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CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR ADULT ESL STUDENTS:
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON WHAT IS UNTOLD

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iv

List of Tables xi

List of Figures xii

Abstract xiii

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Citizenship ESL Education in the United States 1

Problem Statement 3

Research Questions 4

Significance of the Study 6

Definition of Terms in ESL Education 7

What is a Citizenship ESL Class? 7

Subjectivity Statement 8

Chapter 2: Literature Review 11

Naturalization: The Rite of Passage 11

Citizenship Given at Birth or by Blood 12

Naturalization in South Korea: A Social Integration Program 14

Naturalization of the United States: Civics Knowledge and English Proficiency 15

Marginalization of the Immigrants in the U.S. 21

A Brief History of Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) 22

Acculturation Theories: From Assimilation to Civic Integration 23
Naturalization as a Gatekeeping and Screening Process 26
Language Proficiency: Is Your English Good Enough? 27
Curriculum Evaluation and the Hidden Curriculum 28
Curriculum: A Series of Experiences Needed in Real Life 29
The Hidden Curriculum and Social Reproduction 29
Citizenship ESL Education as a Hidden Curriculum 31
The Missing Rights for Naturalized Citizens 32
Language, Citizenship, and Identity 33
ESL Learning and Identity 33
A Constructive Meaning of Citizenship 34
Sense of Belonging by Language and Civics Learning 35
Curriculum for Adult ESL Students and Its Goal 36
Chapter Summary 37
Chapter 3: Methodology 38
Restatement of the Research Questions 38
Theoretical Framework 39
Meaning-Making Through Social Constructionism and Discourse 39
Post-Structuralism to Deconstruct Social Relationships 41
Critical Phenomenology 41

Philosophical Phenomenology: Descriptive vs. Interpretive 42
Phenomenology as Methodology 43
Critical Phenomenology 44
Bracketing in Critical Phenomenology 45
Research Design 46
Document Selection and Its Representativeness 47
Interview Participants and Purposeful Sampling 49
Characteristics and Demographics of the Participants 50
Data Collection 52
Document Analysis 52
Interview 54
Data Analysis 57
Critical Discourse Analysis 59
Thematizing and Interpretation 62
Trustworthiness 63
Ethical Issues 64
Limitations of the Research 65
A Bracketing Interview of the Researcher and Self-Reflexivity 67
Chapter 4: Findings 69

Research Question I: How Does the Curriculum Communicate Social Structure, Power, and Social Justice with Adult ESL Students? 69

Trauma-Related Vocabulary 70

Civics Questions Related to Social Justice and Power 72

Sub-Question I: How Is the Civics Knowledge Distributed and Represented in the Curriculum? 74

Civics Knowledge Represented in the Curriculum 75

Misalignment Between Test Questions and the Curriculum: Excluded Contents 78

Mismatch in Distribution of Civics Knowledge Depending on Applicants' Age 80

Sub-Question II: In What Ways Does the Curriculum Combine ESL Education and Citizenship Education for Adult ESL Students? 82

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Content Standards 83

Highly Grammar-Based ESL Learning with Varying Relevance 86

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge for Content Acquisition 90

Interpretation of the Curriculum as a Discourse 91

Research Question II: In What Ways Do Adult ESL Students Experience Taking a Citizenship Education Class as Future U.S. Citizens? 92

Sub-Question I: How Do Adult ESL Students Experience Learning ESL and Civics Knowledge at the Same Time to Become a U.S. Citizen? 93

Individual-Level Social Empowerment: Emotional Satisfaction and Sense of Achievement 94

Family-Level Social Empowerment: Reduction of the Generational Gap 106
Community-Level Social Empowerment: Increased Engagement in Social Interactions ... 110
Sub-Question II: How Do the Students Interpret Their Learning Experiences in Terms of Power and Social Status? 115
Reasons for Coming to the U.S. and Applying for Citizenship 116
Knowledge is Power: Being "Equal" to Natural-Born Citizens 118
Societal-Level Social Empowerment as Future U.S. Citizens 121
Interpretation of the Interview Data as a Discourse 128
Chapter Summary 130
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications 133
Discussion 134
Disciplinary Power and Implicit Marginalization 135
The Hidden and Nullified Meanings of the Curriculum 137
The Role of Cultural Capital and Valuing the Funds of Knowledge 144
Implications 150
Citizenship ESL Teachers as Social Reconstructionists 150
Applying Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy 154
Naturalized Citizens and a Community of Practice 159
Conclusion 163
Suggestions for Future Research 164

References 166

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Protocol 194

Appendix B: Codes for Interview Data Analysis 196

Appendix C: Codes for Document Analysis 198

Appendix D: Bracketing Interview Questions on the Researcher 201

Appendix E: IRB Approval Form 202

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Examples of 128 Civics Questions and Answers ……... 16

Table 2.2 Comparison of Civics Questions 2008 vs. 2020…….. 18

Table 2.3 Changes in Civics Questions…… 20

Table 3.1 Demographics of the Participants……. 51

Table 3.2 Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions…….. 55

Table 4.1 Questions from the N-400 with Trauma-Related Vocabulary……. 71

Table 4.2 Civics Questions Related to Social Structure and Power……. 72

Table 4.3 Distribution of Subsections within Civics Questions……... 76

Table 4.4 Distribution of Civics Content for 18-64 Years Old and 65 Years and Older…. 81

Table 4.5 The Number of Content Standards per Lesson……. 84

Table 4.6 Combined ESL Knowledge and Civics Content…….. 87

Table 4.7 Relevance of the ESL Knowledge to the Civics Content……. 88

Table 4.8 Summary of Findings of the Research Questions…… 131

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Four Acculturation Strategies…… 24

Figure 3.1 Curriculum as Discourse…… 40

Figure 3.2 Research Questions and Data Collection Methods…… 47

Figure 3.3 A Cover of the Citizenship Education Curriculum…… 48

Figure 3.4 Lesson Design of the Citizenship Education Curriculum…….. 49

Figure 3.5 The Process of Data Collection for Document Analysis…… 54

Figure 3.6 Discourse as Text, Interaction, and Context……... 61

Figure 4.1 Frequency of Civics Questions in the Curriculum……. 77

Figure 4.2 ESL Skills and Content Knowledge of a Lesson…… 82

Figure 4.3 Educational Backgrounds of the Participants……. 95

Figure 4.4 Years of the Participants' ESL Learning Experience……. 103

Figure 4.5 Reasons for Coming to the U.S. from the Participants……... 117

Figure 4.6 Reasons to Apply for U.S. Citizenship from the Participants…… 118

Figure 4.7 Different Levels of Social Empowerment of Adult ESL Students……. 128

Abstract

This research aimed (1) to examine a citizenship education curriculum for beginning-level adult ESL students designed to help them pass the U.S. citizenship test and (2) to explore students' lived experiences of taking a citizenship ESL class in the southwestern United States. The citizenship ESL curriculum was developed by the United States Citizenship and Immigrant Services (USCIS), a federal agency in charge of immigration and naturalization. Based on critical phenomenology, this study examined the curriculum using document analysis and conducted interviews with 11 participants enrolled in a citizenship ESL class. This research analyzed the curriculum as a discourse between the developers and students and used critical discourse analysis to inspect the relationship between the curriculum and students' learning experiences. This study found that the curriculum transmits limited and partial civics knowledge as a disciplinary discourse to the students. At the same time, the participants had satisfactory learning experiences in citizenship ESL class, which they perceived as a source of social empowerment due to increased ESL skills and civics knowledge. This study suggests ways to improve citizenship ESL education and the curriculum to be more meaningful and continuous to help students become active citizens.

Keywords: citizenship ESL education, critical discourse analysis, social empowerment

Chapter 1: Introduction

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America (USCIS, 2021a)

Citizenship ESL Education in the United States

According to the annual report from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), 843,593 applicants were naturalized in 2019 by meeting the qualifications of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (DHS, 2021). The highest number of naturalized applicants were from the age group between 35 to 44 years old (27.17%), followed by 25 to 34 years old (23.28%), 45 to 54 years old (18.71%), and 55-64 years old (12.79%). The lowest number of applicants were under 18 years old (8.18%), and the second-lowest was the age group 65 years and over (9.86%). Applicants must be lawful permanent residents for five years and at least over 18 years old to apply for citizenship. The naturalization test, or the U.S. citizenship test, requires applicants to prove their civics knowledge of U.S. history and government and their English proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing (USCIS, 2021b).

To prepare for the citizenship test, adult ESL students can take citizenship ESL classes through local community-based institutions if available, even though there is no required education before taking the test (Griswold, 2010). The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has been financially supporting community-based institutions such as libraries and faith-based organizations across the nation with the "Citizenship and Integration Grant Program" since 2009 (USCIS, 2021a). According to USCIS, "approximately 25,000 lawful permanent residents will receive citizenship preparation services by Sept. 30, 2022, as a result of the fiscal year (FY) 2020 awards issued through the grant program" (USCIS, 2021a). Through this program, more than $102 million has been given to 473 immigrant-serving organizations and institutions in 39 states and the District of Columbia. As a result, more than 279,000 lawful permanent residents have attended citizenship ESL classes to prepare for naturalization.

Once the grant is offered, it is recommended for the institutions to use the USCIS's citizenship resources and study materials to teach the students, and they have to report their progress back to the USCIS to demonstrate how the class has helped the students pass the citizenship test (USCIS, 2021a). To provide additional support for the institutions offering citizenship ESL programs, the USCIS has designed a sample curriculum for the beginning-level ESL students. This study considers educational resources, including a curriculum, as a "discourse" that involves power dynamics between the knowledge provider and the knowledge consumer through learning with an intentionally designed material (Harb, 2017). Therefore, a curriculum developed for a specific purpose, such as helping students pass the citizenship test, should be critically analyzed to understand the relationship between the intended outcomes from the curriculum developers and the actual learning experiences of the students.

Problem Statement

The primary focus of community-based ESL education for adult ESL students is to include students in the community (Shufflebarger Snell, 2020). The adult ESL students are primarily immigrants living in the United States. Like any other classroom, the classes for immigrant students have to be a safe and supportive place since they are already having a lot of emotional burdens in their own life, especially with second language learning and getting adjusted to the new environment (Larrotta, 2019; Wrigley, 2009). According to Larrotta (2019), "adult educators and program administrators have realized the importance of providing resources and support for the emotional needs of their learners… immigrants face emotional and physical challenges before deciding to leave their countries, during their immigration journeys, and after immigration" (p. 56). Thus, feeling the lack of English proficiency should not be added to their stress, at least in the classroom.

However, immigrants and citizenship applicants cannot feel safe and secure when their immigration status, which affects their overall emotional and physical safety in the U.S., is impacted significantly by the immigration and naturalization policies and the political atmosphere when they apply for citizenship. For example, in 2017, a newly issued presidential memorandum for homeland security focused on "implementing immediate heightened screening and vetting of applications for visas and other immigration benefits, ensuring enforcement of all laws for the entry into the United States" (Larrotta, 2019, p. 53). Likewise, immigration policies can make citizenship applicants worry about their immigration status when they apply for U.S. citizenship. It can also cause them to feel less secure and safe living in the United States. Nash (2019) described how the political attitude of a nation could affect students' learning experience:

> We are witnessing a mounting campaign in this country to blame immigrants and refugees for our economic insecurity, rampant violent crime, and a diminished social safety net. Under this banner, our government is using immigration policy to turn away asylum seekers and refugees, separate children from parents, and threaten the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) of communities that have lived in the United States for a generation and consider this their home (p. 63).

Therefore, this study examines how citizenship ESL education is offered in community-based institutions, acknowledging that immigrant students need support in being included in a society and community regardless of the immigration and naturalization policies. It is to understand how the curriculum designed for a citizenship ESL program delivers the content knowledge to students who are learning both ESL and civics knowledge to pass the naturalization test and become official members of the society. This study seeks to be a foundational work for future studies on making citizenship ESL classes more supportive for immigrant students to help them feel they belong to their community and be active practitioners of knowledge before and after naturalization.

Research Questions

This research focused on the curriculum for the citizenship ESL program and adult ESL students' lived experiences of taking a citizenship ESL class. The goal was to understand how the curriculum meets both language objectives for learning ESL and content objectives for conveying civics knowledge on U.S. history and government. The examination of the representation of civics knowledge, in particular, was focused on the areas related to social structure, power, and justice since those areas are directly related to students' positionality and

power in society, considering the relationship between the curriculum developers and citizenship applicants.

Thus, in terms of evaluating the curriculum and interpreting students' experiences in taking a citizenship ESL class, this study aimed to answer the following research questions and two sub-questions for each of the research questions:

(1) How does the curriculum for citizenship education provided by the USCIS communicate social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students?
    a. How is the U.S. civics knowledge distributed and represented in the curriculum?
    b. In what ways does the curriculum combine ESL education and citizenship education for the students?

(2) In what ways do adult ESL students experience taking a citizenship ESL class as a future U.S. citizen?
    a. How do the students experience learning ESL and civics knowledge simultaneously to become U.S. citizens?
    b. How do the students interpret their learning experiences regarding their power and social status?

The first research question required document analysis of the sample curriculum titled "Adult Citizenship Education Sample Curriculum for a Low Beginning ESL Level Course," designed and provided by the USCIS. The second research question was analyzed by gathering interview data from the adult ESL students taking a citizenship ESL class at an institution funded by the USCIS to learn English and civics knowledge to prepare for naturalization.

Significance of the Study

Wrigley (2007) described the reasons for adult immigrant ESL students to learn English as to enter a *golden door* for "educational opportunities, jobs that pay a living wage, social mobility and a better life for oneself and one's children" (p. 2). Therefore, students tend to appreciate any type of ESL education provided by the community that usually does not cost anything (Larrotta, 2017). In particular, a citizenship ESL class is valuable for immigrant students with busy work schedules and young children to take care of since the class helps with civics learning and provides legal services for citizenship applications (Aptekar, 2015; Loring, 2013). Therefore, citizenship ESL education that community-based institutions provide for immigrant students functions as an essential educational engagement and opportunity for immigrants to be more included as a citizen in the U.S. (Aptekar, 2015; Larrotta, 2019). Community-based institutions that provide citizenship ESL education include community colleges, literacy learning centers, libraries, and churches (Millard, 2020). The education focuses on teaching English as a second language and civics knowledge such as U.S. history and government to help students pass the U.S. citizenship test.

However, the citizenship test material implies the ideals and values embedded in the selected U.S. civics knowledge highlighted and emphasized in the curriculum, which indicates that immigrants need to acquire the designated knowledge to prove their qualifications to achieve citizenship (Loring, 2013). Thus, educators and practitioners should analyze the citizenship ESL curriculum and adult ESL students' actual learning experiences to understand the meaning of citizenship education. It is to know how citizenship ESL education impacts the shift in students' positionality as a citizenship applicant to a naturalized citizen.

Definition of Terms in ESL Education

A *mother tongue*, the language used within a culture group that people are born into, is also called the *first language, native language, home language, primary language,* or L1. The language the students are trying to learn in addition to their first language is a *second language*, also known as a *target language*, or L2 (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017). On the other hand, *heritage language* is a language that immigrant families and their children or descendants speak (Montrul, 2012). Heritage language can be the first language or an L1 to the first generation of immigrants, but it can be a second language or an L2 for their children, depending on how much they use it at home. In this case, a language not used by the immigrant family but spoken outside the household is called the *majority language* (Montrul, 2012). Therefore, if immigrant parents speak Korean and the children are born in the United States, the heritage language of this family is Korean, and the majority language is English. The language acquisition of Korean for the children depends on how much they speak Korean at home and how much children feel attached to the language.

In conclusion, ESL education in practice uses specific terms to refer to different types of languages based on learners' linguistic backgrounds and learning interests and the nature of languages students speak or desire to learn additionally. In the context of this study, the terms related to ESL education or citizenship ESL classes are used in collecting and analyzing the data for the research.

What is a Citizenship ESL Class?

In this research, the term "citizenship ESL class" refers to an ESL class designed to help students pass the U.S. citizenship test. Thus, the content material of this class focuses on the

following categories: (1) how to fill out the N-400 citizenship application form, (2) U.S. civics knowledge on history and government, and (3) English speaking, reading, and writing. Local institutions provide citizenship ESL classes, and Larrotta (2019) explained, "community and adult education centers have realized the need to offer additional civics classes and citizenship classes since many of their students have decided to become American citizens" (p. 57). Therefore, community-based educational centers have been adding citizenship ESL classes to their existing language programs for the increasing number of immigrant students wanting to take the naturalization test.

In most cases, community-based institutions need a source of funding to provide classes almost for free to the students in need. For this reason, the USCIS has offered governmental grants for institutions and organizations registering to open citizenship ESL programs in their facilities (USCIS, 2021a). USCIS even holds educational training and seminars for the institutions about using study materials and resources, such as applying the sample curriculum and syllabus to the program for the teachers and program coordinators to have an easier time setting up and providing the citizenship ESL class.

Subjectivity Statement

"Are you willing to bear arms on behalf of the United States?" is question #48 on the N-400 form, also known as the application for the U.S naturalization, from the section titled "Additional Information About You." I taught a small ESL classroom with students from different nations and age groups. The number of the students varied every day, taking place in an empty hall of a community gymnasium. I reread the question and asked my students what the question's meaning could be. As a life-long English learner myself, I could not help but explain the two very different meanings for each word, *bear* and *arm*. We laughed at how funny it would

be to get confused about those two words ever again. However, it was not enough. Even though the question was a simple one that my students should just check *yes* and move on, I felt I was not genuinely responding to the material I was bringing to the classroom as an ESL teacher. I started to question the premise of passing the test to become a U.S. citizen for my students born and raised in different countries. *What is the meaning of citizenship education for immigrants in the U.S.?*

I am an ESL teacher and a non-native English speaker. I have not received citizenship education in the U.S., nor am I a U.S. citizen. I am an "outsider" who came to the United States to study higher education to learn curriculum development in hopes that I can become a scholar, researcher, and educator. I am a *voluntary minority.* As Ogbu (1998) described, "voluntary (immigrant) minorities are those who have more or less willingly moved to the United States because they expect better opportunities than they had in their homelands or places of origin" (p. 164). Since it was my own choice to come to the U.S., I am willing to take hardships and what is needed to be equal to other residents in this country. As Ogbu (1992) said, "voluntary minorities … interpret cultural and language barriers in school as barriers to be overcome in order to achieve their immigration goals" (p. 291). However, such barriers would be at different levels of height and weight for every individual living in the U.S., especially for students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds. As a teacher, I hope the students who are already bearing so much in life as immigrants can have lower barriers because they are willing to be part of the community.

