Forming a New Literary Identity: Using Popular, Contemporary Series Books to Engage Adolescent English Language Learners

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Abstract

Beyond learning to comprehend and communicate in a second language, becoming literate in a new language is an arduous task. Compounded by the use of traditional and often archaic texts presented in literacy-based secondary classrooms, English Language Learners (ELLs) struggle with negative perceptions about their identity as readers. This difficulty leads to feelings of being ostracized and negative perceptions concerning both reading and second language acquistion. To understand this issue, the researchers conducted a qualitative narrative inquiry that explored the use of popular, Young Adult (YA) series novels as vehicles to teach ELLs how to engage in positive, life-long literacy practices, and more importantly, to form new positive identites as readers. Insights were gleaned regarding the participant's perspective of literacy practices and identity throught this study. Data was gathered and triangulated from interviews, observations, documents, and records. Thematic findings revealed that using series books in the YA genre increased the student's engagement in literacy related tasks, and the participant independently continued reading subsequent books in the series due to heightened interest. Findings also indicated the participant experienced increased confidence, improved grades, and redefined his identity concerning literacy. These findings can likely be transferred to similar secondary classrooms to encourage second language learners to form new literacy identities, support them in reading skills, and enter what Frank Smith (1987) termed the "Literacy Club.".

Keywords: English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Learner (ELL), adolescent literacy, series books, Young Adult genre (YA), Sheltered Instruction.

Introduction

The period of adolescence is often a tumultuous period of identity formation, uncertainty, and a search for social acceptance (Appleman, 2000; Lesko, 2001; Hull & Zacher, 2004; Alvermann et al., 2007). In addition to the common struggles of adolescence, second language learners also tend to struggle with confidence in the classroom due to the unfamiliarity of the language, strategies, and customs used. As is often the case in secondary classrooms, teachers tend to teach content from required textbooks or novels deemed to be "classics;" these texts are often intimidating to second language learners due to the unfamiliar language and foreign concepts. Because second language learners may lack the background knowledge needed, these students may view the texts as unappealing and boring, which can cause them to struggle in comprehending or connecting with characters. Hull and Zacher (2004) suggested that positive adolescent reading identity begins with successful reading experiences. In contrast to the "classics," the Young Adult (YA) genre was created to specifically address topics that concern adolescents. Using the YA genre in classrooms can allow adolescents to see themselves within the literature (Alvermann, 2011), become engaged in the reading process (Monseau, 1996), connect with the characters (Alsup, 2010), and form identities about themselves as readers by transacting with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Due to previous research regarding student motivation towards reading and struggles faced by second language learners, the researchers wanted to investigate how adolescents react to developmentally appropriate literature in the form of YA series books by observing a secondary English Language Arts classroom. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to ascertain how identity affects the literacy development, both positively and negatively, of a second language learner in a secondary American school. The study will show how one English language learner evolved from struggling to come to terms with who he was as a second language learner in an American, English speaking classroom to forming a personal identity as being a competent reader.

Theoretical Framework

Gee (1991, 1996, 2001) provided a rationale for using the sociocultural perspective in literacy instruction. According to him, "Reading and writing cannot be separated from speaking, listening, and interacting, on the one hand, or using language to think about and act on the world, on the other" (Gee, 2001, p. 116). Gee (1991, 1996, 2001) also theorized about cultural models and socio-culturally situated practices. "Cultural models tell people what is typical or normal from the perspective of a particular discourse" (Gee, 2001, p. 125). Much of this theory articulated reasons concerning how people saw

themselves and with what groups, they associated. He found that if children identified themselves as readers, then they became readers by acting the part and engaging themselves in this activity. However, if children struggled with language or literacy and did not receive support, they did not associate themselves in the reading group.

In conjunction with sociocultural learning and identity formation, the Reader's Response (Rosenblatt, 1938) and Transactional Theories (Rosenblatt, 1956, 1978) continues to guide the theoretical framework and views of Young Adult Literacy (YAL). Church (1997) stated according to The Reader's Response Theory, the text was not the central component in reading anymore, but rather the response to the literature by the reader that was key.

