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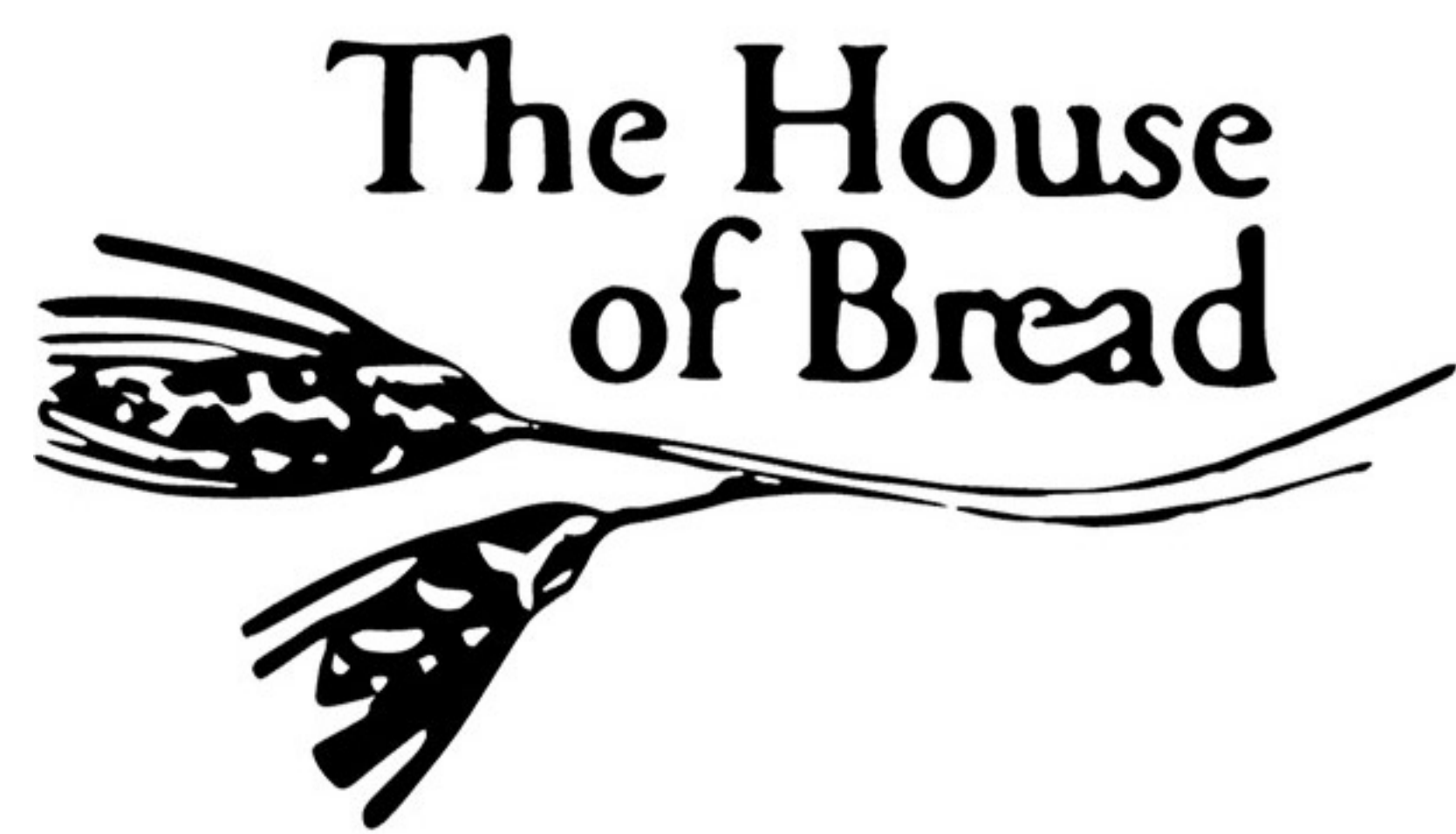
Culture in the Classroom: Promoting Bicultural Identity in an ESL Classroom

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Ruibal, Stefania, "Culture in the Classroom: Promoting Bicultural Identity in an ESL Classroom" (2018).
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Culture in the Classroom

Promoting Bicultural Identity in an ESL Classroom

Stefania Ruibal '19

Community Partner: The Jubilee House, Faculty Advisor: Stefanie Wong
Community Learning Fellows Colloquium 2018, Trinity College



Trinity College
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Introduction

I conducted a project with the The Jubilee House, an immigrant and refugee program center, to determine how The Jubilee House fosters culture and language acquisition. This project addressed how culture and language interact in the classroom and how ESL classes can best assist culture acquisition and establish a bicultural identity through language development. I observed and sat in on their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well as conducted interviews with the students, teachers, and tutors within this program. I chose to conduct my research at The Jubilee House as it focuses specifically on classes consisting of students from multiple cultures. I was interested in what role The Jubilee House played in culture and language acquisition and how social networks and connections impacted this acquisition.