A researcher's positionality can affect data analysis or even data collection of the study. Therefore, I am aware that my subjectivity as an international student from a country with a different educational system than the U.S. might have created biases in developing an academic curriculum. As a critical phenomenology, this research requires the researcher to state their

subjectivity and positionality (Guenther, 2019). An important assumption for critical analysis is that “the world is informed by structured power relations based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, or religion… power relations are everywhere including the research study itself” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 62). Thus, as a critical and phenomenological study, this research focused on collecting and analyzing data objectively while acknowledging the existence of underlying factors within the social structure that can affect the research phenomenon.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviewed previous studies on the following areas: (1) the process and meaning of naturalization as a rite of passage for applicants based on specific criteria, (2) a brief history of marginalization of the immigrants in the U.S. with the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA), (3) curriculum evaluation and the aspects of a hidden curriculum, and (4) citizenship ESL education for adult students and its impact on students' language and identity. This study reviewed the issues of U.S. naturalization test materials by other scholars. The test materials have been criticized for (a) fragmented knowledge required for U.S. history and government with a limited explanation of the rights for naturalized citizens and (b) the validity of an English test for applicant's language proficiency.

For curriculum evaluation and analysis later in this study, the meaning of curriculum and the characteristics of the hidden curriculum with untold narratives beyond the surface level of the curriculum are reviewed. Finally, the sense of belonging among immigrant students is reviewed to emphasize that adult immigrant students can build their concept of citizenship upon the previously learned notion of citizenship and having experienced being a member of society. Therefore, this review implies that education and curricula should encourage and support students to be active participants in learning language and constructing their meaning of citizenship through education.

Naturalization: The Rite of Passage

This study focused on the process of becoming a citizen of a nation, especially for adult ESL students who have to learn English as a second language and country-specific civics knowledge to prove their eligibility to go through the naturalization process (Aptekar, 2015; Isin

& Turner, 2007; Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). *Citizenship* is a type of social membership that can be interpreted as an individual's entitlement or status. In other words, it is a "formal membership in the nation-state" (Holston, 1999, p. 190). In democratic societies, citizenship is one of the promises that individuals can hold to protect their human rights. Therefore, developing a society's democratic values and civic virtues is essential (Isin & Turner, 2007). Citizenship entails both rights and duties that a nation requires and provides for citizens to differentiate the benefits they can have compared to non-citizens (Aptekar, 2015). Thus, having citizenship guarantees specific rights and necessary duties to live as a member. The following sections discuss different methods of achieving citizenship and ways to be naturalized.

Citizenship Given at Birth or by Blood

Every country has different definitions and procedures for becoming citizens of the nation. In general, there are three ways of achieving citizenship around the world, including being born within a country's borders (*jus soli*), through blood descent (*jus sanguinis*), and finally, through naturalization (Aptekar, 2015). Governments worldwide have selected between the three options or combined different ways to a certain extent to verify the eligibility of an individual's citizenship of the nation (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). For example, the United States and Mexico provide citizenship according to *jus soli*, which means that children born in the country are automatically citizens even if the parents do not have citizenship (Becerra Ramirez, 2000). *Jus sanguinis*, granting citizenship through generations and descendants of a citizen, can limit the transmission of citizenship depending on different policies regarding the amount of residency in certain countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Mexico (Klaaren, 2000).

South Africa, for example, holds a relatively unique method of offering citizenship. According to Klaaren (2000), post-apartheid South Africa limits *jus soli* citizenship, but the country allows the indefinite transfer of citizenship through *jus sanguinis.* Therefore, children at birth in the country do not acquire citizenship when the parents do not have permanent residency, and the children have to go through naturalization. For example, Klaaren (2000) described the requirements of naturalization for applicants of South Africa as,

> an applicant who is of good character, who will be a desirable inhabitant of the Republic, who is not likely to harm the welfare of the Republic, and who does not and is not likely to pursue an occupation in which there are already sufficient numbers of people available in the Republic (Klaaren, 2000, p. 232).

South Africa made an amendment to the legislation regarding naturalization in 2010. However, citizenship is not automatically given to children at birth if the parents are non-permanent residents of South Africa (Hobden, 2020).

On the other hand, naturalization offers immigrants opportunities to become citizens even if they are not *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis*. Every country has different types of tests or interviews for naturalization. It is not only the newcomers who go through naturalization since children born in the countries sometimes need to be naturalized (Aptekar, 2015). For example, India, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom do not provide citizenship to children even when born in the country if the parents are not permanent residents.

The essence of naturalization requires “residency, country-specific knowledge, good moral character, integration, and language proficiency” (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016, p. 8). The following sections compare different naturalization processes in South Korea and the U.S. to understand how countries require other qualities from the immigrants to become citizens.

Naturalization in South Korea: A Social Integration Program

In 2018, the Korea Immigration Service (KIS) under the Ministry of Justice in South Korea launched a social integration program called the Korea Immigration & Integration Program (KIIP) (KIS, 2020). The KIIP states that it "evaluates comprehensive basic literacy skills such as Korean language skills and understanding of Korean society" (KIS, 2020). It is an educational program for citizenship applicants, and it consists of two categories, including (a) Korean language and culture and (b) understanding of Korean society. Applicants for this program must take a pretest on Korean language proficiency to be placed in beginning, intermediate, and advanced literacy levels. After the pretest, students should take 100 hours of classes according to their level of proficiency to learn about the Korean language, culture, and how to understand society. Upon completing the coursework, students take the interim evaluation test called the "Korean Language and Korean Culture Test (KLCT)." Applicants have to pass this test to take the final test called "Korea Immigration and Naturalization Application Test (KINAT)."

The final naturalization test involves a written test of 40 questions in 60 minutes and an oral exam of five questions in 10 minutes. The written test also requires a 200-word manuscript about a given topic and multiple-choice questions about Korean history, geography, national holidays, politics, and cultural heritage. The oral language proficiency test includes speaking, explaining, and talking, in which two oral test examiners simultaneously evaluate two candidates (KIS, 2020). Example questions of the oral test include "What are the rights and duties as a Korean citizen?" "Can you describe one historical place or monument in Korean history?" "Explain traditional Korean games, songs, or martial arts," or "What do we eat on New Year's Day?" The last part of the oral test is to sing the national anthem in front of the interviewer. The

applicants need to sing “pitch-perfect” (KIS, 2020). The passing score for naturalization is 60 out of 100 points, and when the applicants receive the score one or two weeks after taking the test, they can find out if they have passed the naturalization test. South Korea’s naturalization process involves a social integration program that students can take according to their language proficiency level. The comprehensive exam decides the students' eligibility to become Korean citizens. Overall, the test material for naturalization combined the civics knowledge of history and government with cultural traditions.

Naturalization of the United States: Civics Knowledge and English Proficiency

The U.S. naturalization test consists of (a) English proficiency tests for speaking, reading, and writing and (b) civics test (USCIS, 2021a). There is no required education before taking the test, and there is no written test since every portion of the citizenship test is an oral interview except the English writing test. The applicants have to write one sentence in English correctly out of three sentences the officer reads to them for the writing test (USCIS, 2021a). For the reading test, applicants have to read aloud one sentence in English correctly out of three sentences given by the officer. The speaking test is the naturalization interview itself, as the officer conducts a 1:1 interview with the citizenship applicant to see how they interact and communicate in English. This aspect of the U.S. naturalization test being a private interview makes it difficult for students to know the specific standards since little is known about the decisions by the government officer on who is accepted and rejected (Ryo & Humphrey, 2022). In addition to the English portion of the test, applicants have to answer six out of ten civics questions correctly about U.S. history and government for the civics part. The applicants can ask for clarification from the officer when they have questions or bring an interpreter or a lawyer to help them understand and answer the interview questions (Aptekar, 2015). The test result is

announced to the applicant as they answer the last question on their interview. If passed, applicants are recommended to participate in an oath of allegiance ceremony where they have to return their permanent resident card and receive a certificate of naturalization (USCIS, 2021a). If they fail the naturalization test, applicants need to reschedule the interview on the section they failed (English or civics) 60 to 90 days after their first interview.

Civics Questions: Country-Specific Knowledge

There has been a revision to the U.S. naturalization test material in December 2020. Applicants who submitted or filed their applications after December 1, 2020, have to orally answer 12 questions correctly out of 20 questions (60%) chosen from the 128 civics questions designed and published by USCIS (USCIS, 2020). According to the USCIS, "these questions cover important topics about American government and history…Although USCIS is aware that there may be additional correct answers to the civics questions, applicants are encouraged to respond to the questions using the answers provided below" (USCIS, 2020, p. 1). The civics questions ask about principles of American democracy, history, symbols/holidays, the system of the government, and the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. U.S. history consists of different periods, including the colonial period, post-independence, the 1800s, recent history, and other important historical information. The "Symbols and Holidays" section discusses the national anthem, flag, and important holidays. Examples of the civics questions are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Examples of 128 Civics Questions and Answers

Category	Subcategory	Questions	Answers

American Government	Principles of American Government	#10. Name two important ideas from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.	Equality, Liberty, Social contract, Natural rights, Limited government, Self-government.
	System of Government	#26. Why do US representatives serve shorter terms than US senators?	To more closely follow public opinion.
	Rights and Responsibilities	#67. Name two promises that new citizens make in the Oath of Allegiance.	Give up loyalty to other countries, defend the US Constitution, obey the laws of the US, serve in the military if needed.
American History	Colonial Period and Independence	#75. What group of people was taken and sold as slaves?	Africans. People from Africa.
	The 1800s	#99. Name one leader of the women's rights movement in the 1800s	Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone.
	Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information	#117. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.	Apache, Blackfeet, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Hopi, Huron, Inupiat, Lakota, Mohegan, Navajo, Oneida, Onondaga, Pueblo, Seminole, Shawnee, Sioux, Tuscarora, and more.
Symbols and Holidays	Symbols	#124. The Nation's first motto was "E Pluribus Unum." What does that mean?	Out of many, one. We all become one.
	Holidays	#127. What is Memorial Day?	A holiday to honor soldiers who died in military service.

New Civics Questions: What Is Changed?

For the 2008 version of 100 civics questions, the questions were composed of the American Government (57%), American History (30%), and Integrated Civics (13%). For the 2020 version of 128 questions, it consists of American Government (56.6%), American History (35.9%), Symbols and Holidays (7.8%), as shown in Table 2.2. It is important to note that the

civics questions affect the curriculum design and the content of a citizenship ESL class. Applicants learning English as a second language have to study how to answer the questions orally by practicing specific vocabulary or sentences required for the test (Larrotta, 2017; Loring, 2013; Loring & Ramanathan, 2016).

Table 2.2

Comparison of the Civics Questions 2008 vs. 2020

100 Civics Questions (2008 ver.)		128 Civics Questions (2020 ver.)	
American Government (57%)	Principles of American Democracy (*n*=12)	American Government (56.6%)	Principles of American Government (*n*=15)
	System of Government (*n*=35)		System of Government (*n*=47)
	Rights and Responsibilities (*n*=10)		Rights and Responsibilities (*n*=10)
American History (30%)	Colonial Period and Independence (*n*=13)	American History (35.9%)	Colonial Period and Independence (*n*=17)
	1800s (*n*=7)		1800s (*n*=10)
	Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information (*n*=10)		Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information (*n*=19)
Integrated Civics (13%)	Geography (*n*=8)	Symbols and Holidays (7.8%)	N/A
	Symbols (*n*=3)		Symbols (*n*=6)
	Holidays (*n*=2)		Holidays (*n*=4)

Therefore, changes made to the civics questions need to be discussed by comparing the revised version with the former version to understand the focus of the civics portion of the citizenship test and what the USCIS considered necessary in improving the questions. In the newer version, civics questions have been added, removed, or reworded from the previous one. It

has kept the same categories and subcategories from the former version, except that the newer questions have replaced one category called “Integrated Civics” with a category titled “Symbols and Holidays.” With this change, the section for “Geography” was removed in the 2020 version. Previously, the geography section asked questions such as “Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States,” “What ocean is on the West/East Coast of the United States?” or “Name one U.S. territory.” However, applicants do not have to study those questions anymore in the revised version. The only question that requires geographic information is “Where is the Statue of Liberty?” under the category of U.S. symbols and holidays.

Revised Civics Questions and Comprehensible Input

From the perspective of second language acquisition, the civics questions became more specific with proper contexts and explanations for English language learners. This revision can be due to an effort to provide more aptly modified or comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981) for ESL students. In second language acquisition and learning, comprehensible input is necessary for learners to better understand the meaning of the given input as a byproduct or result of the negotiation of meaning (Krashen, 1985). According to Krashen (1981), the input hypothesis requires a comprehensible input (i+1) slightly above the learners’ level of understanding to help second language students proceed with their learning. Language input occurs while negotiating for meaning between two speakers, and more proficient or native speakers can modify the input to make it more comprehensible for the language learners. This input modification can happen by “providing definitions of difficult vocabulary items, paraphrasing sentences containing complex syntactic structures, and enriching semantic details” (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012, p. 40).

The revised version of civics questions can support citizenship applicants who are learning English by increasing the comprehensibility of the civics questions as a modified input.

As such, civics questions in the newer version consist of more contextual information and explicit expressions to help learners and applicants understand what the questions are asking. The comparison between the former version and the newer version of civics questions in terms of modified input is shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

Changes in Civics Questions

Former 100 Civics Questions	Revised 128 Civics Questions
The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?	The U.S. Constitution starts with the words "We the People." What does "We the People" mean?
What is an amendment?	How are changes made to the U.S. Constitution?
What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?	Name two important ideas from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
Who is in charge of the executive branch?	The President of the United States is in charge of which branch of government?
Who makes federal laws?	What part of the federal government writes laws?
The House of Representatives has how many voting members?	How many voting members are in the House of Representatives?
We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?	How long is a term for a member of the House of Representatives?
What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?	What are two examples of civic participation in the United States?
When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?	Why is it important to pay federal taxes?
Why did the colonists fight the British?	Name one reason why the Americans declared independence from Britain.
What did Susan B. Anthony do?	Name one leader of the women's rights movement in the 1800s.
What movement tried to end racial discrimination?	What did the civil rights movement do?

For example, the syntax structure of the question “We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?” was changed to “How long is a term for a member of the House of Representatives?” to provide learners with a more familiar sentence structure with *wh*-interrogatives (Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007). In addition, the former question of “What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?” was revised to “What are two examples of civic participation in the United States?” The newer version of the question is more specific in expressions that modify “participate in democracy” to “civic participation.” Even though the current citizenship ESL curriculum is based on the former version of civics questions, examining the attempt to make the test questions more comprehensible for the learners can imply how to modify the curriculum for the applicants who are English language learners.

Marginalization of the Immigrants in the U.S.

The fast-changing policies related to U.S. immigration and naturalization significantly impact the settlement of immigrants. During the Trump administration, the USCIS was encouraged to “be more discriminating in approving applications” (Pierce et al., 2018, p. 8). Larrotta (2019) described the struggles immigrants face with such policies as,

> Regardless of legal status (i.e., documented or undocumented), living as an immigrant has become more difficult nowadays in the United States. Rules and policies that applied to immigrants a couple of years ago do not apply today. Every day new immigration policies and difficult situations arise, adding uncertainty, anxiety, and fear in the life of different immigrant populations in the United States (pp. 54-55).

Therefore, the practitioners of citizenship ESL education should know the fast-changing policies that affect immigrants’ life and settlement in the U.S. Therefore, understanding the problematic

situation for immigrants and creating a comfortable environment for the students is essential (Larrotta, 2009).

A Brief History of Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA)

Marginalization of the immigrants in the U.S. can be more understandable by examining the history of the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) and how it has excluded certain races and genders regarding who is eligible for citizenship. In 1790, U.S. citizenship application was limited to "free white men" by the Naturalization Act (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016; Orgad, 2010). The eligible applicants could apply for citizenship after living in the country for five years, and the naturalization process included reciting the oath and renouncing allegiance to the U.S. (Aptekar, 2015). In terms of racial restrictions, black immigrants were not eligible for naturalization until 1870. Specific regulations were included in 1875 that citizenship was not provided to "criminals, prostitutes, and Chinese contract laborers" (Ewing, 2008, p. 1). Chinese workers were prohibited even from immigration by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Immigrants from the Philippines and India were restricted from naturalization until the 1960s, while the immigration policies mostly favored Northwestern Europeans (Aptekar, 2015; Ewing, 2008; Ngai, 2004). In 1965, a year after the Civil Rights Act, the INA finally discarded the quota system based on discriminative national origins and racial restrictions, which removed denial of immigration to the U.S. by race and nationality (Ewing, 2008).

Women were also excluded and discriminated against as a subject for naturalization. Until the 1920s, women applicants were naturalized depending on their fathers or husbands (Aptekar, 2015). In the 1850s, immigrant women were immediately naturalized upon marriage if the husband was already a citizen. The husband's naturalization was still restricted to certain races and national origins. Until 1922, naturalized women could lose their citizenship status once

the marriage was no longer valid or if they married a foreigner (Aptekar, 2015; Bredbenner, 2018). After World War I, due to the immense shifts in global migration and confusion, immigrant women married to an American citizen had to wait another year as a stateless status to be proven eligible for naturalization (Cott, 1998). In the 1920s, with women's achievement of voting rights through suffrage movements, the eligibility for naturalization became less restrictive for women. However, it was still difficult for nonwhite immigrant women to naturalize until the mid-twentieth century (Cott, 1998; McCammon, 2003).

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the federal agency in charge of naturalization, was created after reorganizing offices after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, working to help the Department of Homeland Security (Aptekar, 2015). Since 2006, the eligibility for applying for citizenship in the U.S. has been based on the following requirements for naturalization: (a) 18 years and older, (b) able to prove a continuous residency and physical presence in the U.S., (c) good moral character, (d) attachment to the U.S. Constitution, (e) basic English language proficiency, (f) knowledge of fundamental U.S. history and government system, and (g) taking the oath of allegiance (Orgad, 2010). As a part of the naturalization process, a literacy test of basic reading and writing was added as a requirement of a citizenship test in 1917; however, applicants could pass the literacy assessment in whichever language they chose (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). In 1952, the English proficiency test was added to prove applicants' English speaking, reading, and writing skills.