Literature Review

When considering literacy habits for second language learners, it is important to consider identity and relatability of the texts as well. The YA genre represents recognizable and relevant material for adolescents revolving around coming of age themes and relatable characters (Owen, 2003). Herz and Gallo (2005) explained that the language used in YA books was representative of modern adolescents, and the vocabulary used in YA books was more "manageable" than that of the "classics" (p. 10).

According to Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994), adolescents need to view themselves as a part of the reading discourse (Gee, 2001), while Gardner and Lambert (1972) believed that educators were directly responsible for students' engagement and motivation. Ambe (2007) opined, "To motivate reluctant readers, teachers must help students choose interesting reading materials and provide favorable instructional contexts" (p. 634), and Rosenblatt (1938) asserted it was the teacher's job to introduce literature to students.

However, Moje (2008) and her collaborators proposed that before students could have a literacy experience, they had to read. Pitcher et al. (2007) maintained the motivation to read was a driving force in adolescent students. When literacy activities were aligned with students' needs and desires, students were far more likely to put forth effort. In contrast to these findings, textbooks and canonical novels were used most often in literacy classes. Therefore, the researchers are suggesting teachers need to incorporate more types of novels into lessons because adolescents are at a critical stage where they are essentially trying to discover who they want to be as individuals.

When considering adolescents as readers, one must be cognizant of identity formation of this age group since this can be such a volatile time for many teenagers (Appleman, 2000). Hull and Zacher (2004) believed that struggling and reluctant readers needed to view themselves positively as

readers. Through successful reading experiences, struggling and reluctant readers can perceive themselves as literate and create identities as readers. de Certeau (1984) posited a dialogic stance that supported how people functioned in particular social and cultural situations and were shaped by the different circumstances they faced. Moje et al. (2000) discouraged the "baggage" associated with certain labels put on different types of reading and readers such as "secondary reading" or "content area reading." Moje et al. (2000) explained these terms have connotations of being intellectually inferior, and the term remediation is detrimental to budding readers. Dolby (2003) concurred by recommending that identity could be used to generate equality; she advised that popular culture texts could be used to help students form their own identities and learn to respect differences in others. Alvermann (2011) insisted that popular culture literature helped adolescents form identities when they "saw" themselves in the literature that they read and when they were able to share their opinions about the texts instead of being told what to think about a piece of literature.

Monseau (1996) also considered the identity formation of adolescents as readers in her research. She contended that those who condemned the YA genre failed to recognize the power that books in this field contributed to make adolescents want to read and transact with a text. Adolescents who experienced a piece of literature that moved them were emboldened to continue reading and develop more profound understandings of the texts (Monseau, 1996). "Identifying or relating to a character involves a mental and emotional grappling with what the character represents—an ongoing interaction between the reader's lived experience and the narrative with which her or she is engaging" (Alsup, 2010, p. 10).

Furthermore, this realization of literature becomes connected to personal growth and identity formation at a very influential period in a young person's life. Alsup (2010) believed that most teachers wanted to instill a love of literature in their adolescent students and help them have transactions with literature that moved them to think deeply on what they read. Problematic to this idea, she also revealed that many of these same teachers did not know how to help their students feel something for a text that they could not comprehend because either it was far above their lexical level or so archaic that they could not relate to the storyline.

Hopper (2005) concluded that adolescents read for two main reasons: the search for identity and role experimentation. She also reported that what children chose to read was critical to their development as readers. Moll and Gonzalez (1994) believed that it was imperative to stop viewing these students from a "working-class" perspective and begin viewing them from unique cultures where their knowledge and experiences are of value and crucial to their development. After their discussion on culture and identity, Moll and

Gonzalez (1994) returned to the idea of literacy practices in conjunction with their idea of children's "funds of knowledge." They found "a major limitation of most classroom innovations is that they do not require (or motivate) teachers or students to go beyond the classroom walls to make instruction work" (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994, p. 451).

Of central concern with language minority children is whether they are limited to learning only the rudimentary uses of reading and writing, as is typically the case, or whether they are supported in developing various modes of engagement, especially what Wells (1990) refers to as 'epistemic; engagements with text: where text is treated to create, develop, or interpret knowledge or new meanings.' (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994, p. 451).

