold, while commenting on one of the newcomers raising his hand noted, "He's pretty sure about this one I think.… He keeps his hand up." Similarly, Mrs. Lees excitedly stated, "I was really pleasantly surprised with how many of the newcomers actually had their hands raised." Student understanding, according to the teachers' cultural model, was demonstrated by the particular classroom behavior of raising the hand. This action was always paired with their understanding of this action with no mention of other possible interpretations or cultural systems.

Newcomers' Storylines

In contrast to the other storylines, the newcomers ascribed different meanings to the behavior of raising the hand. Raising one's hand was paired with either an evaluation of one's intelligence or with compliance to the rules or classroom system (Table 5). For Mira (Albania), the students raising their hands indicated they understood the answer and would help the others by expressing their answers. For Emir (Bosnia) and Bialy (Poland), raising the hand indicated that they were smart. For example, Emir (Bosnia), while watching the students raising their hands in the video, stated, "I know because they raise their hand a lot, so then they're smart."

Ceadel (Philippines) and Anida (Mexico) paired the behavior of raising the hand with thoughts of rules and the system. Ceadel spoke extensively about when it is right and wrong to raise his hand. Anida conflated students raising their hands with describing that they had obeyed the teacher's requirement of highlighting a portion of the story they were discussing.

Hugo and Juan (Mexico) spoke of raising hand in a different way. They paired the hand raising with a description of how the teacher is helping them in the classroom. This relationship between their behavior and the teacher's response is telling when they state, "When I have a question and I raise my hand and she tell me like what is the word and she tell you what is meant."

Cultural Bridge Persons' Storylines

Commenting on hand raising, the cultural bridge persons elucidated the newcomers' storylines with the cultural nuances demonstrated in this action (Table 6). For example, as Jealene (Philippines) watched Ceadel raising his hand constantly with enthusiasm from the back of the room during the class discussion while the teacher called on others, she

TABLE 5
Raising the Hand: Newcomers

Newcomer	*Narrative Quotation*
Mira (Albania)	Like *making her understand* like if she picks another person who *raises their hand* like if they help [Marta] so she can understand it much better like me.
Emir (Bosnia)	Some of them are smart and some of them don't get the story … some of them *don't raise their hand* as much.… I know because *they raise their hand* a lot, so then they're smart.
Anida (Mexico)	She [Teacher] asks us what we had highlighted, and *so we were raising our hands.*
Hugo and Juan (Mexico)	When I have a question and I *raise my hand* and she tell me like what is the word and she tell you what is meant.
Ceadel (Philippines)	[The teacher] is asking a question we *raise our hand* or if there's like an emergency we *raise our hands* to tell [the teacher].… When you just answered—when you just answered right now, if I like, answer the question from you and if you're the teacher, I answered a question from you, you have to pick another person until, until maybe if you pick three more and then you can pick on me now because she wants—she wants other kids *to raise their hands* to know the answers.
Bialy (Poland)	[describing that he raises his hand in different content areas] Because the times when [my teacher] asks a question in math I raise my hand all the time.
Marta (Puerto Rico)	I kind of know the answer sometime, but I don't like *to raise my hand* and, however, the teacher call me sometimes.… I was nervous in that part, and when I nervous, I can't even speak.

TABLE 6
Raise the Hand: Cultural Bridge Persons

Cultural Bridge Person	*Narrative Quotation*
Ardita (Albania)	Oh, okay. And she wants to be involved. See, *she gets her hand up*. So she wants to be involved. She wants to answer stuff. That means that *she's got it*. She's heard. She's paid attention to what is going on.
Tahra (Bosnia)	I think he don't [sic] know how everything working in America … and they much working for just for him or her, she, you know?… She [the teacher] must know just this boy need time of teaching *how this system in America work*. He must know just take care of self, no watching what other kids doing.
Gracia (Mexico)	I expect [Juan and Hugo]—[Hugo] has a natural shyness. It's like it runs in the family. He's not that open. He's doing great, you know, to see that smile and to *see that raising the hand*, I mean, that's a lot from him.
Jealene (Philippines)	He was the first one to raise his hand, but how come he didn't get a chance to talk? What is the teacher thinking*? Is she thinking that he doesn't know the answer or he's just raising his hand* for the heck of it or what? I wouldn't know. I'm talking maybe because I'm a Filipino or I have the color, but I think that if someone raised their hand, give them a chance to talk. See if they understood. But she's pointing to people who are *not raising their hand*.
Ania (Poland)	But I think two kids know what she talking. That's it for the whole class. Two kids know what she talking. [Two kids have their hands up]. You think he is lost. Poor kid. Look at him. He looking in a class. [He raises his hand]. *I think he know something.*
Elisa (Puerto Rico)	I think she knows the answers, but *she doesn't like to raise her hand* or anything.… Because of her face, how she, you know, just—with her—like she knows the answer, but … she's being shy a little bit.

remarked, "I'm Filipino or I have the color, but I think that if someone raised their hand, give them a chance to talk.… She is pointing to all Americans, White kids." In response to watching Emir (Bosnia) not raising his hand but getting up and looking at others' work during a lesson, Tahra (Bosnia) stated the following: "You don't get it.… He needs time of teaching how this system in America works." This emphasis on the cultural system's role in the classroom was particularly noted. They focused on the cultural system they defined as carrying some dimension of racism, as noted in Jealene's statement, or an individualistic system, described by Tahra. This cultural system model was found to be most prevalent within the narratives of the cultural bridge persons.