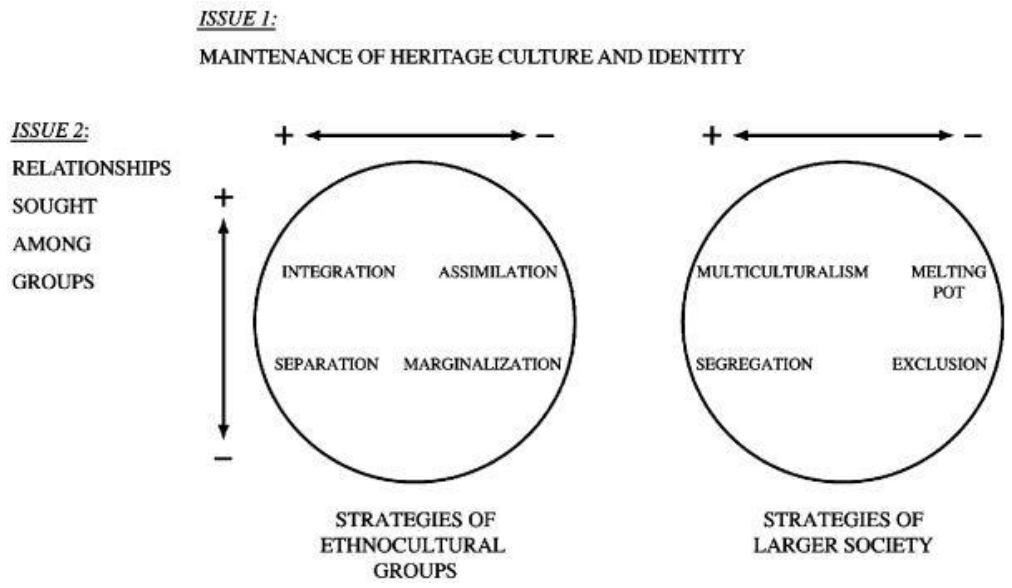
Acculturation Theories: From Assimilation to Civic Integration

When an individual goes through intercultural contact, the transition is often called *acculturation* (Berry, 2005; Kunst et al., 2021). The strategies of acculturation consist of four different stages, including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. At the same

time, the melting pot, multiculturalism, segregation, and exclusion correspond with each stage as a social outcome (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1

Four Acculturation Strategies



Note. From "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures" by J.W. Berry, 2005, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*(6), p. 705. Copyright 2005 by the International Journal of Intercultural Relations.

This study focused on the curriculum for citizenship ESL education designed to help immigrant students prepare for the naturalization test. It is crucial to examine how acculturation theories in the U.S. have changed to understand how the immigrants have been potentially marginalized or assimilated into the U.S. society. Specifically, the melting pot theory is a well-known type of assimilation and multiculturalism as social and cultural integration for immigrants, representing how the U.S. has viewed and treated immigrants and created a social and political atmosphere toward newcomers (Berray, 2019; Garcia, 2017). Berray (2019) described two major acculturation theories, a melting pot theory and a salad bowl theory. A

melting pot theory is to have immigrants remove "any traits of immigrant religion and race, down a blast furnace" (Berray, 2019, p. 143). It was a way of assimilation to make immigrants give up their cultural values of origin to adapt to the culture of dominance (Garcia, 2017). The salad bowl theory, representing the idea of integration compared to assimilation, acknowledged and welcomed the different cultural identities of the individuals. However, it still used a metaphor of a salad dish with a specific "recipe" rather than admitting the existence of other ingredients that might not make a salad dish (Berray, 2019). Therefore, acculturation theory is essential to expand inclusiveness for cultural practices, identifications, and values (Juang & Syed, 2019; Lee et al., 2020).

The acculturation theories on different social segments, including the education, economy, and culture, have affected immigrants from different ethnicities to reject part of their culture and identity to be accepted in the U.S. society (Habecker, 2017; Muchomba et al., 2020; Peri & Rutledge, 2020). The citizenship education provided for the immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship is not unrelated to the ideology of acculturation that the U.S. has historically held against newcomers and immigrants. Notably, the grant program from the USCIS, financially supporting citizenship education programs throughout the nation, has changed its name from "Citizenship and *Assimilation* Grant Program" to "Citizenship and *Integration* Grant Program" in 2020 with a political shift in the U.S., followed by the presidential election. The transition from assimilation to integration from the perspective of citizenship education for adult ESL students reflects the current acculturation ideology aligning more with civic integration than assimilation. Bonjour and Duyvendak (2018) explained civic integration as a way that "obliges newcomers to enroll in civic and language courses" (p. 5) as European countries require immigrants to take classes on language and civics knowledge as a mandatory process. Since the

U.S. does not require attending a class before applying for U.S. citizenship, the following sections discuss how the shift from assimilation to integration could be related to the current naturalization process.

Naturalization as a Gatekeeping and Screening Process

Naturalization is a gatekeeping and screening process that only allows immigrants worthy of becoming citizens of a nation to be given the "honor of citizenship" (Aptekar, 2015, p. 87). A country makes its test policies and decides whether or not an individual is qualified to be included as a member based on their criteria. The naturalization process in the U.S. requires the applicant to prove their (a) dedication to staying within the territory physically, (b) financial capability to pay for the citizenship application ($725), (c) a clean background with good moral character, and (d) willingness to follow the U.S. Constitution (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). These criteria can be an obstacle for some immigrants to consider applying for citizenship since naturalization requires "resources that are within reach for some but not for many others" (Aptekar, 2015, p. 46).

Even after being proven eligible for citizenship, applicants must study for the naturalization test to prove their English skills and civics knowledge (USCIS, 2021a). A statement from the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) indicates that citizenship applicants must "demonstrate an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, speak, and understand words in ordinary usage in the English language" (INA, Title III, Sec. 312 [8 U.S.C. 1423 (a) (1)], 1952). In addition, the statement also mentions that applicants not only have to prove their English skills but also must "demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles and form of government, of the United States" (INA, Title III, Sec. 312 [8 U.S.C. 1423 (a) (2)], 1952). Thus, citizenship is only given to

applicants with a certain level of English proficiency and civics knowledge, which can be difficult for beginning-level ESL students (Aptekar, 2015; Loring, 2013).

Language Proficiency: Is Your English Good Enough?

Loring (2013) claimed that naturalization tests could reproduce a prototypical idea of a nation's linguistic ideology. The language proficiency test is essential in U.S. naturalization, in which the applicants have to succeed in performing their English language skills to become a citizen. The required English proficiency can promote the idea of judging the level of English the applicants speak, which is hard to tell how much proficiency is "good enough" (Loring, 2013). In addition, Shohamy (2009) argued that the "use of the hegemonic language(s) of the state serve as primary symbols of belonging, loyalty, patriotism, and inclusion, and can, therefore, be used legitimately as criteria for classifying people, i.e., those who know the language proficiently versus those who do not" (p. 46).

Understandably, growing English skills as an immigrant is fundamental since English is the primary communication tool needed for survival in the U.S. to adjust to the new environment. Wrigley (2007) stated that English language proficiency is necessary for immigrants because "for the immigrants and refugees themselves, control–if not mastery–of English represents the key to the golden door behind which lie the benefits of American society" (Wrigley, 2007, p. 222). To have better opportunities in the U.S., improving ESL skills is necessary for immigrants to get through the golden door.

English proficiency test for naturalization takes place throughout the entire citizenship interview process. When the interviewer greets the applicant with a simple greeting such as "Nice to meet you," the test for speaking proficiency begins as the officer and applicant interact in English. The interviewees can bring an interpreter to help them understand and answer the

questions. However, the applicants are afraid of looking incompetent to get someone to help them (Loring, 2013). Besides the speaking test that is the overall course of the naturalization interview, the officer asks the applicant to read aloud one sentence out of three sentences correctly for the reading test. The writing test is similar to the reading test, in which the applicants should write one sentence correctly. Spelling and grammar errors are acceptable as long as the sentence is intelligible, and applicants can try up to three sentences for writing (USCIS, 2021a). Applicants are allowed to ask any questions and clarifications for the questions, and the USCIS officer who interviews the applicant decides whether the applicant passes or not for the English portion.

Curriculum Evaluation and the Hidden Curriculum

A curriculum conveys knowledge that curriculum developers think is needed for the students to learn to function well as a member of society after receiving the education (Schiro, 2012). This section of the literature review focused on understanding a curriculum's role in analyzing and evaluating a curriculum for its meaning and impact on society. Most importantly, the knowledge selected to be essential and reflected in the curriculum by the developers needs to be questioned. An intentionally designed curriculum can function as a tool of social reproduction, which intensifies social inequality by keeping the imbalanced system (Gorden, 1984; Macris, 2011). A curriculum that perpetuates social inequality is a *hidden curriculum* that aims to implicitly indoctrinate students to behave and think in a certain way (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Kentli, 2009; Regalsky & Laurie, 2007). Therefore, a curriculum needs to be critically inspected to reveal how the relationship between the curriculum developers and the targeted students affects knowledge selection.

Curriculum: A Series of Experiences Needed in Real Life

Bobbit (1918) explained the origin of the word *curriculum*, which means a series of experiences that students must go through to gain the necessary knowledge for developing any type of discipline. Therefore, a traditional view of a curriculum was an ordered combination of experiences for students that were considered essential and selected by the teachers. Schools and teachers were responsible for organizing the content knowledge students needed to experience before applying it in real life (Tyler, 2013). Thus, a curriculum consists of experiences that students should practice before going into the real-world (Bobbit, 1918).

Evaluating a curriculum considers the worth or value of the experiences delivered through the curriculum and inspects the aim or purposes (Bharvad, 2010). Curriculum evaluation, therefore, is "a process by which we attempt to gauge the value and effectiveness of any piece of educational activity which could be a rational project, or a piece of work undertaken by or with pupils" (Bharvad, 2010, p. 72). White (1971) pointed out that in curriculum evaluation, it is crucial to assess the objectives of a curriculum since "one should not just *assume* that objectivity will be impossible" (p. 106). This study focused on evaluating and analyzing the curriculum for citizenship education, especially for adult ESL learners. Therefore, curriculum evaluation aimed to explore applying knowledge in real life that requires both linguistic and civics knowledge for a settlement in the U.S.

The Hidden Curriculum and Social Reproduction

Knowing that a purpose of a curriculum is to convey a set of experiences to students, it is essential to look at what caused the selection of experiences and knowledge in the curriculum. As curriculum theory developed in education to study the nature of a curriculum, scholars have come to dissect the process of generating a curriculum and discovered that a curriculum could be

a tool for *social reproduction*. Greene (2013) explained a curriculum "ordinarily represents little more than an arrangement of subjects, a structure of socially prescribed knowledge, or a complex system of meanings which may or may not fall within his [learner's] grasp" (p. 119). What needs to be emphasized here is that a curriculum represents *socially prescribed knowledge*. Indeed, an institution uses a curriculum based on its political and educational decisions, which can bring up the question of power affecting the issues of choice and making standardizations in learning and education (Flinders & Thornton, 2017).

Socially prescribed knowledge reflects the values of the current social system and structure, which can be delivered either explicitly or implicitly in the curriculum to reproduce what is considered good and needed for society (Giroux & Penna, 1979). Such a curriculum that aims to reproduce the social structure implicitly is a *hidden curriculum* that creates inequality in experiences and knowledge provided to different groups of students for specific purposes (Anyon, 1980). Auerbach and Burgess (1985) claimed the function of a hidden curriculum is to generate socially-approved meanings, regulations, limitations, and cultural values that "shape students' roles outside the classroom" (p. 476). Therefore, a hidden curriculum that limits and regulates what students are given in education can restrain individuals' development and growth in society, determining their positionality in the social structure reproduced by education. Acknowledging the existence of a hidden curriculum that delivers what is "good and correct" for the reproduction of the current society, teachers need to be aware of who makes the big decisions in the development of a curriculum (Regalsky & Laurie, 2007). When a curriculum functions as a tool for social reproduction to strengthen the current system with problems entailed, education cannot act as a social process of developing individuals as active members of society for creating a better environment with positive changes (Gordon, 1984; Macris, 2011). Therefore, teachers

should know how the institutional discourse is formed and delivered through a curriculum (Gofton & Regehr, 2006). Suppose a teacher does not approach a curriculum with a critical view of what is represented in the curriculum. In that case, the teacher's role becomes "reproducing the structures of the hidden curriculum as part of the creolization of education" (Regalsky & Laurie, 2007, p. 232).

Citizenship ESL Education as a Hidden Curriculum

A curriculum exists in any social relationship that requires learning and teaching between subjects with a common interest or a need for education (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). Specifically, a curriculum for ESL learning with citizenship content is designed and provided for immigrants with different educational and linguistic backgrounds (Auerbach, 1992; Wrigley, 2007). It is important to note that language and civics learning for immigrants is directly related to social mobility and building a solid foundation for their settlements in the U.S. (Haque et al., 2007; Williams & Chapman, 2007). Therefore, the development of a curriculum for citizenship ESL education needs to consider two objectives, including (a) ESL learning objectives and (b) content knowledge objectives (Fleming & Morgan, 2011). Both objectives are developed based on the design of the citizenship test, which makes the test itself a critical element of curriculum development. However, Etzioni (2007) criticized the citizenship test as a rigid screening process against immigrants without proper educational opportunities by stating, "citizenship tests, rather than establishing qualifications for citizenship, are instead very often used as a tool to control the level and composition of immigration" (p. 353). Fleming and Morgan (2011) emphasized the need for an "awareness of the complex ways in which ESL programming contributes to the normalization of particular citizenship beliefs and outcomes for newcomers" (p. 28). They further argued that academic policies and pedagogy could impose structured ideas of a "model

citizen" (Fleming & Morgan, 2011, p. 30). Therefore, it raises a question of the curriculum for citizenship ESL education being the hidden curriculum for making immigrants become the model citizens fitting into the nation's ideology.

The Missing Rights for Naturalized Citizens

A society can be afraid of sharing too many rights with immigrants even when everyone living in the country should share the same rights (Aptekar, 2015; Loring, 2013). An implicit way to hide the rights from the immigrants is not to let them know about the existence of such rights. According to Loring (2013), the citizenship ESL materials "excluded Miranda rights, witness-protection rights, and the right to interpretation and translation" (p. 216), when such rights are especially important for immigrants with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Waldinger (2018) pointed out that immigrants have to face "different legal statuses, each with a distinctive set of entitlements, depending on the legal circumstances under which they gain entry into their new environment" (p. 1414). In addition, Higgins (2018) argued that liberal nations have to explain the rights to immigrants and naturalized citizens to protect the human rights of people living in the territory.

To objectively state the need for fully explained rights to the immigrants and naturalized citizens in a globalized world, it is crucial to discuss perspectives based on social justice and human rights. Shafir (2004) defined citizenship as "a broad legal and social framework for membership in a political community" (p. 12). Human rights, a broader term that includes citizenship, are universal, equal, and natural because "they are anchored in a person by virtue of his or her humanity and not by virtue of his or her status in the body politic" (Hunt, 2001, as cited in Shafir, 2004, p. 13). Shafir (2004) compared human rights to citizenship that "human rights have made great strides in the past 250 years, but to be truly effective in a globalizing era

they would have to be transformed into citizenship-namely, membership in a global political community that has its own distributive and enforcing institutions" (p. 25). Therefore, citizenship ESL education has to consider human rights that reflect civil rights to all people residing in the nation and explain the rights in full description and explanations to all students.

Language, Citizenship, and Identity

Immigrants' settlement and career opportunities depend highly on their improvements in English proficiency, which is a goal for many ESL programs provided to help immigrants learn ESL (Miller, 2019; Shufflebarger Snell, 2020). ESL learning affects learners' settlement and identity, related to the language they use and speak since language represents a culture and social structure (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Edwards, 2009; Norton, 2010; Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Especially ESL learners who are also citizenship applicants can have their identity affected by going through a change such as achieving new citizenship (Oakes & Warren, 2007; Spiro, 2008; Williams, 2003). This review section focused on the effect of language on individuals' identity and the meaning of citizenship for adult ESL students who are likely to have built a concept of being a citizen depending on their nation of origin (Griswold, 2010).

ESL Learning and Identity

Learning a second language can affect learners' identity (Norton, 2013). Second language acquisition has multifaceted relations between language and the power that the language holds in affecting learners' identity (Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2006). Norton and Toohey (2011) discussed language learning and identity building in learners' recognition of the power dynamics between languages. As Bourdieu (1984) argued, a speech of one language system automatically gives the speaker a specific power. If learning a second language affects students' identity, how does it

affect learners' identity and the concept of citizenship when they are trying to pass a test that requires language proficiency?

For adult ESL students, a lot of research has investigated how to make ESL learning effective. ESL curriculum development has focused on students' motivation and individual differences in learning to find ways to help them acquire their second language (Hassell, 2019; Norton, 2013). Plausibly, this might be what the students need the most, especially when they are immigrants who want to settle down as fast as they can. However, identity building is a life-long process for people going through any changes in an external or internal set of environments. Ibrahim and Schwarz (2019) described how global migration and language learning affected identity in adult learners, "Although immigrants are often willing to rise to the challenge of assimilation in some cases, many immigrants rarely denounce their backgrounds and completely adopt a new identity" (p. 15). Therefore, it is vital to create a constructive way of identity building for adult learners instead of simply shifting one from the other as they encounter language and culture.

A Constructive Meaning of Citizenship

The relationship between identity building and how an individual can be constructive in creating their concept of citizenship is relevant to citizenship ESL education for adult students. Ibrahim and Schwarz (2019) emphasized the meaning of gaining new citizenship as

> Citizenship has been used around the world to distinguish between the in-group and out-group within the boundaries of nations. Citizenship provides constituents with rights and privileges that are not accessible to foreigners. One of the presumed privileges of citizenship is that it gives you a claim to belonging to that nation (p. 2).