Many struggling and reluctant readers faced similar stigmas and issues as described in "Lessons from Research with Language-Minority Children." These researchers revealed that identity was an important issue when considering the needs of all adolescent students. The idea of identity formation was also presented in a study by Kirkland and Jackson (2009); the authors contended that as adolescents engaged in popular culture texts, "their experiences with pop culture texts also support their development as literate individuals, help them better understand themselves, and give them the freedom to try on and enact various identities" (Hall, 2011, p. 297).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain how identity affects the literacy development, both positively and negatively, of a second language learner in a secondary American school. Specifically, what role identity plays in a second language learner entering into what Frank Smith calls the "Literacy Club" (1987) and to what degree popular, contemporary series books in the Young Adult (YA) genre are relatable to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Methodology

The qualitative model was most appropriate for this study because in its very structure, it allows researchers to explore on a deep, visceral level the feelings and beliefs of the participants. Merriam (1988) suggested, "Research focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3). The participant's voice was the strongest form of empirical evidence in this study. This research project carefully studied one participant at great length and depth. Voice was the most important aspect of the findings in this study; therefore, the qualitative methodology provided the most appropriate platform.

Narrative Inquiry

Lieblich (1998) maintained that it is vital to use research methods that best fit the research questions being studied. Therefore, for this study, the researchers employed a narrative inquiry model which involved methods that are "considered 'real world measures' that are appropriate when 'real life problems' are investigated" (Lieblich, 1998, p. 5). Connelly and Clandinin (2000) succinctly defined narrative inquiry by stating,

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving, and retelling, the stories of the experience that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

The essence of narrative inquiry is to analyze personal experiences in a methodical approach to make meaning and share profound experiences with others who can to relate to the experiences presented in the findings (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Sarbin (1986) contended:

The narrative is a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actors' reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening. (p. 9).

In adherence to the theoretical framework presented, the researchers used discourse analysis within the study. Merriam (2002) suggested this as one possible strategy to use when engaged in narrative analysis. Gee (1991) asserted that, "Discourse analysis examines the written text of the story for its component parts or assesses the spoken words by looking for intonation, pitch, and pauses as lens to the meaning of the text" (Merriam, 2002, p. 9). The researchers wanted to see how adolescents react to developmentally appropriate literature in the form of Young Adult (YA) series books, and how they processed these literary experiences.

Triangulating data from sources included field observations, a reflective researcher's journal, and interview transcriptions were used to accurately present the findings.

Participants

To identify a viable, credible participant for this study, the researchers vetted interested Sophomore students in Ms. Haile's (pseudonym) 7th period English II class. One student in this class was an English Language Learner and labeled as Limited English Proficient in the state database: Public

Education Information Management System or PEIMS system (Texas Education Agency, 2017, "PEIMS Overview"). This participant was informed of the study and its research purposes. He received both an informed consent document and informed assent form to take home and review with his parents. Upon returning both forms and meeting all the inclusion criteria, the participant was selected for the study.

Ms. Haile's English II classes read *The Hunger Games* as a part of their literacy curriculum. The participant criteria included reading at least one other book in this trilogy of the student's free will or choice. The participant, Romero (pseudonym), willingly agreed; therefore, the researchers conducted a narrative inquiry concerning his perceptions and experiences over reading Young Adult (YA) series books through the perspective of an English Language Learner (ELL).

Data Sources

Data sources included three 45 minute formal interviews with the participant, 15 formal classroom observations in Ms. Haile's Sophomore English II class during the course of reading *The Hunger Games*, and documents and records. Field notes were recorded during observations; documents included student writing samples in respect to *The Hunger Games*, assignments, essays, and exams. Records included published course grades. These course grades were used to compare with course grades from previous semesters in which students did not read *The Hunger Games*. The purpose was to identify a correlation between students reading a YA series book and letter grades.

Interviews. To gain insight of the participant's perspective and to tell his story as a narrative, the researchers conducted three separate 45 minute interviews. Seidman (2006) elucidated, "I interview because I am interested in other people's stories" (p.1). In adherence to the theoretical framework of this research endeavor and in consideration of sociocultural perspectives through the lens of discourse analysis (Gee, 2001), the principal investigator conducted the interviews with the participant as socio-communications (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This is the most appropriate form of interviewing since socio-communications concerns sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Following Rossman and Rallis's (2003) description of the interview process, the principal investigator allowed the open-ended conversations to drive the questions asked to the participant during the interview process.