Research Question

How does The Jubilee House's ESL and tutoring program influence second language/culture acquisition for immigrants and refugees in Hartford?

Prior Research

Bicultural Identity Integration

- For new arrivals, immigrant enclaves may impede cultural acquisition of US customs - Huynh, Que-Lam, et al.

Biculturalism and Adjustment:

A Meta Analysis

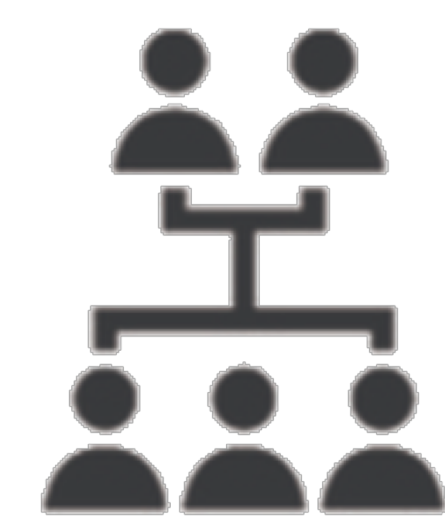
- Strong sense of identity and connection of dual cultures leads to more positive culture acquisition - Nguyen, Angela, and Verónica Benet-Martínez

Goals of my research:

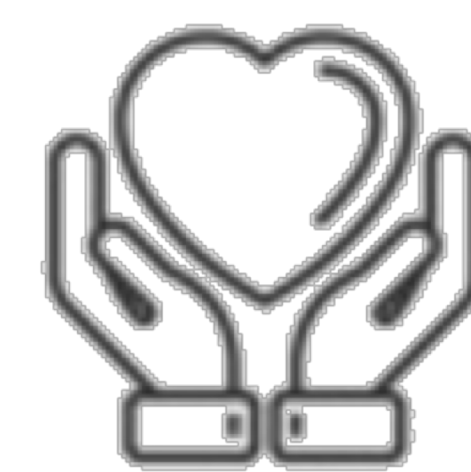
- Focused on how culture is acquired at The Jubilee House
- How do ESL classes impact students' cultural identity?
- How can the ESL classes better serve the students' needs?

Jubilee House

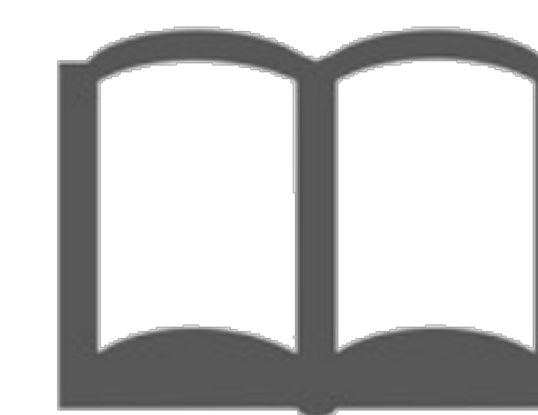
Immigrant and refugee program center focusing on learning English as a second language and building a community in Hartford. Holds English as a second language classes and job training programs.



Community building



Support system



Education and life skills

Methods

Collected qualitative data through class observations, conversations and interviews with students, and informal conversations during coffee breaks. Observed and conducted one on one tutoring sessions.

2
TEACHER
INTERVIEWS

3
STUDENT
INTERVIEWS

4
TUTORING
SESSIONS

Key Findings

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

21
STUDENTS from **10**
COUNTRIES

- Multicultural classroom encouraged students to speak English as a means of connecting with one another
- Classroom environment fosters interactions between students who share goal of language acquisition

"I came here to learn English, in my country I was not allowed to. Now I get to come here and learn when I want."
-Fatamina ESL Student



CULTURE ACQUISITION

Learning culture through social networks and personal connections

"We all really come to love one another. I have some really strong personal connections with my students even after they stop using me as a tutor." -Maureen ESL Tutor

"The Jubilee House is like a home for me. They help me with English but they help me with my life too."
-Amena ESL Student

"Our main focus when it comes to culture is in building relationships."
-Jessica ESL Tutor

Significance and Impact

NAVIGATING U.S. INSTITUTIONS

"I want to learn how to talk to the American schools and teachers here. I want to help my kids in school." -ESL Student



Jubilee House
Community



Hartford Schools

- Identify needs of ESL students
- Create more programs at The Jubilee House with connections to public schools

Deliverable

TUTOR ORIENTATION PAMPHLET

- Student-centered approach to tutoring session
- More connections and lessons on working with Hartford public schools
- Focused English practice such as job interview language

Future Directions

PERMANENT CONNECTION TO TRINITY

The Jubilee House is in such close proximity to Trinity and hopes to continue to work students for further research or as potential tutors.