In addition, Larrotta (2019) described language learning of adult ESL students as "students enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) nonprofit classes that help adult learners gain English proficiency for 'employment and other social interactions'" (p. 62). However, these students are likely to "face numerous challenges during the English acquisition process, such as problems with restricted 'access to economic, educational, and public resources' and 'limited interactional opportunities'…with speakers of the target language" (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016, p. 288). Thus, curriculum developers for citizenship ESL education should be aware of language learning for adult ESL students and aim to teach students how to build their own identity and concept of citizenship.

Sense of Belonging by Language and Civics Learning

The ideal state of learning a second language and citizenship education is having students feel like they are included in the community, in other words, feeling *a sense of belonging* (Wrigley, 2007). This research on the curriculum for citizenship ESL program encourages teachers and students to grow a sense of belonging due to learning a second language and ultimately passing the naturalization test. However, applying for naturalization, preparing to meet the requirements for English proficiency, and memorizing questions and answers for the civics portion of the test can affect students to lose their identity from their linguistic and cultural background (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). Amit and Bar-Lev (2015) explained that immigrants are "expected to gradually release previous attachments, social identifiers and even a sense of national commitment to his country of origin, and develop a sense of local identity and belonging in the host country" (p. 948). The sense of belonging is closely related to an individual's satisfaction in life, especially how their membership in the desired community is secured (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Sugiman, 2015). Understanding immigrants' satisfaction with the current

community depends on how they are motivated economically and politically to engage in the community as a member (Sugiman, 2015). Thus, the citizenship ESL program should consider a way to provide continuous citizenship education that can motivate students to be a part of the community before and after naturalization.

Curriculum for Adult ESL Students and Its Goal

From being the most basic and necessary tool for survival to being the prerequisite skill to aim for a better job opportunity, learning English as a second language has increased its significance within the population of immigrants over the past decades in the United States (Auerbach, 1992; Wrigley, 2009). Especially for adult immigrants who are not currently in school with different educational backgrounds, finding the opportunity to improve their English skills has been the core aspect of their settlement. However, in terms of official education and curriculum, adult ESL students who are not in school do not fall under the category of mandatory education that can help them with their life and careers (Fernandez et al., 2017). The lack of professional resources, even though numerous local programs exist to help adult ESL learners, leaves a question of how to evaluate an ESL program and its curriculum (Abbott et al., 2018). More freedom and autonomy give individual institutions and programs the ability to design their curriculum. Therefore, it requires a thorough examination of the curriculum provider's belief in teaching adult ESL students (Wrigley, 2009). Especially for this study, the concept and notion behind the development of a citizenship ESL education curriculum need to be questioned about the objective and purpose of creating the curriculum.

Chapter Summary

This literature review aimed to understand the meaning of naturalization and the different process of achieving citizenship. Different nations hold varying standards and values needed for citizenship applicants to become official members of the country as a citizen. In addition, the history of marginalization of immigrants was reviewed by examining a brief history of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to provide a foundation for understanding the life of immigrants. The naturalization process requires citizenship applicants to learn English and prove their capabilities in learning civics knowledge while financially able to pay the application fee of $725, which can be a significant amount depending on a person. Research studies on curriculum evaluation and hidden curriculum revealed the role of a curriculum in education and its impact on students' learning experiences.

Moreover, studies on the relationship between language learning and identity building, especially for adult ESL students, were reviewed to understand how language can affect students' identity and concept of citizenship as adult students go through the citizenship application process. The relationship between language learning and the sense of belonging was reviewed regarding the test's required language proficiency and its impact on feeling included in a community. Lastly, the roles and goals of adult ESL education were examined to provide the foundational meaning of ESL education for adult students to help them become genuinely involved with language and education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research applied critical phenomenology based on social constructionism and post-structuralism. This study used document analysis and interviews for data collection. It focused on the curriculum for citizenship ESL education offered to adult low-beginning ESL students, which is to help them learn both ESL skills and civics knowledge to pass the U.S. citizenship test. For data analysis, this research applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze the relationship between the curriculum developers and students since the citizenship ESL curriculum functions as a discourse that transmits selected knowledge and values to the immigrant students. Therefore, the data analysis focused on the gap between students' satisfactory learning experiences gathered through interviews and the missing contents from the curriculum found in the document analysis. This study aimed to understand the phenomenon of citizenship ESL education with a critical lens to provide an in-depth understanding of possible improvements to the curriculum.

Restatement of the Research Questions

This study aimed to analyze the design and structure of the curriculum from the USCIS in terms of empowering and marginalizing adult ESL students and explore students' lived experiences of taking the citizenship ESL program. The following two research questions shaped this study:

(1) How does the curriculum for citizenship education provided by the USCIS communicate social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students?

(2) In what ways do adult ESL students experience taking a citizenship ESL class as future U.S. citizens?

Theoretical Framework

This research applied social constructionism. It assumed that the reality and the knowledge that people observe and believe to be the truth are socially constructed from a meaning-making process emerging from social interactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When meanings are constructed through social interactions between people, it is vital to consider the relationship between the meaning-making subjects to understand its impact on the created meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, this study implemented a critical view of post-structuralism that deconstructs the meaning-making process to examine the relationship between the knowledge provider who developed the curriculum (USCIS) and the knowledge consumer (adult ESL students). Eventually, this research aimed to reveal the untold narratives behind the curriculum as a *discourse* between the meaning-making subjects using critical discourse analysis.

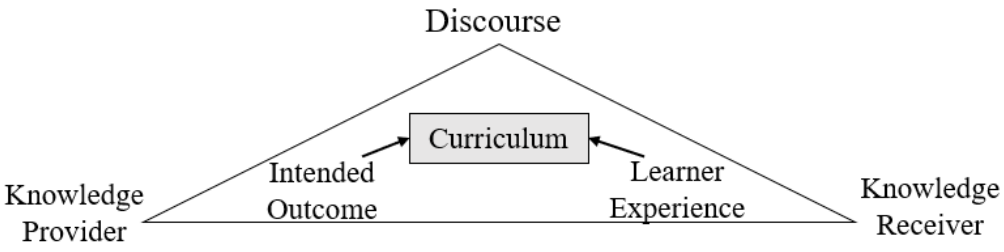
Meaning-Making Through Social Constructionism and Discourse

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructionists believe that people seek meanings and understanding of their world by building subjective meanings through various life experiences. This research used social constructionism to comprehend the process of knowledge-making and sharing to recognize a curriculum as a product made for delivering knowledge between the knowledge providers and consumers (der Merwe & Rauch, 2019; Harb, 2017; Pillay, 2016). The reality or meaning is generated through interactions between the subject and object; as Stewart and Mickunas (1990) stated that the "reality of an object is inextricably related to one's consciousness of it" (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). Thus, it is assumed that subjects' consciousness interprets an object, and this study examined the curriculum as the object. The intentions to either grant or achieve citizenship can create socially-constructed meanings delivered through the curriculum. The meaning of the curriculum derives from both

subjects—curriculum developers and students—interacting with the curriculum as an object. This interaction between the knowledge providers and consumers based on how each subject interprets the object generates a form of interaction as a *discourse* (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Curriculum as Discourse



Considering curriculum as discourse is to concede the relationship between the two subjects, the knowledge provider and knowledge receiver, involved in developing a social discourse to decide what needs to be learned by the students (Harb, 2017, Van Dijk, 2003). The interaction between the two subjects creates meaning from how they interpret the curriculum as an object with different intentions. For example, in citizenship ESL education, the curriculum developers as knowledge providers would intentionally decide what knowledge needs to be passed on to students regarding societal values. The students, as knowledge receivers, intend to learn the required knowledge to be accepted as members of society through naturalization. Therefore, the meaning-making process involved in creating a curriculum has different intentions and interpretations of the curriculum, which can affect selecting the knowledge and going through the actual learning experience.

Post-Structuralism to Deconstruct Social Relationships

Post-structuralism as a theoretical framework analyzes and interprets the social structure that influences the meaning-making process (Crotty, 1988). Ezzy (2002) described post-structural studies as "seriously questioning the ontological status of the empirical world" (p. 16). Qualitative research, in general, is to know more about "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 15). Based on post-structuralism, this research aimed to critically inspect the relationship involved in the curriculum.

The purpose of qualitative research based on post-structuralism is "to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 15). The application of post-structuralism into this study allowed the researcher to critically deconstruct the relationship that consists of the process of meaning-making using a curriculum as a medium of delivering selected knowledge.

Critical Phenomenology

A phenomenological study aims to capture the essence of participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study, in particular, considered the process of naturalization and application for citizenship as a universal phenomenon that shares common social aspects among citizenship applicants who are immigrants. This study used critical phenomenology to interpret the human world and experiences, but the focus was on critically analyzing the factors of human consciousness involved in the specific phenomenon (Guenther, 2019; Salamon, 2018; Velmans, 2007). Therefore, this study focused on capturing the essence of

students' experiences of taking the citizenship ESL program through interviews and combined the data with the critically conducted document analysis using critical phenomenology. The following section explains phenomenology and critical phenomenology in detail.

Philosophical Phenomenology: Descriptive vs. Interpretive

Seeking ways to understand the events happening in the human world and express the understanding and emotions entailed in social interactions, Husserl viewed phenomenology as "a way of reaching true meaning through penetrating deeper and deeper into reality" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1294). Phenomenology differentiated the human world from the natural sciences, criticizing the science realm of psychology that attempted to apply natural sciences methods to interpreting human behavior and interactions (Laverty, 2003). For Husserl, how people perceive and experience what they go through in life could not be described in figures to define emotions and thoughts involved in a social phenomenon.

Husserl (1962) explained that human interactions and intuitions are only represented by human consciousness using the conscious mind and senses, unlike the study of nature. Therefore, the essence of descriptive phenomenology focuses on capturing human experiences as a lived phenomenon with authentic descriptions since there is no scientific measurement to describe them (Laverty, 2003). In other words, the main feature of Husserl's descriptive phenomenology was that "the observer could transcend the phenomena and meanings being investigated to take a global view of the essences discovered" (Sloan & Bowe, p. 1294). Interpretive phenomenology, on the other hand, was developed by Heidegger (1962) to emphasize the human ability to interpret phenomena based on individuals' specific backgrounds or personal histories (Laverty, 2003). Therefore, the implementation of phenomenology in this study was to accentuate the

meaning of a curriculum as a product of social interaction that requires deeper interpretation as a phenomenon for creating and delivering knowledge.

Phenomenology as Methodology

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained methodological phenomenology as a method of describing the meaning of a phenomenon to capture people's lived experiences and emotions. The purpose of phenomenology as a research methodology is to primarily deduct individual experiences of a phenomenon to a universal element as a description of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, this is not to ignore individual uniqueness in experiencing a phenomenon but rather to focus on finding the core characteristics shared by individuals to interpret the meaning of a social event that has a purpose within a society (Van Manen, 2016). Achieving citizenship is a social phenomenon that can happen worldwide, and it brings forth a particular set of emotions or behaviors in human society. Therefore, this study applied a phenomenological method of understanding the phenomenon of applying for citizenship.

What is essential about a phenomenological method is that it allows researchers to interpret the phenomenon from their own experience and perspective before collecting data (Laverty, 2003; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) indicated that in phenomenological research, "the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (p. 27). Such a process for researchers to examine themselves, also called *epoche* or bracketing, helps the study be objective while admitting other factors affecting the phenomenon while collecting and analyzing the data. Promoting objectivity by bracketing in research design for data collection and analysis is closely related to applying critical

phenomenology to gather authentic and lived experiences from the participants and to look beyond the surface-level description of a phenomenon.

Critical Phenomenology

A critical inquiry for qualitative research examines what is underneath a surface-level structure of a situation or a phenomenon (Guenther, 2013). Conceding the underlying factor for any social situation is related to hierarchical power dynamics or a specific type of innately imbalanced social structure, critical phenomenology attempts to uncover the relationship between subjects experiencing the same phenomenon but from different perspectives (Guenther, 2013; Velmans, 2007). Guenther (2013) explained critical phenomenology as "a method that is rooted in first-person accounts of experience but also critical of classical phenomenology's claim that the first-person singular is prior to intersubjectivity and to the complex textures of social life" (as cited in Salamon, 2018, p. 9). Guenther (2013) criticized how classical phenomenology treated a phenomenon as something that transcended beyond a social structure and focused only on the first-person description of experiences, ignoring the social structure and its impact on the phenomenon. Salamon (2018) explained that classical phenomenology advocates first-person perspectives of a phenomenon. However, critical phenomenology adds another layer to a phenomenon by examining the relationship between the phenomenon, the individual, and the world. Guenther (2019) claimed that it is essential to consider the social structure influencing the phenomenon and individuals. It is because "the capacity of the material, historical changes in the world affect not just *what* I perceive but *how* I perceive it, and even to erode my *capacity* to experience the world in a coherent, harmonious fashion" (p. 13). Therefore, critical phenomenology gathers the authentic experiences of a phenomenon from the individuals and

acknowledges the system or the social structure affecting the phenomenon and individuals that might have induced specific results of the experiences.

This research implemented a method of critical phenomenology based on the assumption that curriculum conveys knowledge selected by a subject with more power within the society. The curriculum developers decide what is valuable and essential that a subject with less power needs to retain unconditionally (Graham, 2011, Hook, 2007). In addition, any social discourse, including an educational curriculum, signifies society's current ideology to keep the system working (Fairclough, 2001). Therefore, a curriculum as a discourse produced in a specific social context and interaction between the knowledge provider and consumer is a phenomenon based on critical phenomenology. The lived experience of students taking the citizenship ESL program to prepare for a citizenship test is considered a phenomenon that necessitates a social interaction between the curriculum developers with specific intentions and students responding to the learning as they go through receiving, interpreting, and applying the knowledge.

Bracketing in Critical Phenomenology

According to Fischer (2009), bracketing in a qualitative study is "an investigator's identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's data" (p. 583). Therefore, bracketing in critical phenomenology enables the study to capture the raw data of participants' experiences as authentic as possible while keeping a researcher's stance for examining the experience with an objective and critical approach. Guenther (2019) described that "the purpose of this reduction [bracketing] is not to abstract from the complexity of ordinary experience but rather to lead back from an uncritical absorption in the world toward a rigorous understanding of the conditions for the possibility of any world whatsoever" (p. 11). Bracketing is to disclose the researcher's

educational background, goals, or interests related to the research topic and the research design that can directly or indirectly affect data collection and analysis (Fischer, 2009).

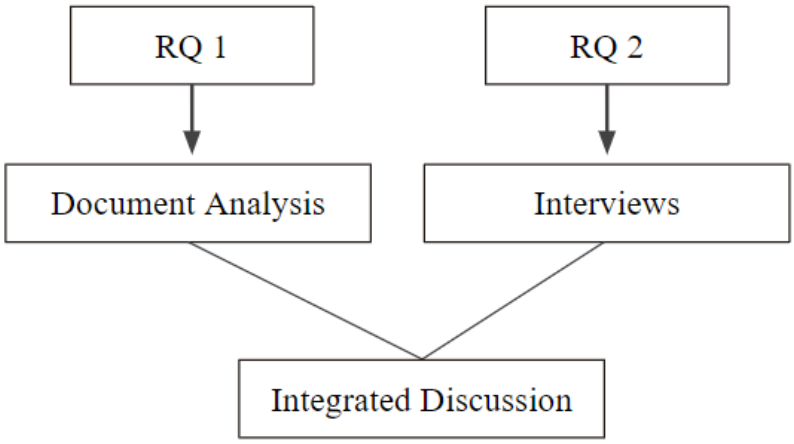
Consequently, a researcher reveals their own belief and history of education that impacted their language choice or terms they use to describe the participants or the phenomenon. Especially for critical phenomenology, as Dörfler and Stierand (2020) explained, the purpose of bracketing is to "disclose the learning process through which the researcher achieved a confidence in understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspective" (p. 12). The goal of a bracketing interview on a researcher in a phenomenological study is "to check whether one [researcher] is imposing meanings on the data and to re-look to see what other meanings might appear" (Fischer, 2009, p. 584). Therefore, this study conducted a bracketing interview with the researcher, presented at the end of this chapter, to divulge the researcher's understanding of the citizenship ESL program and participants' learning experience that can affect the social empowerment or marginalization of adult ESL students in the process of studying for the citizenship test.

Research Design

Patton (2015) described different types of data sources for qualitative research as "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge from interviews, detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions through observations, and excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from documentations" (p. 14). This study used qualitative data sources collected through two different methods, which are (1) document analysis and (2) interviews, to answer the research questions and analyze the collected data for an integrated discussion on both types of sources, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods



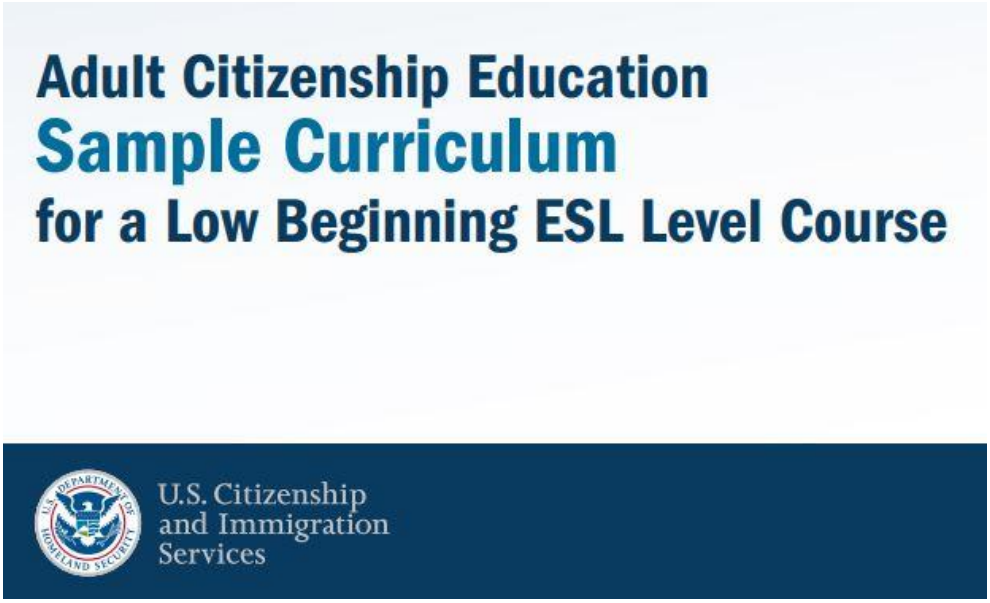
This research selected a curriculum provided by the USCIS as a source for document analysis and recruited interview participants based on criteria using purposeful sampling. This study analyzed the data using critical discourse analysis based on thematizing and theorizing processes. Finally, the validity, ethics, and limitations of this research acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of this study in gathering and presenting the interpretation of the collected data. In the end, the purpose of this research design was to explore the citizenship ESL program with authentic experiences from the participants while reflecting on the structure of the curriculum to suggest improvement and revision for the current curriculum.