Additionally, two of the cultural bridge persons paired raising the hand with an emotion. Gracia (Mexico) and Elisa (Puerto Rico) attributed their newcomers' hesitation in raising their hands to their shyness. This pairing of raising the hand with relationships and affect was prevalent throughout the cultural bridge persons' narratives augmenting the newcomers' storylines.

DISCUSSION

The narrative data collected in this study revealed aspects of the social, historical, and cultural storylines each participant constructed when making sense of a shared classroom activity (Gee, 2005; Strauss, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). All the participants expressed the primary goal of the class activity as "getting it." Each group's storylines invoked three cultural models: relationship with the teacher, English language acuity, and an awareness of the system in which they were situated. However, juxtaposing the teachers', newcomers', and cultural bridge persons' narratives exposes a difference in the construction of these three concepts. This difference elucidates the importance of hearing each voice in the pursuit of providing the opportunity for all students to learn.

The teachers' narratives were centered on appraising language and behavior in order to move the newcomer to the right answer. Without exception, each teacher discussed the newcomers' English language acuity as key to understanding the class lesson. Language ability was also central to how they interpreted newcomers' actions. Hand raising, was a symbol of knowing the answer and understanding the lesson, which was thwarted, according to them, by the newcomers' limited language abilities. They provided no alternative explanation for students' hand raising, such as the emotive or cultural explanations offered by the newcomers and cultural bridge persons. Their understanding of the newcomers' behaviors remained framed within their worldview exposed here as identifying newcomers as primarily language learners. Only a cursory mention of culture was found in their narratives. In contrast, the newcomers' storylines revealed a different focus.

As the newcomers talked about trying to understand the teacher and the classroom activity, their understanding of their personal relationships with the teachers constructed their understanding. They talked about the teacher as one who directed their engagement in the classroom tasks or helped them. They also talked about "nice" teachers, helping friends, and teachers "giving" meaning. Only three newcomers mentioned their own English language ability one time. The students never mentioned culture but appeared to be aware of the system in place through their description of the timing and appropriateness of raising the hand. Their semantic context reveals relationships at the center of their pursuit to understanding.

The cultural bridge persons' narratives introduce further explanation to the newcomers' focus on relationships by supplying the cultural view. "It's a culture thing," stated cultural bridge person, Elisa (Puerto Rico), in each narrative as she described what she saw in the video. Likewise, other cultural bridge persons, when they discussed anything which was remarkable to them in the video, identified it as

something that was embedded within a cultural system and thus foreign to the newcomer in the classroom. Therefore, they framed the work of making sense of a class activity as an effort of getting to know the particular cultural system represented by the classroom. English language acuity and the teacher's relationship with the newcomers were mentioned but appear to be situated within the newcomers' need to understand the culture. For example, Tahra (Bosnia) indicated that the newcomer's relational approach within the class activity, although valued by her culture, was not appropriate in this "American system." She noted that in America the newcomer must "take care of self." This storyline elucidates the relational approach found in the newcomers' expression of their pursuit of understanding.

Recognizing the negotiation of mutual understanding as an ongoing social process places the sociohistorical worldviews of teachers and students at the center of class activity. Banks (2006) suggests that a critical awareness of the cultural perspectives the teachers and students bring into the learning process is key to effective multicultural education. Gee (2005) noted that the negotiation of understanding necessary in a learning environment, the pursuit of intersubjectivity, "makes visible to others who they are and what they are doing" (p. 29). This study reveals how the newcomers', teachers', and cultural bridge persons' cultural models framed how they interpreted classroom activities. Although all included relationships, language acuity, and cultural system in their narratives, a cultural analysis of their thought contiguity revealed that these were placed differently in their pursuit of understanding. The newcomers saw their role as connecting to the teacher and her response, which was noted by the cultural bridge persons as embedded within getting to know the cultural system. The teachers, on the other hand, although not ignoring relationships, paired the newcomers' "getting it" with language issues and defined their facilitation of understanding as provoking a correct answer.

Multicultural education purports the importance of critical awareness about the world and one's interactions within this diverse world in the pursuit of providing all students the opportunity to learn (Banks, 2006). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides an effective framework to expose teachers' cultural models and explore the dynamic complexity of teacher-student interactions within a learning process (Ageyev, 2003; Kozulin 2003; Wertsch, 1985). This study suggests three lessons for middle school teachers to use as they seek to enhance their critical awareness and understand their dynamic interactions with newcomers. First, this study suggests that middle school teachers seeking to facilitate newcomers' learning must pursue understanding centered within the newcomers' storylines. Gay (2000) identifies teaching situated within the students' frames of references as cultural responsive pedagogy. The findings in this study suggest that this requires suspending the tendency to limit the interpretation of newcomers' behaviors and their understanding within language acuity. This may involve seeking to hear the storylines of newcomers as well as those with relevant cultural experiences. In other words, middle school teachers must become better listeners and bridge storylines within the classroom for understanding to occur.