Observations. Observations were another key component to conducting this research project. Rossman and Rallis (2003) expounded, "Observation takes you inside the setting; it helps you discover complexity in social settings by being there" (p. 194). The observations conducted throughout this research revealed intricate parts of the participant's story.

Throughout the course of this research project, the principal investigator conducted 15 formal observations of Ms. Haile's sophomore English class as they engaged in series book readings and activities related to *The Hunger Games* and the curriculum established for this book. The principal investigator recorded observations using robust, rich description in a researcher's journal; this data source was used to triangulate data between the interviews, recorded observations, and other documents and records. "The reflexive journal supports not only the credibility but also the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study" (Erlandson, 1993, p. 143).

Documents and records. The final data source used in this research project were documents and records. Merriam (1998) described documents as the "product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world" (p.126-127). The principal investigator examined homework papers, class assignments, and tests over *The Hunger Games.* The classroom teacher allowed the principal investigator access to her grade book to determine the effects of motivation and participation during the course of reading the series of books. In general, Romero's grades increased during the grading period he and his class engaged in work concerning *The Hunger Games*, and growth was demonstrated by his homework and test scores. Interestingly, an unexpected trend was noticed when Romero would fail to complete assignments because he did not want to stop reading the books to finish an assignment by the due date.

Data Analysis

Because the researchers were interested with the participant's story regarding reading of a novel, they used a narrative inquiry design for the data analysis. The qualitative data analysis began immediately and continued throughout the research process. "The analysis of qualitative data is best described as a progression, not a stage; an ongoing process, not a one-time event" (Erlandson, 1993, p. 111). Throughout the research process, the principal investigator used the constant comparative method and open coding as suggested by Glaser and Struass to produce grounded theory (1967). As the data was coded, themes began to emerge; these terms were used to sort and analyze the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 271).

Findings

Two themes emerged in this study concerning identity formation of a second language learner engaged in literacy activities. First, the researchers considered the participant's identity as a second language learner and how this affected his literacy development. Secondly, the participant had a distinct identity as a reader throughout this process. Initially, he viewed himself as a struggling and reluctant reader due to the necessity of reading in his second

and weaker language. However, as effective instruction was provided in a positive learning environment, the participant began to see himself in a new light as both a second language learner and a reader entering into the "Literacy Club" (Smith, 1987).

Image

Echoing the research by Alvermann (2011), Romero desired to see representations of himself in the texts he read. In previous literacy experiences, this student did not have any of those engaging encounters or transactions with a text. However, after reading *The Hunger Games*, Romero gained a new perception of what books can do for the adolescent image by commenting, "I think the newer books are more interesting because they have more details about what kids like to read about what is going on in our lives right now" (Garcia, 2017). At one point while he read the book, Romero declared, "Wait till we get to the good part with blood and 'chingasos' [inappropriate, explicit Spanish word for fighting]" (Garcia, 2017). This statement illustrates the connection the student made with the book and the transfer of his own personal thoughts and culture into the text.

Identity as a Second Language Learner

Romero discussed his perceptions of himself and his identity as an English Language Learner throughout the research project. He considered his language learning journey and the difficulties he continued to have with both language and literacy. "Sometimes I struggle with reading because I've only been learning English for the last two years, since 8th grade. Some of the words in the stories I don't understand any of them. That's why I liked the movies better until I found out what the books had in them" (Garcia, 2017). Before entering into Ms. Haile's class and receiving sheltered instruction and an engaging text, Romero's literacy journey was difficult as a second language learner. The main issue he identified was the need for context as he was reading and vocabulary support, two germane components directly addressed by the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. Romero informed the researchers that, "If I had to read the book on my own without help from Ms. Haile, or my reading group, I probably would have struggled over *The Hunger Games* and not understood it at all because they use some words that I don't get, and that would have been sad because this is a great book. It makes me wonder if I have missed things in other books because I didn't get them" (Garcia, 2017).

Based on the observations of Romero during this reading process, second language learners appear to struggle with confidence in the classroom. For example, each time an assignment was due, Romero would hide his paper among the rest of his classmates by slipping his assignment in the middle of the stack. When the researcher noticed this behavior several times over the

course of turning in assignments, she asked Romero why he hid his paper. He replied, "I don't know; I just don't want anyone looking at it and seeing how I say things" (Garcia, 2017).