Document Selection and Its Representativeness

The primary source of the document analysis for this research was a curriculum titled *Adult Citizenship Education Sample Curriculum for a Low Beginning ESL Level Course* designed and provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3

A Cover of the Citizenship Education Curriculum



Note. From "Adult Citizenship Education Sample Curriculum for a Low Beginning ESL Level Course" by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), 2017. Copyright 2017 by the USCIS.

The curriculum is openly accessible through the USCIS website. Additional sources used in the document analysis include (a) the citizenship application form, also known as Form N-400, and (b) 100 civics questions. Those documents were used and represented in the curriculum to create the content knowledge for each lesson. The curriculum was selected and considered representative for this research since citizenship ESL education programs, especially those that had received grants from the USCIS, are likely to use the sample curriculum as the USCIS recommends the curriculum through seminars and teacher training (USCIS, 2021a).

The curriculum is for a 15-week-long course with two lessons per week, and each lesson consists of nine sections assigned with different categories, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4

Lesson Design of the Citizenship Education Curriculum

Week 7 · Day 2–(Date)

Lesson	ESL	N-400	Chapter	Speaking Test	Civics Test	Reading Test	Writing Test	Civics Questions
Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence	Simple past with high frequency regular verbs	Part 12 – Additional Information About You (Questions 16-21)	##	4bb 4cc	5a 8a 8d 8e 9a 12a 12c 12d	13a 13b 13c 13d 13e 13f 13g 13h	14a 14b 14c 14d 14e 14f 14g 14h	8, 9, 61, 62 63, 64, 71 96, 97, 99 100

Note. From "Adult Citizenship Education Sample Curriculum for a Low Beginning ESL Level Course" by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), 2017, p. 15. Copyright 2017 by the USCIS.

The sections of a lesson include: (a) lesson (a title of the lesson), (b) ESL (ESL knowledge and skills needed for the lesson), (c) N-400 (contents from the citizenship application), (d) Chapter (a related chapter of a course textbook selected by the instructor if they have any), (e) Speaking Test, (f) Civics Test, (g) Reading Test, (h) Writing Test, and (i) Civics Questions (selected civics questions for the lesson). This lesson structure corresponds with a curriculum design for content-based instruction that attempts to deliver both language and content objectives in ESL education (August, 2018; Brown, 2004; Spenader et al., 2020). Therefore, document analysis focused on how the curriculum communicates content knowledge with adult ESL students using content-based instruction.

Interview Participants and Purposeful Sampling

For a phenomenological study, the appropriate number of interview participants can be as small as five to more than 50 individuals who have gone through the phenomenon of interest

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sim et al., 2018). This study had 11 participants recruited using a purposeful sampling to specifically select interview participants who went through the same phenomenon of applying for U.S. citizenship and preparing to take the citizenship test. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explained that sampling "customarily involves addressing issues of probability, such that the sample can, with some measurable margin for error, be asserted to represent the whole group from which it was extracted" (p. 3). Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested three considerations to have during the process of purposeful sampling, which include "whom to select as participants (or sites) for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample to be studied" (p. 157). Especially for phenomenological studies, the range of sampling strategies is much narrower due to choosing participants rather strictly in that they have to share the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, a criterion sampling within the category of purposeful sampling that chooses samples that meet specific standards was fitting for this research design.

Characteristics and Demographics of the Participants

Participants for this study were selected based on the following criteria: (a) adult ESL students who are currently taking a beginning-level citizenship ESL class at a community-based institution located in the southwestern United States, (b) the institution has received a grant through the "Citizenship and Integration Grant Program" by the USCIS to run the citizenship ESL program, and (c) participants are in the process of applying for the U.S. citizenship or have already passed the test to be a naturalized citizen. Notably, the selected community-based institution provided the citizenship ESL program with the grant received from the USCIS, which could increase the chance that the program coordinators or teachers had taken the sample curriculum designed by the USCIS into consideration when planning for the lessons.

In total, 11 adult ESL students participated in this study. Participants' demographic information such as their home country, first language, age, gender, years of living in the U.S., and ESL learning experience is shown in Table 3.1. The names of the interviewees are all pseudonyms used throughout the study.

Table 3.1

Demographics of the Participants

Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Home Country/ First Language	Years in the U.S./ ESL learning	Interview Date	Days after the first interview for a follow-up
Ivan	M	62	Russia/ Russian	8 years/ 8 years	June 29, 2021	95 days (October 2)
Alisa	F	60	Russia/ Russian	8 years/ 8 years	June 29, 2021	95 days (October 2)
Samuel	M	61	Haiti/ French, Creole	20 years/ 40+ years	June 30, 2021	96 days (October 3)
Hayma	F	42	Myanmar/ Zomi	5 years/ 5 years	June 30, 2021	96 days (October 3)
Agustina	F	52	Mexico/ Spanish	29 years/ 30+ years	June 30, 2021	101 days (October 8)
Lucia	F	50	Mexico/ Spanish	19 years/ 20+ years	June 30, 2021	102 days (October 9)
Aiyla	F	29	Turkey/ Turkish	4 years/ 10 years	July 10, 2021	102 days (October 9)
Samira	F	65	Iran/ Persian	8 years/ 8 years	July 13, 2021	103 days (October 10)
Ligaya	F	45	Philippines/ Tagalog	5 years/ 20+ years	July 13, 2021	103 days (October 10)
Emilio	M	44	Mexico/ Spanish	21 years/ 20+ years	October, 16, 2021	N/A
Rafael	M	40	Mexico/ Spanish	20 years/ 20+ years	October 21, 2021	N/A

For a short summary, the countries in which they are from included Mexico (*n*=4), Russia (*n*=2), Haiti (*n*=1), Iran (*n*=1), Myanmar (*n*=1), Philippines (*n*=1), and Turkey (*n*=1). Their first languages included Spanish, Russian, French and Creole, Farsi, Zomi, Tagalog, and Turkish. Out of the 11 participants, seven were female (64.6%), and four were male (36.4%). The ages of the participants included those who were in their 60s (*n*=4), and in their 50s (*n*=2), 40s (*n*=4), and 20s (*n*=1). One participant was 65 years and older, which means they were eligible for a shorter version of the civics questions requirement. For the number of years living in the U.S., only one participant has lived less than five years, and the rest of the participants have lived five to ten years (*n*=5) or ten years or longer (*n*=5). However, years of learning English as a foreign or second language did not necessarily coordinate with the years of living in the U.S., since the number of years varied from less than five years (*n*=3), five to ten years (*n*=2), and more than ten years (*n*=6).

Data Collection

Document Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) defined a *document* as collectible data in a qualitative study as “an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study (including visual images)” (p. 162). This study used a curriculum from the USCIS designed for adult beginning-level ESL students for document analysis. Document analysis for qualitative research is a “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents" (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). It aims to discover specific contexts in detail, search for any hidden meaning behind the document, or discover important patterns the document displays that need analysis (Altheide, 2000). Specifically, this research applied a holistic view of document

analysis which attempts to understand a document as a part of a system (Gorichanaz & Latham, 2016). Gorichanaz and Latham (2016) considered a document as an object incorporated in a social system which requires a more profound understanding from diverse perspectives to uncover how a social system affected the process of making the document. Therefore, the analysis of the document is from a holistic view that considers the contexts and social relationships surrounding it within the "shared systems such as families, organizations, cultures" (Gorichanaz & Latham, 2016, p. 1127).

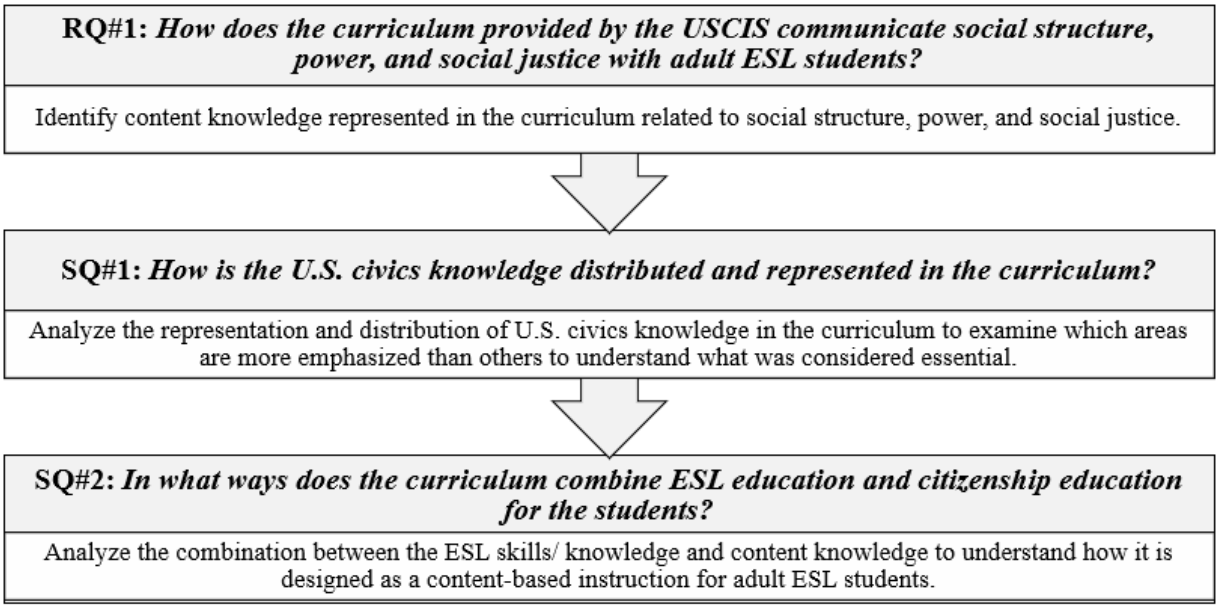
The research question that used document analysis was "How does the curriculum provided by the USCIS communicate social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students?" Based on this research question, the goal of document analysis was not to analyze the entire curriculum but to focus on specific features of the content knowledge, such as civics questions and questions from the citizenship application related to social structure and power. Therefore, the document analysis aimed to discover and understand how the curriculum conveyed citizenship education to students about social structure, power, and social justice. The delivery of the content knowledge was analyzed by examining the ESL skills and knowledge provided in each lesson to help adult ESL students understand the content knowledge. The data collection process for document analysis in this research is shown in Figure 3.5.

First, a preliminary phase of data collection for document analysis focused on the sources used for content knowledge, such as the citizenship application and the 100 civics questions, to identify areas related to social structure, power, and social justice (e.g., trauma-related vocabulary used in the citizenship application, lack of information on rights as naturalized citizens, etc.). Secondly, the representation and distribution of civics knowledge, including U.S. history and government, were analyzed to see which sections of the content knowledge the

curriculum emphasized more than other sections. Lastly, it examined the combination of language education with civics education in the curriculum as a content-based instruction for its relevance and effectiveness.

Figure 3.5

The Process of Data Collection for Document Analysis



Interview

Participants' previous experiences and backgrounds can provide a basis for designing and preparing the interviews for phenomenological interviews (Oerther, 2021). In addition, phenomenological interviews consider each individual's experience essential and unique to "understand the meaningfully rich and complex lived world" (Oerther, 2021, p. 2145). The interviews for this study were semi-structured, which allowed scheduling the interviews and informing participants previously about the research topic (Evans & Lewis, 2018). The researcher prepared interview questions beforehand, and probing questions were asked to the participants to gather more information and data during the interviews.

Interview questions focused on gathering participants' lived experiences in learning ESL and civics knowledge and more in-depth questions related to the learning experience affecting participants' social empowerment or marginalization. The researcher designed interview questions for the research question, "In what ways do adult ESL students experience taking a citizenship ESL class as a future U.S. citizen?" Two sub-questions included "How do the students experience learning ESL and civics knowledge at the same time to become a U.S. citizen?" and "How do the students interpret their learning experiences in terms of their power and social status?" The relationship between each interview question and the sub-questions of the research question is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions

	IQ 1	IQ 2	IQ 3	IQ 4	IQ 5	IQ 6	IQ 7	IQ 8
SQ#1: How do adult ESL students experience taking the citizenship ESL program while learning English and preparing to become U.S. citizens?	X	X	X	X	X			X
SQ#2: How do these students interpret the curriculum and learning experiences regarding their power and social status?						X	X	

	IQ 9	IQ 10	IQ 11	IQ 12	IQ 13	IQ 14	IQ 15	IQ 16
SQ#1: How do adult ESL students experience taking the citizenship ESL program while learning English and preparing to become U.S. citizens?		X	X		X	X		X
SQ#2: How do these students interpret the curriculum and learning experiences regarding their power and social status?	X			X			X	

The interview questions for the first sub-question focused on gathering information on students' broad experience in learning ESL and civics knowledge at the same time to prepare for the citizenship test. The second sub-question focused on students' interpretation of the learning experience about feeling empowered and included or marginalized as an immigrant and a future U.S. citizen. For the first sub-question, the examples of interview questions included "How do you like learning ESL in a classroom? (IQ#1)" "How do you feel when you see a word you don't know its meaning, and what do you do? (IQ#4)," "Why do you think the English test is needed to become a U.S. citizen? (IQ#5)," "What was the most interesting thing about the American government? (IQ#11)," "What was the most interesting thing about U.S. history? (IQ#13)," and "Why do you think we have to study civics knowledge to become U.S. citizens? (IQ#14)" (see Appendix A).

Example interview questions for the second sub-question focused on participants' interpretation of taking citizenship ESL education and its effect on their social empowerment or marginalization. The interview questions included "How do you feel about the U.S. and its culture? (IQ#6)," "How does learning ESL make you feel about the U.S.? (IQ#7)," "What is a *citizen*, and why do you want to become a U.S. citizen? (IQ#9)," "What do you think about the rights of the U.S. citizens? (IQ#12)," and "How does learning about the American government and history make you feel about the U.S.? (IQ#15)" (see Appendix A).

Since the participants were all ESL learners, they were encouraged to ask any questions or request any detail if the interview questions were too conceptual or abstract to understand. Participants had an option of declining to answer or passing on any of the interview questions. All interviews were held over an online platform for video calling, and each interview lasted about an hour. The interviews were recorded through the platform. The audio/video files of the

interviews were stored according to participants' consent to use them in data analysis and to be deleted once this research is finished. Nine of the 11 participants had a follow-up interview for more descriptions and clarifications for their responses. After the transcription and interpretation, the researcher went through a member-checking process to attain the validity of this research. It was to help clarify the intentions and connotations of their answers to the interview questions on the transcribed data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is like a jigsaw puzzle that forms a bigger picture with the research questions (LeCompte, 2000). Like the puzzle pieces, the researcher put the collected data into smaller pieces before an in-depth analysis of this research. The in-depth analysis used critical discourse analysis, which focused on examining what is unseen from the surface-level of social interactions in creating the document as a type of social discourse (Fairclough, 2001). Collected data from both document analysis and interview were coded as a part of a thematizing analysis. A code is "simply a short, descriptive word or phrase that assigns meaning to the data related to the researcher's analytic interests" (Lester et al., 2020, p.100). Similarly, Blair (2015) defined a code as "conceptually similar events/ actions/ interactions" (p. 17). Therefore, coding determines sections of the collected data that share similar ideas and meanings to organize the data according to a theme needed to answer research questions (McAlister et al., 2017). The researcher gathered codes primarily through a process of *open coding*, which "involves applying codes that are derived from the text (emergent codes)" (Blair, 2015, p. 17). After codes were defined and selected from the collected data, the researcher used the process of *axial coding* to categorize each code under bigger meanings to derive themes for

the research by using codes to determine subcategories and main categories to form specific and concrete descriptions for the themes (Blair, 2015, Sundler et al., 2019).

The examples of categories for codes defined and analyzed from the collected interview data in this research include “demographic information,” “cultural comparison,” “civics learning experience,” “ESL learning experience,” and “naturalization experience” (see Appendix B). In addition, examples of codes used in the document analysis include “sections [of civics knowledge],” “subsections,” civics questions related to social structure and power,” and “ESL skills combined with content knowledge” (see Appendix C). Further explanations on thematizing, mapping, theorizing, and interpretation are discussed later in this chapter.

The organized codes were analyzed and categorized to discover common themes. After examining the relationship between the codes, the researcher clarified specific themes coordinating with the focuses of the research. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2016), a theme is “the main product of data analysis that yields practical results in the field of study” (p. 101). Analyzing the themes from collected data is related to thematic analysis, which aims to understand the patterns of the meanings, ideas, and products of the data analysis to form a collective description of lived experiences, especially for phenomenological study (Sundler et al., 2019). Braun and Clarke (2012) described a thematic analysis as “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (p. 57). Examples of themes formed and studied in this research include “individual-level social empowerment,” “family-level social empowerment,” “community-level social empowerment,” and “societal-level social empowerment” based on the participants’ descriptions and explanations of their lived experiences of taking citizenship ESL education. Learning ESL and civics education simultaneously affected the participants’ perception of growth in power in terms

of having more communications and interactions within their community and society, which is interpreted and discussed in detail in the findings chapter.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Considering an academic curriculum as a discourse that reflects society's current educational ideology, this study applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a tool for in-depth data analysis. Critical phenomenology, the research methodology of this study, was to look at *how* a phenomenon is perceived and interpreted by different subjects within the power dynamics, and CDA, a tool for data analysis, was to examine *what* is involved in a discourse generated from the unbalanced power structure between the subjects (Oughton, 2007). CDA, in its nature, is a critical approach to a text which aims to reveal a hidden meaning underneath the surface-level interpretation of the text (Harb, 2017). Therefore, analyzing the curriculum using CDA was to explore the hidden narrative beyond the surface level of the document (Wood et al., 2020).