The second lesson is that middle school teachers must be open to new possibilities of meaning. Throughout the narratives the teachers assigned meaning to the newcomers' behavior without entertaining other possible meaning-making that was occurring. No matter how common raising the hand was to all, different meanings were assigned to this seemingly common class behavior. For example, whereas the teachers interpreted raising the hand as having the correct answer, the newcomers and cultural bridge people introduced different interpretations of this same behavior. The multicultural dimension of knowledge construction which attends to the social construction of understanding and the complexities of meaning-making requires providing for

all perspectives to contribute to the learning process (Banks, 2006). As all worldviews are given the opportunity to be heard, the ongoing negotiation of meaning within a class activity moves the teachers from the static correct answer to a dynamic process filled with possibilities.

Third, this study posits the need to center efforts within the diverse classroom setting around providing space for middle school teachers to listen to the storylines each newcomer brings into the classroom learning environment along with the cultural storylines gleaned from their context outside of school. Listening to each group's storylines enhances the pursuit of understanding that is mutually constructive. This effectively promotes responsive participation within classroom activities (Schultz, 2003). Furthermore, the value of listening beyond the school walls, as evident by the cultural bridge persons' insights which enhanced the framing of the cultural voice outside the teachers, children, and the researcher, emerges from this study. This comprehensive pursuit of listening extends Schultz's (2003) work, which suggests that listening across differences is a key focus for effective communication in today's diverse classroom settings. Listening to newcomers' storylines is advocated as valuable to teachers as they are committed to facilitating learning of all students.

CONCLUSION

In the present school context, multicultural education remains elusive and complex. Nieto and Bode (2008) note that the complexity and value of newcomers and teachers understanding each other has been overshadowed by the focus on language learning. In this study the teachers' facilitation of newcomers' understanding centered on language acuity. However, the newcomers' and cultural bridge persons' comments suggest that relationships and cultural systems enrich the understanding. The challenge of listening to and connecting with the newcomers' storylines when seeking understanding within a shared class activity takes the discourse to a higher level and is necessary for culturally responsive teaching within a multicultural setting (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Pang, Nembhard, & Holowach, 2006).

Although this study was limited in scope and sample size, the findings provide a backdrop for investigation and augmentation of education professional development. As multicultural education proponents have suggested, awareness of one's own cultural constructs is an efficacious starting point for culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000). The method employed, video-based stimulated recall activity, can help teachers' recognition of their own patterns of listening for, documenting, respecting, and seeking to understand first their own storylines and then the storylines of the newcomers. It is noted that the voices of the cultural bridge persons, when included in the dialogue, allowed their authentic points of truth and clarification to be heard and acknowledged. Therefore, this study suggests the potential efficacy of utilizing this method for elucidating conversation within parent-teacher conferences.

Although the method appears efficacious, what dominates the landscape of this study is the value of being open to possibilities—possibilities of multiple interpretations of behavior, the core knowledge valued in the classroom, and the relationships which may trump the newcomers' language limitations. As multicultural education proponents and sociocultural theorists acknowledge the value of recognizing the multiple voices and worldviews brought into a classroom, the lessons learned in this study reveal that middle school teachers must open up their interpretations to new possibilities, unimagined by them and yet fully available to them.

There are a number of limitations of this study. First, although many newcomers arrive in U.S. classrooms without formal school experience and varying English language skills, the participating newcomers had formal schooling experiences in their home country

and some experience in the U.S. classroom. They also had a grasp of the English language. The sample, arguably, is not a complete representation of all who are or could be in this category of students in the United States. The employment of cultural bridge persons, rather than newcomer parents, also was a limitation. Although the cultural bridge persons provided a helpful voice, the parents' worldviews would have strengthened the quality of the data collection and the findings of this study. This study assumes that a pursuit of the state of intersubjectivity is a key goal in today's classrooms. The value of the right answer, as propagated by high-stakes testing, stands at odds to this goal. Finally, although listening to these storylines is theoretically efficacious, it is necessary to test this out with teachers of newcomers. Professional development around listening and noting the impact of such an approach on the newcomers' academic achievement would be a strong next step.

APPENDIX

Newcomer Participants

Pseudonym	*Gender*	*Country of Origin*	*Formal U.S. School Experience*
Mira	F	Albania	2 years
Emir	M	Bosnia	1 year
Anida	F	Mexico	2 years
Hugo	M	Mexico	4 months
Juan	M	Mexico	4 months
Ceadel	M	Philippines	1 year
Bialy	M	Poland	2 years
Marta	F	Puerto Rico	1 year

Cultural Bridge Persons

Pseudonym	*Country of Origin*
Ardita	Albania
Tahra	Bosnia/Serbia
Gracia	Mexico
Jealene	Philippines
Ania	Poland
Elisa	Puerto Rico

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