Identity as a Reader

An interesting theme surfaced in the data when the participant brought up a relevant point about adolescents not being afforded choice in literature materials stating, "I like to read when I get to choose what I want to read about. When the teacher chooses for me, she don't make it fun. They [teachers] usually pick boring books. Last year, we read this really boring book called *The Odyssey*" (Garcia, 2017). When asked what he chose to read, Romero responded, "I like to read books in Spanish, they are easier for me to understand, and I like action adventure books; we never read those in English class" (Garcia, 2017). When his classroom teacher reminded Romero that *The Odyssey* was full of action and adventure, he countered, "Ya, but even if that stuff is in there, who could understand it?" (Garcia, 2017).

Initially, Romero had an antagonistic view of readers due to peer and social influences. He informed the researchers during an interview, "My friends that I know right now (he speaks hesitantly at first but then gains confidence), I have friends from out of town, and they read a lot. My sister, she reads a lot and her friends, but I think they are all nerds for doing this" (Garcia, 2017).

As the grading period progressed, Romero became more and more interested in reading *The Hunger Games* due in part to his success with understanding the book and improved grades on class assignments covering its content. When asked about his reading, Romero stated, "I've been doing good, better than usual anyway" (Garcia, 2017). In a follow up interview in the middle of reading the novel, Romero shared, "The other books the teachers chose, I never paid attention to, but this is a book that I like, so I wanted to read it" (Garcia, 2017). Even more interesting was the fact that this student initially wanted to merely watch the movie; after reading the book, the class did watch the movie, and Romero did not like it because it did not adhere to the mental pictures he created in his mind as he read the text.

"What I don't get though is why they would make books two and three if they already won the games? If we don't have time to read those in class, I will check them out from the teacher because I have to know what happens; I might even read them over the summer" (Garcia, 2017). Also when asked about finishing the trilogy, Romero remarked, "When I finished the last book in the series, I felt accomplished. I am happy it is over with, but then I am sad because I don't have anything else to read" (Garcia, 2017). These final statements indicated that Romero had a change in his identity as a reader; over

the course of reading *The Hunger Games*, this student began to view himself as a reader.

Entering the Literacy Club

After reading *The Hunger Games* book and receiving sheltered instruction support throughout this reading, Romero formed a new identity moving from a non-reader to that of a competent reader; when this occurred, he entered into what Smith (1987) calls the "literacy club." This is the metaphor Smith uses to describe the social nature that encompasses literacy learning. Smith showed his readers that readers join the "literacy club" by connecting with others and engaging in similar activities concerning literacy while the most significant influence in entering this club falls upon both formal and informal teachers in the learner's life (Smith, 1987). Romero stated, "I think listening to and knowing the book has helped me, of course. On other assignments, I'll try, but I don't always get as good grades because I wasn't into it, so I didn't understand them as much" (Garcia, 2017).

As Romero began to view himself more as a reader, he began to have transactions with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). He had visceral and metacognitive reactions to the text as he read *The Hunger Games* such as one part when he blurted out, "No, gross, Haymitch just threw up all over himself and then Peeta said they had to clean him up. Katniss was smart for not wanting any part of that" (Garcia, 2017). Midway through reading the first book a student interrupted class, and Romero lost all patience and yelled, "OMG, just shut up so we can read" (Garcia, 2017). This statement indicated the high level of Romero's engagement after being hooked into the book by the classroom teacher's reading. During one of the semi-structured interviews, Romero discussed his lack of time to read due to sports and work. In a follow up question, the researchers asked Romero if there was anything teachers could do to help adolescents like to read and enter what they called the "Literacy Club," and he affirmed, "Yeah, don't push too much, but make it fun" (Garcia, 2017).

Implications

The findings from this qualitative study represent the participant's change in his perceptions concerning his identity as both a second language learner and a reader. As a qualitative, narrative inquiry, an exact replication of this study would be improbable; however, the use of thick, rich description makes transferability more likely while allowing the readers of this study to come to their own conclusions. Due to the findings presented in the previous section, several implications resulted from this narrative inquiry, which the researchers organized into three sections representing the themes from the findings section.