Is Curriculum a Discourse?

According to Fairclough (2013), a *discourse* is a product of a meaning-making process generated from diverse types of social interactions. Language composes a discourse, and the specific language used in the process of discourse represents a particular social field or practice (Fairclough, 2013; Graham, 2011). Therefore, a discourse is "a way of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental) that can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 11). Pinar (1978) compared the nature of a curriculum to that of discourse by stating that the development of a curriculum entails a historical view and the current social order, the same as a discourse

emerging from a social system. This study regarded a curriculum as a discourse, which means that a curriculum is a product of social interactions engaged in a meaning-making process.

Tanner and Tanner (1975) explained that a curriculum consists of "the planned guided learning experience and intended learning outcomes formulated through a systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences" (as cited in Bharvad, 2010, p. 72). Therefore, specific knowledge is represented in a curriculum that the curriculum providers selected based on certain standards. The knowledge providers systematically reconstruct the knowledge to be learned and delivered to the students (Harb, 2017). This process is similar to a discourse, which is also a product of the meaning-making procedure of social interactions. This study aimed to inspect a curriculum provided by the government, which innately holds more power and a higher social hierarchy than the country's immigrants.

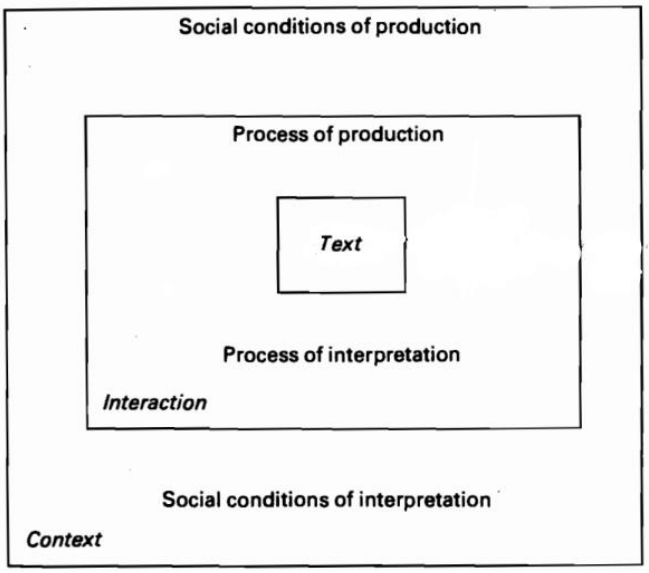
Structure of Critical Discourse Analysis

The process of discourse analysis, as Fairclough (2001) explained, involves "social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation" (p. 25). The overall process of producing a discourse using a text under social conditions is described in Figure 3.6. As such, a curriculum is generated during an interaction between the curriculum developers based on social conditions of production and the process of interpretation by the curriculum receivers or users based on social conditions of interpretation. Notably, Fairclough (2001) differentiated a text from a discourse. A text is a means to express produced meanings from social interactions. A discourse represents the entire process of social interaction that includes a text as a meaning-making tool. The process starts from the given social conditions of production and proceeds with an interpretation of social practice in a particular context. Therefore, the production of creating a

discourse aims to determine a set of texts to deliver the meaning to the receiver who has to interpret the produced meanings.

Figure 3.6

Discourse as Text, Interaction, and Context



Note. From *Language and Power* by N. Fairclough, 2001, p. 25, Pearson Education. Copyright 2001 by Pearson Education.

The receivers or the consumers of the knowledge involved in the discourse process tend to intentionally or unintentionally use their own experiences to make individualized meanings (Khiat, 2017). Pillay (2016) criticized the risk of a curriculum being a discourse emerging as a product of hegemony since a curriculum "serves the important ideological and political purposes of empowering or repressing its recipients both immediately and beyond its institutional confines" (p. 532). Therefore, the citizenship education curriculum for adult ESL students can be considered a product of social interaction that accommodates an ideological and political purpose from the producers, who possess more social and political power than the learners of the curriculum, who are the country's immigrants. The relationship between the two subjects

inevitably presupposes the power dynamics (Harb, 2017). Each of the subjects has different intentions of interpreting the role of the curriculum as one being a gatekeeper of the country while the other subject is trying to become U.S. citizens.

Thematizing and Interpretation

Morse (1994) indicated that there are four cognitive steps for integrating qualitative methods into data analysis: "comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing, and recontextualizing" (p. 25). To search for themes from the data, Thomas (2006) focused on thematizing the data analysis, which is "to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (p. 238). Marshall (1999) described the process of finding themes from data as "emerging themes (or categories) were developed by studying the transcripts repeatedly and considering possible meanings and how these fitted with developing themes" (as cited in Thomas, 2006, p. 239). Thus, the data analysis process for this study aimed at searching for emerging themes from the document analysis and interview transcripts that were coded and categorized.

Based on a post-structuralist point of view, this study's most prominent theme or concern was the hidden meaning of the curriculum for citizenship education provided for adult ESL students applying for U.S. citizenship. The represented knowledge in the curriculum could prioritize specific values and principles for the social structure of the current society. To examine the perceived meaning of citizenship education, the theorizing of this research focused on students' perception and interpretation of learning ESL and citizenship education to pass the U.S. citizenship test. Data interpretation of this research implemented the idea of active citizenship from Monte-Mór and Morgan (2014), which interpreted the relationship between conformity and

critique in terms of citizenship education for immigrants. They explained, “one will encounter the terms ‘active citizenship,’ ‘engaged citizenship,’ or ‘critical citizenship’ treated as synonyms, guiding inferences about the definition of attitudes envisaged in practice: action, engagement, and critique” (p. 23). Likewise, the findings and implications of this study focused on the true meaning of citizenship to provide naturalized citizens with activities and a space to practice their active citizenship to be a member of a democratic society.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies have received criticisms for being subjective to researcher bias and lacking data that can be generalized in research (Cope, 2014; Koch & Harrington, 1998). The nature of qualitative research uses researchers’ interpretation as the primary tool for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Therefore, researchers conducting qualitative research strived to achieve the validity of their study, in other words, trustworthiness or transferability of the research (Shenton, 2004). To address this issue and to gain trustworthiness, this study used three strategies which include (a) specifying researcher bias in researcher’s self-reflexivity, (b) a peer review or peer examination of the overall research process and data, and (c) member checking with the participants on the interview transcription.

First, the clarification and specification of researcher bias are articulated in the researcher's self-reflexivity to openly acknowledge the values and experiences that can affect the data collection and analysis for the readers to consider (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Peer review or peer examination of qualitative research is to seek an external check by someone aware of the content of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, member checking is to have participants examine the data and interpretation of it to verify the validity and

credibility of the content (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Member checking, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314).

This study used the three applications for trustworthiness by including a section for the researcher's critical self-reflexivity that can disclose researcher bias and reflexivity, receiving a peer review from a colleague to play a devil's advocate to have them challenge the research methodologies, and the overall process. After transcribing and analyzing the interview data, the researcher contacted the participants to confirm the content for member checking, which is especially important for this study since it involved participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Ethical Issues

During data collection and analysis, a researcher should always consider ethical issues regarding the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Such ethical concerns include "the protection of subjects from harm, the right to privacy, the notion of informed consent, and the issue of deception" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 261). Before conducting this research, ethical issues were considered by following the professional standards for qualitative research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of a research university located in a southwestern state of the U.S., and approval was given to this study after meeting all the criteria.

The researcher prepared semi-structured interview questions before conducting the interviews. For document analysis, only publicly accessible documents through a governmental website were used, which did not reveal any identifiable information on the individuals involved in the production and consumption of the document. For interviews, the researcher used pseudonyms to keep the confidentiality, which was not to reveal any identifiable information about the participants for their privacy. Interviews were recorded via an online platform for

video meetings under consent from the participants for using audio/video files in data analysis. The recorded data was stored in a laptop protected with a password, and the researcher also used private online data storage, which was also protected with a password. Both of the data storage were only accessible by the researcher. The researcher will delete the collected data after the publication of the manuscript of this research. The emails exchanged between the participants and the researcher throughout the member checking process will also be deleted.

Limitations of the Research

Data interpretation and analysis with critical phenomenology requires an in-depth self-awareness from the researcher and acknowledging the deeper structure of the system affecting the research. Otherwise, the nature of phenomenology describing participants' true feelings and experiences from a researcher's point of view might perpetuate a biased interpretation of the current system. As Salamon (2018) explained, "if phenomenology offers us unparalleled means to describe what we see with utmost precision, to illuminate what is true, critique insists that we also attend to the power that is always conditioning that truth" (p. 15). Therefore, the balance between subjectivity for validating individuals' experiences, including the researcher, and being objective in gathering and interpreting the data was essential in this study. As Guenther (2019) stated, "the ultimate goal of critical phenomenology is not just to interpret the world, but also to change it" (p. 16). Therefore, the nature of critical phenomenology restricting the conscious realization of the critical view on the system while keeping the bracketing on the researcher in collecting the data can limit the research by the innate contradiction between being critical and blocking assumptions in the research procedure. If the researcher could not handle the multi-layered approach to the data collection and analysis using critical phenomenology, the data collection and analysis could be too complicated (Guenther, 2019).

This research was about how adult ESL students experience ESL learning and prepare to become a citizen in the U.S. while acquiring civics knowledge at the same time. As the primary goal of this study was to understand how students feel about their learning experience to suggest possible improvements to the curriculum for future students, the study was inherently critical and enclosed with a hierarchical structure of power dynamics affecting the curriculum. However, this research had a limitation in delivering the critical aspect of the research. The interviewer contacted participants through the institution, which made participants not fully open up since they worried about their reputation to their teacher and institution. In addition, both the researcher and participants were ESL learners with different levels of English proficiency which might have limited the amount of data gathered in the interviews conducted in English. Moreover, this study could not conduct classroom observations to gather more information on classroom interactions since the classes were all online due to the pandemic.

To compensate for the limitations, future studies can prepare more interview questions so that a researcher can spend a long time in each interview to build a rapport and trust with the participant before getting to the critical part of the interview questions. Multilingual sources can be provided to the participants depending on their first language to help them understand the concept and notions of specific terms needed for the interview questions. In addition, re-designing the interview process to have at least two phases can help build a closer relationship between the researcher and participants to discuss more critical aspects of the research interests. For example, the researcher should conduct the interviews at the program's beginning and end. It helps participants become more familiar with the interview questions and the researcher and can provide more information and data by comparing participants' attitudes and emotions towards citizenship education at the start and end of the program. Future studies can also add classroom

observations to capture students' experiences in detail and how the teacher interacts with students.

A Bracketing Interview of the Researcher and Self-Reflexivity

A bracketing interview reveals the researchers' existing bias on the research topic and the overall design of the research. For this study, a researcher's colleague from the same department at the research university who is aware of the general idea of this study conducted the bracketing interview before the researcher collected data. The interview focused on identifying the researcher's assumptions about the research topic based on her previous experiences and educational journey. The interview questions include: "What is your research topic?" "What is your relationship or related experience with the topic?" "What made you choose this topic, and why are you interested in it?" "What are some expectations or assumptions of the findings before the analysis?" and "Can you explain your educational journey or scholarly work related to the topic that might affect the data collection and analysis?" (see Appendix D).

This interview revealed that the researcher is aware of a citizenship ESL program as community-based education provided at a low cost for adult immigrant students. In addition, the researcher had taught a citizenship ESL class before and considered applying for U.S. citizenship as a long and exhausting process that required a lot of paperwork and studying for the required civics knowledge and English tests of speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, the researcher personally believed that the citizenship ESL program should support students throughout the process. The institution where the participants were recruited for this research had received grants from the USCIS to offer the program, so the researcher expected the institution has a structured curriculum and classroom management to make students' learning experience effective and meaningful. The researcher also believed that adult ESL students are self-motivated

and appreciative of the locally-provided education for its flexible schedule and a reasonable price for adult students working or raising children.

Most importantly, the researcher's positionality about citizenship ESL education revealed that the researcher could be a teacher of citizenship ESL education and possibly a future citizenship applicant. Thus, the researcher might have empathetic feelings toward participants while collecting and analyzing data. However, at the same time, the researcher could hold preconceptions and assumptions about the citizenship applicants based on the self-reflection of the researcher on what it is like to be an adult ESL student in the U.S. and the previously constructed perception of becoming a U.S. citizen.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine (1) how the curriculum for citizenship education provided by the USCIS communicates social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students, and (2) in what ways the students experience taking a citizenship ESL class as future U.S. citizens. This chapter presents findings from the document analysis on the curriculum with a preliminary analysis of the citizenship application and 100 civics questions that framed the content knowledge of the curriculum. Moreover, it focused on discovering what was hidden and eliminated from the curriculum as it represented and distributed the civics knowledge for the curriculum units. Interviews with the participants revealed their experiences in feeling empowered with increased civics knowledge and engagement in social interactions with improved ESL skills, which helped them feel stronger and be more "equal" to the natural-born citizens. The participants also expressed the expected social status changes in their life after naturalization, which showed a high hope for American democracy.

Research Question I: How Does the Curriculum Communicate Social Structure, Power, and Social Justice with Adult ESL Students?

Civics questions and citizenship application are essential components of the content knowledge in the citizenship ESL curriculum. Therefore, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis before analyzing the curriculum in-depth to identify sections with information on social justice and power that could use a more discreet approach in delivering the content to the students. It is noteworthy that the curriculum provider, the USCIS, has changed the name of the grant program for offering citizenship education from "Citizenship and Assimilation" to "Citizenship and Integration" in the year 2020 (USCIS, 2021a). The unknown logic behind the

change of the program's focus from assimilation to integration raised a question about how the curriculum they designed to assimilate immigrants to U.S. citizens represented and distributed the content knowledge on the curriculum. The preliminary analysis found that the content for the curriculum (1) contained vocabulary that can cause traumatic stress to students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds, and (2) involved civics questions and answers that require a deeper understanding of social justice and the power of American democracy and social issues of the U.S.

Trauma-Related Vocabulary

The citizenship application form, also known as the "N-400 Form," is one of the first documents applicants must fill out and submit to the USCIS in preparation for the naturalization interview. The form asks applicants about their personal information to check applicants' backgrounds and eligibility for citizenship, such as their nation of origin, current address, time spent living in the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident, marital information, and criminal history. To help applicants who are learning English, N-400 is included in the citizenship ESL curriculum as part of the content knowledge to help them learn vocabulary and the sentence structure of questions asked in the application form.

The preliminary analysis identified the sections containing vocabulary that can cause trauma in students with immigrant or refugee backgrounds. Such vocabulary included "genocide" and "torture," which are *trauma-related vocabulary* that has the potential to cause extreme stress to students, especially those with traumatic immigrant/refugee backgrounds (Benseman, 2012; Finn, 2010). The sections containing trauma-related vocabulary were "Additional Information About You" and "Oath of Allegiance." The example questions and answers for the sections are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Questions from the N-400 with Trauma-Related Vocabulary

Section	Question	Answer
Part 12. Additional Information About You (Person applying for Naturalization)	#14. Were you **EVER** involved in any way with any of the following:	*Genocide* *Torture*
	#16. Were you **EVER** a worker, volunteer, or soldier, or did you otherwise **EVER** serve in any of the following:	*Prison or jail?* *Prison camp?* *Detention facility (a place where people are forced to stay)?* *A labor camp (a place where people are forced to work)?*
	#30. Have you **EVER**:	*Been a habitual drunkard?* *Been a prostitute, or procured anyone for prostitution?* *Been married to more than one person at the same time?* *Helped anyone to enter, or try to enter, the United States illegally?* *Failed to support your dependents or to pay alimony?*
	#48. If the law requires it, are you willing to *bear arms* on behalf of the United States?	Yes/No
Part 18. Oath of Allegiance	I hereby declare on oath… that I will *bear arms* on behalf of the United States when required by the law…	

The selected questions and answers contained vocabularies such as *genocide, torture, prison camp, detention facility, habitual drunkard, prostitute, killing, hurting, sexual contact,* or expressions like *bear arms*. One way to categorize these words is to consider them low-frequency words, which Nation (2013) defined as technical terms used in specific areas that individuals who do not share the same interest might not know. The low-frequency words such as genocide and torture are not often used in daily English conversations. Still, they would instead appear in specific areas of topics or sources that beginning-level ESL students are not likely to have experienced learning. According to Nation (2013), adult ESL students, especially

beginning-level students, tend to know less than 5,000 words in English. It takes 15,000 to 20,000 vocabulary words to understand English sentences containing low-frequency words.

In addition, the vocabulary mentioned above can also be culturally sensitive or emotionally triggering to students depending on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Adult immigrants, especially those with backgrounds as refugees, might experience traumatic stress due to "extreme events that cause harm, injury, or death, such as natural disasters, accidents, assaults, war-related experiences, and torture" (Benseman, 2012, p. 8). On that account, vocabulary such as *genocide, torture, killing, hurting, sexual contact, prison camp,* or *prostitution* can affect students with previous physical or mental trauma in filling out the application form (Finn, 2010). In addition, students with refugee backgrounds can experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that causes them (a) to have difficulty focusing, (b) not able to trust individuals with power, including teachers, and (c) to feel guilty in learning (Finn, 2010; Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016; Perlman, 2020).

Civics Questions Related to Social Justice and Power

The following sections contained civics contents about social structure and power within the 100 civics questions used in developing the citizenship ESL curriculum (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Civics Questions Related to Social Structure and Power

Section	Question	Answer
Rights and Responsibilities	#49. What is <u>one</u> responsibility that is only for the United States?	serve on a jury vote in a federal election
	#50. Name <u>one</u> right only for United States citizens.	vote in a federal election run for federal office
	#51. What are <u>two</u> rights of everyone living in the United States?	freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom to

		petition the government, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms
	#53. What is one promise you make when you become a United States citizen?	Give up loyalty to other countries. Defend the Constitution and laws of the United States. Obey the laws of the United States. Serve in the U.S. military (if needed) Serve (do important work for) the nation (if needed), Be loyal to the United States
	#55. What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?	Vote. Join a political party. Help with a campaign. Join a civic group. Join a community group. Give an elected official your opinion on an issue. Call Senators and Representatives. Publicly support or oppose an issue or policy. Run for office. Write to a newspaper.
Colonial Period and Independence	#59. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived?	American Indians, Native Americans
	#60. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?	Africans, people from Africa
Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information	#84. What movement tried to end racial discrimination?	civil rights (movement)
	#87. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.	Cherokee, Navajo, Sioux, Choctaw, Pueblo, Apache, Iroquois, Creek, Blackfeet, Seminole, Cheyenne, Arawak, Shawnee, Mohegan, Huron, Oneida, Lakota, Crow, Teton, Hopi, Inuit

Such civics questions delivered the content knowledge of how U.S. citizens can have rights, essential democratic values, and about different races living in the U.S., such as the Native Americans and African Americans. However, the questions and answers only cover partial and limited knowledge about the social structure without an in-depth explanation of how the rights function practically for immigrants and future citizens.

According to Loring (2013), the addressed rights in the civics questions are "selective." The test material excluded other rights of citizens, such as Miranda rights, the right to

interpretation and translation, and witness-protection rights. The rights of U.S. citizens include the "right to a prompt, fair trial by jury, right to apply for federal employment requiring U.S. citizenship, freedom to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (USCIS, 2021a). However, the citizenship test material does not explain these rights. Moreover, the races of the United States include White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), which was also not represented in the civics questions.

Sub-Question I: How Is the Civics Knowledge Distributed and Represented in the Curriculum?

The first sub-question for the research question, "How does the curriculum communicate social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students?" focused on analyzing the curriculum on how the civics knowledge about American government and history was represented and distributed in the curriculum. It aimed to examine if a specific part of the content knowledge was more emphasized than the other in the curriculum regarding content about social structure and power. The goal was to reveal any excluded civics questions or the content on the curriculum, which can lead to biased or misguided learning for adult ESL students and citizenship applicants. Briefly, the findings indicate that (1) the most signified topic of the curriculum was the U.S. government system followed by the principles of American democracy, (2) three of the civics questions were removed from the curriculum, which were exclusively about the U.S. history on Native Americans, and (3) there was a mismatch in the representation and distribution of the civics knowledge required for citizenship applicants who are 18-64 years old and applicants 65 years and older.

Civics Knowledge Represented in the Curriculum

The curriculum contained 100 civics questions as part of the primary content knowledge for the beginning-level adult ESL students. The curriculum contained lessons for 15 weeks, and the civics questions were distributed in each unit with different topics to form a relevant lesson for the topic. The lesson topics included "American Symbols and Celebrations," "George Washington," "Judicial Branch," "Thomas Jefferson," "Bill of Rights," "Fighting for Our Rights," "U.S. Wars of 1800," and so on, covering U.S. history and the system of the government required for the citizenship test.

The representation and distribution of civics knowledge were analyzed by the number of times each civics question was introduced in the curriculum. For example, the researcher counted the number of civics questions mentioned in a curriculum to determine how much percentage they take up from the overall representation of the civics questions. If most questions shown in the curriculum were from one category of the civics knowledge, such as "American Government," then the information on the American government was the most emphasized content knowledge in the curriculum. The findings indicated that among the three big categories of the civics questions, the most highlighted category was the "American Government" (57.66%), followed by "American History" (24.32%), and "Integrated Civics" (18.02%).

For the subsections within those three categories, the most mentioned subcategory of the civics knowledge was the "System of Government" (34.23%), followed by "Rights and Responsibilities" (12.16%), "Principles of American Democracy" (11.26%), "Colonial Period, and Independence" (9.91%), "1800s History" (9.46%), "Geography" (9.01%), "Holidays" (5.41%), "Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information" (4.95%), and lastly, the "Symbols" (3.60%), as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Distribution of Subsections within Civics Questions

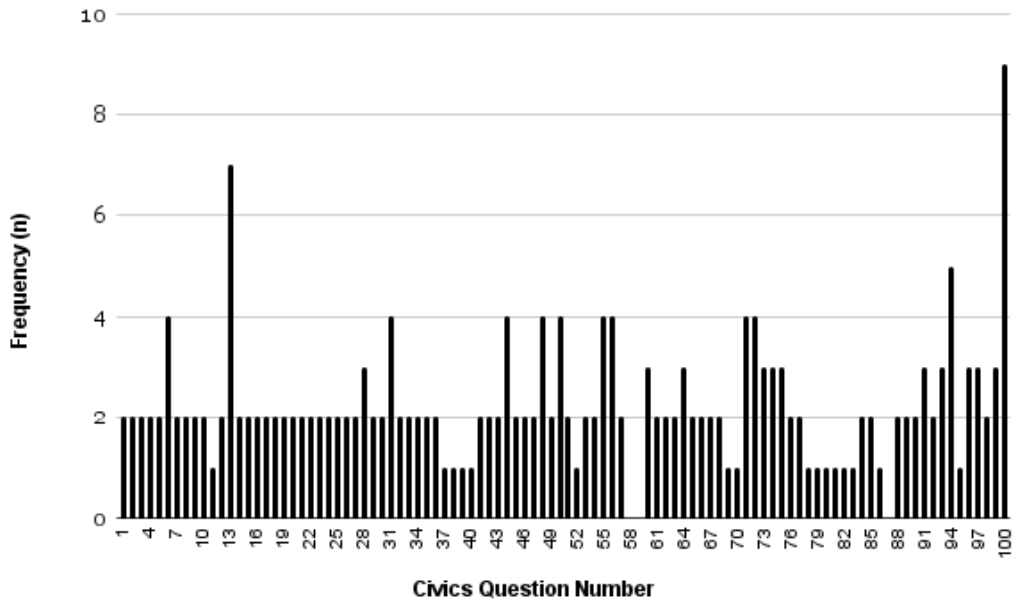
Subsection	Percentage
System of Government	34.23%
Rights and Responsibilities	12.16%
Principles of American Democracy	11.26%
Colonial Period and Independence	9.91%
1800s	9.46%
Geography	9.01%
Holidays	5.41%
Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information	4.95%
Symbols	3.60%

The differences in the emphasis for each section indicated what was more valued over other sections of the civics knowledge. Therefore, it proves plausible that the most valuable principle in civics knowledge was the American government system, followed by the rights and responsibilities and the principles of American democracy. U.S. history was less emphasized than the government system, and holidays, recent American history, and symbols were the least stressed in the curriculum.

The number of each specific civics questions from question number 1 to 100 was also counted to see which questions were more highlighted than other questions in the curriculum (see Figure 4.1). The most frequently asked civics question in the curriculum was “Name two national U.S. holidays (#100),” which was from the subsection called “Holidays.” The question was mentioned nine times throughout the curriculum, while the other questions were mentioned an average of only 2.22 times on the curriculum.

Figure 4.1

Frequency of Civics Questions in the Curriculum



While the most emphasized section or category of the civics knowledge was "System of Government," the most emphasized question throughout the curriculum was about the U.S. holidays. The second most frequently mentioned question was "Name one branch or part of the government (#13)" from the "System of Government," followed by "What is the capital of the United States? (#94)" within the subsection of "Geography." Therefore, there was no precise coordination between the category of the most frequently brought up question (e.g., U.S. holidays) with the most mentioned area of civics knowledge (e.g., the system of government) in the curriculum.

However, it is reasonable to consider that the question about the U.S. holidays appears the most because lessons on the curriculum included content knowledge about the American government and history that affected a declaration and celebration of a U.S. holiday. The most frequently mentioned question, "Name two national U.S. holidays (#100)," appeared in nine

curriculum lessons. Each lesson was about “American Symbols and Celebration,” “George Washington,” “Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence,” “Equality and Freedom,” “U.S. Wars in the 1800s,” “Abraham Lincoln,” and “U.S. History Since 1900.” According to those topics and assigned civics questions related to the topic for the lesson, the U.S. holidays represented in each lesson include Independence Day, Presidents’ Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Veteran’s Day, and Memorial Day.

Misalignment Between Test Questions and the Curriculum: Excluded Contents

Another finding indicates a misalignment between the civics questions required for the U.S. citizenship test and the lessons covered in the citizenship education curriculum. The curriculum had 25 lessons altogether. However, none of the lessons covered the U.S. history of the colonial period and Native Americans, and the curriculum removed citizenship test questions representing those topics. The curriculum did not include the citizenship questions #58, #59, and #87, and those were the only three questions removed from the 100 civics questions. The questions were, “What is one reason colonists came to America? (#58),” “Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived? (#59),” and “Name one American Indian tribe in the United States. (#87).”

Due to this fact, the content knowledge on the curriculum was limited and would not likely be fully delivered to adult ESL students. For example, U.S. holidays such as Indigenous People’s Day and other historical information related to Native Americans and the colonial period would have to be learned alternatively other than following the curriculum. The curriculum only partially covered the topic of the colonial period in a lesson titled “Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.” The lesson covered questions such as “Why did the colonists fight the British?” “Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?” “Who is the

Father of Our Country?" and "What happened at the Constitutional Convention?" Notably, the questions were focused on the start of the United States when the country declared independence from the British and the Founding Fathers of America, emphasizing the first great triumph of the United States as a nation.

Native American History Vanishing into Thin Air

The only part of the content knowledge that was completely removed from the curriculum was the history portion of Native Americans. However, this might not be unusual or extraordinary since some of the K-12 schools in the U.S. also do not teach Native American history or refuse to add it to their curriculum even if the instructional policies require the inclusion of Native American history of the state (Benally, 2019; Gross & Terra, 2018). For example, teachers and students in Arizona, where Native American history is mandatory, paid little attention to the policy, and often they were not even aware that such policy exists. Even if they knew about the policy, they found the policy vague since the policy only states that "[teachers should] incorporate instruction on Native American history into appropriate existing curricula" (Ariz. Rev. Stat. 15-341) without any practical application to make it happen. Benally (2019) asserted that the lack of knowledge of Native American history makes it difficult for teachers to plan their lessons. In addition, many students do not have experience learning Native American history before, and teachers are not sure how to approach Native American history when they do not know how each tribe wants to deliver their stories.

Thus, excluding Native American history from the civics content for the citizenship education curriculum for adult ESL students would lead to a lack of knowledge about Native Americans. The USCIS has served more than 25,000 citizenship applicants with the citizenship and integration grant program (USCIS, 2021a), and the curriculum from the USCIS missing the

history of Native Americans is questionable. As Curtis and Curran (2015) emphasized, community-based English classes are, in many cases, the only source of education provided for adult ESL students. Therefore, it is concerning that the curriculum has eliminated an essential part of U.S. history.

Mismatch in Distribution of Civics Knowledge Depending on Applicants' Age

Between 2015 and 2019, about 90.3% of the citizenship applicants were aged between 18-64 years old, and applicants who were 65 years and older were about 9.7% (USCIS, 2021c). Applicants who are 65 years and older can study a shorter version of civics questions, which only has 20 questions out of 100 civics questions. The 20 questions consist of seven questions about the system of American government, three questions about the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, two questions about the principles of American democracy, two questions about recent American history, another two from geography, and one question from each of the category including U.S. independence, 1800s history, symbols, and holidays. The examples of the 20 questions included "What is the economic system in the United States?" "What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?" "In what month do we vote for President?" and "When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?"

The civics questions for 65 years and older applicants were represented and distributed in the curriculum as shown in Table 4.4, compared to the civics content distribution for 18-64 years old applicants. The findings indicate that, compared to examining the distribution of all 100 civics questions, the 20 questions required for 65 years and older applicants showed similarities and differences from the applicants aged between 18-64 years old in representing the content knowledge.

Table 4.4

Distribution of Civics Content for 18-64 Years Old (left) and 65 Years and Older (right)

Subsection	Percentage
System of Government	34.23%
Rights and Responsibilities	12.16%
Principles of American Democracy	11.26%
Colonial Period and Independence	9.91%
1800s	9.46%
Geography	9.01%
Holidays	5.41%
Recent American History	4.95%
Symbols	3.60%

Subsection	Percentage
System of Government	40.74%
Rights and Responsibilities	14.81%
Geography	11.11%
Principles of American Democracy	9.26%
1800s	5.56%
Holidays	5.56%
Recent American History	5.56%
Symbols	5.56%
Colonial Period and Independence	1.85%

First, the two most emphasized categories of civics questions were the same: "System of Government" and "Rights and Responsibilities." However, the 65 years and older applicants had relatively more exposure to learning about "Geography," whereas the 18-64 years old applicants were more exposed to the "Principles of American Democracy." The most significant difference between the two groups was the different emphasis on U.S. history. The 65 years and older applicants only had four questions about American history and thus represented less than other sections of the civics knowledge curriculum.

The logic behind the selected civics questions only for applicants who are 65 years and older might be due to several reasons, including that they are (a) essential knowledge about the U.S. civics, (b) age-appropriate with relatively easy answers and less historical information to memorize, and (c) practical information such as the current President's name, last day to send in federal income tax forms, and what month the people vote for the President. The most frequently

introduced question in the curriculum for applicants 65 years and older was “Name one branch of part of the government,” followed by “What is the capital of the United States?” “What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?” and “When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?” The questions were mainly about the American government system, geography, and rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens.

Sub-Question II: In What Ways Does the Curriculum Combine ESL Education and Citizenship Education for Adult ESL Students?

The second sub-question focused on analyzing how the curriculum's lessons combined ESL education with citizenship education to help adult ESL students acquire civics content knowledge. Since the target students of the curriculum were low-beginning level ESL students, the delivery of the content knowledge to the students should be aligned with relevant language knowledge to help students understand the content better while also improving their ESL skills. Therefore, this research examined the composition of lessons in the curriculum combining ESL skills and civics knowledge of U.S. history and government based on the structure of a lesson in a curriculum. Each curriculum lesson comprises nine sections dedicated to each category needed for citizenship ESL education, as shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

ESL Skills and Content Knowledge of a Lesson

Week 7 · Day 2—(Date)

Lesson	ESL	N-400	Chapter	Speaking Test	Civics Test	Reading Test	Writing Test	Civics Questions
Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence	Simple past with high frequency regular verbs	Part 12 – Additional Information About You (Questions 16-21)	##	4bb 4cc	5a 8a 8d 8e 9a 12a 12c 12d	13a 13b 13c 13d 13e 13f 13g 13h	14a 14b 14c 14d 14e 14f 14g 14h	8, 9, 61, 62 63, 64, 71 96, 97, 99 100

The section titled “ESL” is related to the language objectives of the lesson, while “N-400” and “Civics Questions” are the content objectives of the lesson. The lessons' structure can be considered content-based instruction (CBI), which contains language and content objectives (Spenader, 2020). In Figure 4.2, the lesson title is “Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.” The dedicated ESL knowledge of the unit is the grammar skills for the simple past tense with high-frequency regular verbs combined with the content of the citizenship application (N-400) questions on “Part 12: Additional Information About You (Questions 16-21)” and the civics questions distributed in the lesson related to the topic of the lesson.

Regarding the content knowledge, the analysis focused on the sections identified explicitly from the preliminary analysis, such as areas of the content knowledge which used vocabulary that might cause traumatic stress to the adult ESL students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds. Specifically, this analysis section focused on the civics questions and answers from the preliminary analysis that lacked information and explanations on the social structure and power, which could be problematic for adult ESL students to acquire without proper language knowledge. The findings indicate that (1) there were too many content standards assigned in a lesson to follow that can lead to ineffective learning for ESL students, (2) the ESL skills selected and represented in the lessons were highly grammar-based with varying relevance to the content knowledge, and (3) vocabulary acquisition lacked guidance and information for teachers and students.

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Content Standards

According to Spenader (2020), content-based instruction (CBI) is “a pedagogical approach that commits to addressing both language and content learning objectives, so that students work towards learning both simultaneously” (p. 477). Based on the structure of units of

the curriculum, which combined ESL learning with the content knowledge of civics education, the citizenship ESL curriculum had a suitable format of a CBI with both language objectives and content objectives. Moreover, each lesson had content standards related to speaking, reading, and writing for the English portions of the citizenship test. The skills placed in each lesson, shown as a combination of a number and a letter (e.g., 13a, 13b, 14a, 14b), represented foundational standards excerpted from the "Guide to the Adult Citizenship Education Content Standards and Foundation Skills," which was the guide used as a framework in developing the curriculum (USCIS, 2018).

In general, academic standards address the goals of lessons with skills and knowledge that students are supposed to accomplish within a lesson or a particular academic period or term (Rao & Meo, 2016). However, the content standards included in the curriculum mainly were conceptual that did not practically help with citizenship ESL learning. The number of content standards included in the curriculum for each lesson is shown in Table 4.5, and the curriculum had a total of 25 lessons.

Table 4.5

The Number of Content Standards per Lesson

English Content	Number of Content Standards per Lesson
Speaking Test	Min.= 1, Max.= 4, Mean =2.04
Civics Test	Min.=3, Max.=14, Mean=8.29
Reading Test	Min.=5, Max.=8, Mean=6.13
Writing Test	Min.=3, Max.=8, Mean=5.63

An example of the standards used for this curriculum stated, "students can correctly read aloud people's names within written interrogative sentences (13a)" as a reading standard. In addition, one of the writing standards stated, "students can correctly write people's names within dictated

declarative sentences (14a)" (USCIS, 2018, p. 16). Each curriculum lesson has several content standards, which can be too many for one lesson, especially for content-based instruction that has to be designed coherently for both language learning and content knowledge acquisition. The civics test section of the lesson had the most content standards at an average of 8.29 standards, while the maximum number of standards a lesson had was 14 standards. Reading test preparation for each lesson had an average of 6.13 standards. The section with the least number of content standards was the speaking test preparation, with an average of 2.04 standards. An example of the content standard for speaking test preparation includes "students can respond orally and correctly to a variety of possible questions posed by officers regarding additional information requested of the applicant (4cc)" (USCIS, 2018, p. 9).

Having too many standards in one lesson can cause the lesson to be less cohesive, especially when the standards lack details and fail to meet student variations (Khan et al., 2019; Martin-Beltrán & Peercy, 2012; Rao & Meo, 2016). Learner variability exists in every classroom, and too many standards assigned for one lesson can make the learning experience complex to meet students' needs (Rao & Meo, 2016). In addition, effective lesson planning for content-based instruction should focus on the arranged subject-specific content for language learning that requires a logical connection between the content and language (Khan et al., 2019). Drost and Levine (2015) defined the connection as an effective alignment that ensures "congruence between the standards, learning objectives, assessments, and instructional activities" (p. 38). Therefore, assigning multiple standards at the same time for a lesson can make not only the learning difficult but also assessments and activity planning complicated as well.