Image

It became apparent through observations and conversations with the participant that he regarded his literacy journey concerning *The Hunger Games* from two positions: that of an adolescent reader and from the stance of a second language learner. The implications of both stances are explained based upon the findings.

Identity as a Second Language Learner

At the start of this research study, the participant preferred movies because he understood them more. This is typical for second language learners because the visuals provide context to the spoken English and makes the content more comprehensible (Krashen, 1987). It was obvious this student lacked confidence in his English speaking and literacy capabilities because anytime he was asked a question, he would repeat it back to the researcher or classroom teacher. Second language learners typically do this for additional wait time, so they have longer to formulate a response and to seek assurance that they understood the question correctly (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010). To build background and create his own context, he began to engage in visualization techniques. The researchers' findings concurred with Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2010) who discussed sheltered instruction techniques to build background in second language learners.

Identity as a Reader

Initially, Romero had negative perceptions about himself as a reader and a great deal of this identity was formed as a result of the struggles he encountered as a second language learner. He believed that reading only consisted of long, academic, and difficult texts such as traditional books because this was all he had been exposed to before this literacy experience. Romero's persistent engagement with a Young Adult (YA) series book revealed the potential impact of such books to leverage the transformation of adolescent self-concept as readers and to ultimately change their reading practices and habits. This study revealed that the participant struggled to come to terms with who he was as a reader and to form a personal identity as a second language learner in an American, English speaking classroom. The participant did not want to stand out from the rest of his peers as being overtly different. Romero tried very hard to learn the language, use appropriate slang, and hide his papers, so he could blend in and hoped his peers did not notice his differences.

The researchers determined that this adolescent reader needed to see images of himself in the literature and once his perceptions of himself as a reader changed; he noticed higher grades for the grading period as evidenced

by the classroom teacher's grade book. In fact, Romero discussed how the characters seemed like real people to him. In addition to this displaying excellent character development on the part of the author, it also showed how this student related to the characters that mirrored him in age, attitude, and beliefs. This is the beauty of the YA genre as it allows adolescents to see themselves in literature, relate to it, and form identities by providing learning experiences without preaching morals to them.

Entering the Literacy Club

After Romero experienced success in reading, he began to have transactions with the text that powerfully moved him, and consequently, he was advanced from the label of a struggling, reluctant reader to entering the "literacy club" (Smith, 1987). Once he engaged with the reading, he found that he understood the literature more. This in turn, led him to feel more positively about himself as a reader as he experienced success in the classroom. When the participant found success in a literary experience, he was motivated to continue reading. Because of his recently established identity as a competent and capable reader, he continued to read voluntarily due to his high level of engagement with *The Hunger Games* text. This process details what it means to enter the "Literacy Club" (Smith, 1987), but even more importantly, the participant shared that secondary teachers can help other adolescents enter this club by not pushing a text by overselling it yet at the same time making it interesting and fun. To do this, an educator must know her students, their likes, and interests. This will allow teachers to choose appropriate texts they can introduce to their students while still meeting curriculum and state requirements.

Limitations

The only true limitations of this study included time and number of participants. The researchers were only able to observe the student over the course of reading *The Hunger Games* trilogy over one semester. It would have been beneficial to follow this student over a longer period to ascertain continued literacy growth and motivation to read. Even though one participant is adequate for a qualitative study, it would be valuable to observe and interview other English Language Learners in a similar process. These are considerations for follow up research endeavors.

Conclusion

The YA genre was created specifically to address the topics that concern adolescents and show people their own age as the protagonists of the story. Popular, contemporary series books can act as springboards for adolescent readers into the world of literacy. Additionally, adolescents "like

to identify with characters who are resilient through struggles, people who are working through relationships, people trying to figure out who they are" (Moje et al., 2008, p. 147). Results of this study illustrate that utilizing the YA genre, specifically popular, contemporary series books, have the potential to bring struggling, reluctant, and ELL readers into the "literacy club" (Smith, 1987). By providing sheltered instructional support and the background found through repeated readings in series books, the ELL participant in this study formed a new identity as a reader and second language learner when he was able to make meaning from a text. Once this occurs, students can engage with the reading, have transactions with a text, and still learn literacy content making the use of popular, contemporary books in the YA genre a necessary component in high school English Language Arts Classrooms a necessity for struggling and reluctant readers.

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