Highly Grammar-Based ESL Learning with Varying Relevance

Teaching grammar in ESL education is essential since a lot of ESL students find it difficult, and grammar structure takes a long time to acquire, which needs a thorough inspection of the effectiveness of the methods of instruction (Azizpour & Alavinia, 2021; Lytovchenko et al., 2020; Sauro, 2021). To help ESL students learn English grammar effectively, many practices and studies focused on making grammar teaching contextual rather than having it exclusive to the grammatical forms (Azizpour & Alavinia, 2021; Long, 2000). Grammar acquisition, especially for adult ESL students, requires exposure to situational and authentic contexts using communicative approaches to make learning practical and memorable for daily social interactions (Lytovchenko et al., 2020; Sauro, 2021). Therefore, grammar teaching for adult ESL students provides contextual activities to practice grammatical structures and sentences to improve English conversational skills and communicative proficiency.

However, the ESL skills and knowledge assigned for each lesson were exclusively grammar-based in the curriculum. Each lesson had a section on ESL learning with only one or two grammar skills to be learned as a language objective. The lessons did not contain instructions on communicative proficiency or situational contexts to practice the grammar structures.

The researcher analyzed the combination of language objectives and content objectives, focusing on the civics knowledge that contained content about social structure and power. It was to understand how the curriculum communicates its content to adult ESL students. The identified lessons with the contents of social structure and power and the ESL knowledge and skills provided for each lesson are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Combined ESL Knowledge and Civics Content

Lesson	Civics Questions	N-400	ESL
Your Government and You	#50, #53, #55	-	Past tense of the verb TO HAVE (has/have)
Your Government and You	#50, #53, #55	-	Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g., have to+verb)
Legislative Branch	#55	-	Simple *wh*-question and response to "how" Present tense of the verb TO DO
Legislative Branch	#55	-	Other common irregular verbs in the present tense
Judicial Branch	-	Part 12-Additional Information About You (Question 14)	There is/ There are
Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence	-	Part 12-Additional Information About You (Question 16)	Simple past with high-frequency regular verbs
Benjamin Franklin and the U.S. Constitution	-	Part 12-Additional Information About You (Question 30)	Past tense of the verb TO BE
Bill of Rights and Other Amendments	#50, #51	-	Past tense of the verb TO HAVE
Bill of Rights and Other Amendments	#50, #51	Part 12-Additional Information About You (Question 48)	Conjunctions-*and/or*
Equality and Freedom	#84	-	Past tense of the verb TO DO
Abraham Lincoln	#60	-	Other common irregular verbs in the past tense
Civil War	#60	-	Subject-verb agreement
Civil War	#60	Part 18-Oath of Allegiance	Adjective + noun/ Future tense

Each lesson assigned English grammar skills and knowledge such as the past tense of the verb *to have,* modal auxiliary verbs, simple *wh*-question, common irregular verbs in the present tense, simple past with high-frequency regular verbs, conjunctions *and/or* and subject-verb agreement. Based on the emphasis on the grammatical structure, the curriculum was mainly focused on English grammar and considered it a core element of the ESL learning required for content acquisition. Following analysis focused on to what extent each English grammar skill or knowledge provided in the lesson was relevant to the content to make language learning and content knowledge acquisition effective.

Grammar Knowledge and Content Relevance

The researcher determined the relationship between the grammatical feature and the content knowledge for each lesson by the relevance of how the grammar skill was directly applicable to the assigned civics questions and the designated section of citizenship application. The relevance analyzed between the grammar structure and the content knowledge of each lesson is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Relevance of the ESL Knowledge to the Civics Content

ESL Relevance to the Content	Unit Percentage
Low	23.08%
Moderate	38.46%
High	38.46%

The *low relevance* was for an assigned grammar structure of a lesson that does not apply or is irrelevant to the content. *Moderate relevance* was for a grammar structure generally used with an implicit application to the given content. *High relevance* was for explicit connection to the

designated content to help students learn the content knowledge with the help of the grammar structure.

As an example of low relevance, a lesson titled “Judicial Branch” (see Table 4.6) introduced *there is/there are* to have students learn the singular and plural forms of describing the status of objects in a sentence. However, the lesson's content covered a question from the citizenship application, which included grammar skills for the past perfect tense in an interrogative form of “Were you *ever*…?” Therefore, the designated grammar structure was not helpful or related to the content knowledge and was analyzed to have “low” relevance to the content. For moderate relevance, a lesson titled “Civil War” focused on the subject-verb agreement (SVA), and one of the civics questions of the unit was “What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?” The grammar skill of SVA had relevance to the question of learning verbs *is/are* with a singular and plural noun. However, since the grammar structure for the unit was very generic, which is related to any sentence structure with a subject and verb, the researcher analyzed it as “moderate” relevance.

A grammar structure with “high” relevance to the content was the conjunctions *and/or*. The lesson contained a civics question “What are two rights of everyone in the United States?” The students could learn both the grammatical skill and content knowledge by stating two or more rights with the conjunction *and*, such as “freedom of speech *and* freedom of assembly.” Thus, the researcher analyzed the grammar knowledge to have “high” relevance to the content. However, grammar structures selected for the lessons with a moderate to high relevance were primarily generic and basic, such as subject-verb agreement and conjunctions including *and/or,* which are beneficial to learn as a beginning level ESL student. However, all of the ESL-specific

portions were about grammar skills, which is questionable for students who need communicative skills that they can implement grammar knowledge into practice.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge for Content Acquisition

Vocabulary learning for ESL students is crucial, and it is a fundamental element that students need to expand other English skills (O'Neill, 2019). It is essential for communicative competence, including oral language proficiency, which can help students in conversational English for everyday life (Alghamdi, 2019). There are different ways of vocabulary learning, including an explicit method through vocabulary-focused instruction and an implicit way of vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading (Chang, 2018; O'Neill, 2019). However, the citizenship ESL curriculum only provides a broad and abstract concept of vocabulary learning as content standards throughout the lessons since the ESL portion of all units focuses only on grammar skills. It can lead to less emphasis on vocabulary learning with limited knowledge and information for curriculum users.

Based on the preliminary analysis of the curriculum, certain portions of the content knowledge contained trauma-related vocabulary, which can cause traumatic stress for beginning-level adult ESL students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The content standards for the lessons related to vocabulary acquisition only vaguely mention that students should be able to understand the vocabulary and meanings of the civics questions and citizenship application (USCIS, 2018). One specific section of the content knowledge that required the aforementioned trauma-related vocabulary was within the citizenship application titled "Part 12 Additional Information About You." The standards for that section specifically stated that the section "contains a significant amount of information on a variety of themes and sub-themes" (USCIS, 2018, p. 9). However, the curriculum does not guide vocabulary learning. A content

standard related to vocabulary acquisition only states, “students can understand the vocabulary and meaning of possible questions posed by officers regarding additional information requested of the applicant (4bb)” (USCIS, 2018, p. 9). Therefore, the abstract standards for vocabulary acquisition are not enough to learn the essential vocabulary needed for citizenship ESL education.

Interpretation of the Curriculum as a Discourse

The most important finding from the document analysis of the curriculum was the exclusion of civics questions about the colonial period and Native Americans since those were the only questions eliminated from the content knowledge. It indicates that the knowledge providers affect the selection of knowledge and academic discourses given to the students without thoroughly examining its effect on students’ long-term educational goals (Hook, 2007). Angermuller (2018) emphasized the need to analyze a discourse to reveal what is untold and not seen regarding the discourse's power dynamics. Therefore, the relationship between the knowledge providers and the knowledge consumers should be considered when analyzing a curriculum conveying academic discourses. For instance, the smallest number of citizenship applicants, aged 65 years and older, are receiving knowledge that is even shortened and summarized to be considered essential but can also limit what they learn about the American government and history.

In addition, the lack of focus on trauma-related vocabulary with multiple standards to be covered in each lesson can make the learning and teaching of the content less effective and complicated. As the curriculum represents the underlying values of the civics knowledge, especially principles of American democracy required to become a citizen, the most emphasized areas of the curriculum were the system of the American government and the rights and

responsibilities of U.S. citizens. According to Pillay (2016), curriculums can be a political tool throughout the process of curriculum planning and enactment "that is silent about who and what it attempts to address is, in this sense, deeply problematic and very political in its silences" (p. 528). Therefore, it is rather what is untold and hidden in the silence that forms an essential aspect of a given academic discourse or a curriculum that has two ends of interest as the knowledge providers and consumers. After analyzing the curriculum to inspect how it represented the civics knowledge, the following section presents how the adult ESL students experienced taking a citizenship ESL class.

Research Question II: In What Ways Do Adult ESL Students Experience Taking a Citizenship Education Class as Future U.S. Citizens?

Social empowerment of individuals within a society is "concerned with matters of the empowering individuals in settings of their immediate sociability" (Herrmann, 2012, p. 200). At an individual level of social empowerment, the focus is on how individuals develop ownership in their surroundings (Hermann, 2012). However, social empowerment of individuals has its limitations since the society would prioritize protecting the current system of social structure over allowing individuals to become too powerful, especially when the individuals already hold relatively less power (Adams et al., 2005; Herrmann, 2012). Adult ESL students, especially those who are citizenship applicants, are in a tricky spot regarding social power dynamics since their identities entail that they are (a) immigrants, (b) adult ESL learners, and (c) citizenship applicants. The process they have to undergo to be accepted in society as citizens, to have the same rights and benefits as natural-born citizens, has multiple gates. To help applicants with the process, community-based institutions provide citizenship ESL classes which often is the only source of education for citizenship applicants seeking help (Larrotta, 2017; Paloma et al., 2018).

Taking classes for language and civics knowledge to achieve citizenship can be a gateway to social empowerment for immigrants. Therefore, it is important to hear from the adult immigrant students about their experiences in taking the citizenship ESL class and how the education affected their social empowerment in terms of expected changes in their social status and educational achievement.

The findings of this section present the different levels of social empowerment that the participants experienced by taking a citizenship ESL class. From the interview data, four different levels of social empowerment emerged as themes, which are the (1) *individual-level* of social empowerment based on participants' satisfactory feelings towards education with positive outcomes such as growing cultural attachment and a sense of achievement, and (2) *family-level* of social empowerment as an attempt to reduce the generational gap between the first generation immigrants and their children, (3) *community-level* of social empowerment that promotes engagement in social interactions at workplaces and daily activities, and (4) *societal-level* of social empowerment related to the participants' expectations in their lives and changes in social status after becoming U.S. citizens with a strong belief in American democracy.

Sub-Question I: How Do Adult ESL Students Experience Learning ESL and Civics Knowledge at the Same Time to Become a U.S. Citizen?

According to Larrotta (2017), both documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States participate in community-based education to support themselves in improving language skills and increase their chances of community engagement. Active engagement in the community impacts adult ESL students' perception of their surroundings, which starts from a personal-level reflection, identifying their families as members of the community, and to a community-level contemplation of their role as workers, parents, and future citizens (Sugiman,

2015; Perren et al., 2013; Tadayon & Khodi, 2016). Paloma et al. (2018) explained that studying language and participating in community events affect immigrants' feelings of connectedness and a sense of belonging, which can initiate psychological empowerment through intrapersonal and interpersonal psychological development. This sub-question, therefore, focused on the different levels of perceiving the social empowerment that participants experienced in taking the citizenship ESL program in which they learned ESL and civics knowledge at the same time.

Individual-Level Social Empowerment: Emotional Satisfaction and Sense of Achievement

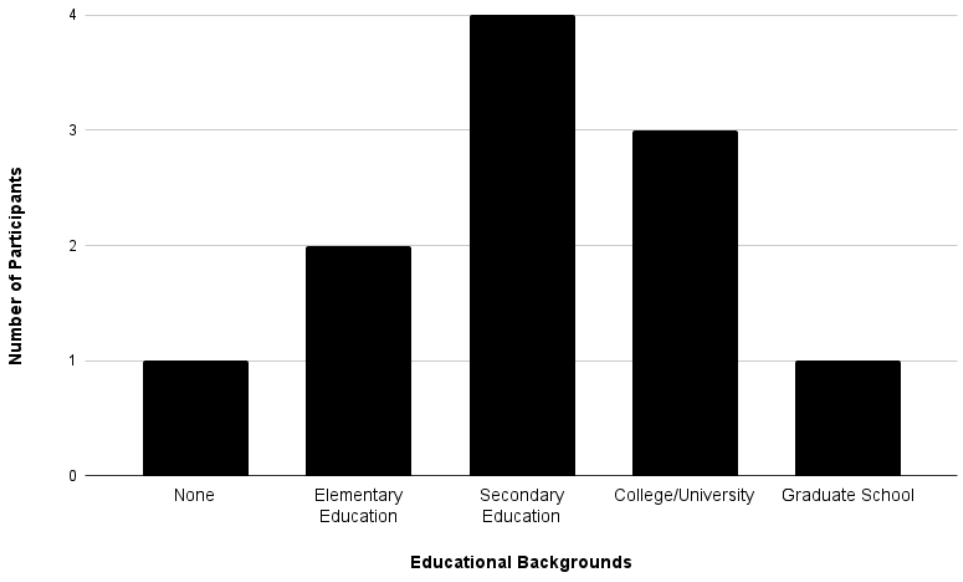
Individual-level social empowerment derives from individuals' development that enables them to feel stronger in social interactions within their surroundings, mainly by growing social skills needed to be more involved in their communities (Adams & Blandford, 2005; Herrmann, 2012). One way to experience social empowerment at an individual level for adult ESL students is by improving ESL skills and growing cultural attachment with civics education through a community-based institution that offers easily accessible and cost-effective education (Larrotta, 2017). Based on participants' responses to their experiences of taking a citizenship ESL class at a local institution, they experienced emotional satisfaction expressed as "excitement," "fulfilling," "sense of achievement," and "happiness." Moreover, participants were highly motivated to learn and appreciated being in class. A sense of achievement due to learning ESL and civics knowledge contributed to participants' individual-level social empowerment with emotional satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment. In specific, the following factors contributed to participants' experiences of individual-level social empowerment: (a) passion for learning as a strong motivation and a sense of achievement, (b) growing and nurturing cultural attachment, and (c) feeling supported in class in addition to receiving practical assistance in applying for citizenship.

Passion for Learning as an Integrative Motivation

10 out of 11 participants currently taking the citizenship ESL program expressed that they were emotionally satisfied with the class with descriptions of positive emotions such as *glad*, *happiness*, *enjoyment*, and *feeling supported*. Most of the participants were in their 50s and 60s (54.55%), followed by participants in their 40s (36.36%) and 20s (9.09%). Therefore, being back in a classroom was a source of excitement. The passion for learning also came from being actively involved in learning to accomplish a short-term goal of achieving citizenship and a long-term goal of improving English skills and being culturally more engaged in their community. The participants had diverse backgrounds in education, from no specific experience in school to higher education such as colleges and graduate schools (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3

Educational Backgrounds of the Participants



The educational backgrounds varied among participants, in which about 27.3% of the participants had elementary school education or no educational background, while 36.4% of

them went to high school. Three of them finished college, and one participant was accepted to a university in Mexico but dropped out due to financial issues. Most of them had finished their education in their home country (*n*=9), and two had experience in taking education in the U.S. One participant finished elementary school in Mexico and went to middle school and high school in the U.S., while the other finished college in Turkey and came to the U.S. to proceed with a master's degree.

However, regardless of their previous experience in education, participants showed a strong passion and enthusiasm for learning, which affected their emotional satisfaction in taking the citizenship ESL class, making them feel like they were back in school. Rafael is a participant who finished high school in Mexico, and he explained,

> Being in class makes me remember the times I was in school as a kid. I don't think I cared much about what I was learning back then. But now I am older, and learning these is more exciting (October 21, 2021).

Similarly, Ivan, who finished college in Russia, enjoyed being back in class after more than 20 years of not being in school.

> It's just fun to learn more. Learning history again makes me want to study more. I like studying history. My daughter found this class for me when I decided to get citizenship. It is my first time taking an ESL class, and my wife and I enjoy it. We feel like we're back in school and reading a textbook (June 29, 2021).

Ligaya, a student who went to college in the Philippines, expressed her satisfaction with the class that teaches her both ESL skills and citizenship education.

> Taking classes is good for me. I can study all about American history and government. I love learning a language and learning other things. When I first came here, I talked to no one else but my family, so my speaking was always not good. But now, I feel more confident that I can talk more and louder (July 13, 2021).

A passion for learning motivated participants to take the citizenship ESL class to achieve their goals, which is related to studies on motivation for ESL learners as an intrinsic factor for learning that derives from a desire for self-accomplishment (Igoudin, 2008). It seems plausible that participants might have enrolled in the citizenship ESL class only to prepare for the naturalization test at first, which is related to the instrumental motivation of language learning that focuses solely on improving language to accomplish specific objectives (Hong & Ganapathy, 2017).

However, participants showed more integrative motivation, leading to in-depth learning of language and culture, than instrumental motivation in language learning (Dornyei, 2001; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017). About 90.9% of participants communicated feelings of excitement and willingness to learn more about the country than simply getting ready for the test. In other words, most of the participants expressed a strong intrinsic factor of learning which functions as an integrative motivation for learning ESL and civics knowledge. It can help students learn the language itself and the cultural values of the speakers of the language, leading to a continuous enjoyment of learning (Hong & Ganapathy, 2017). Emilio, who could not continue his education due to a financial problem back in Mexico, was strongly motivated to learn.

> I just want to get better at everything, including the language. I love learning. Learning is important for my kids and me, and my job. I have to speak to many people at my work, sometimes 20 to 30 guys. It's better to know how to speak English more and better. It is good to learn the language and other things they teach me in class about this country, the people, and the history. I know more now (October 16, 2021).

Significantly, participants who are 60 years and older expressed a strong passion for learning and being in a class in which they can prove to themselves and other people that they are capable of learning more. For example, Samira is a 65-year-old participant, and she stated,

> I told people around me that I was getting U.S. citizenship. I'm 62 years old. I have a grandson who is 13 years old. I am happy to show him that anyone with a strong mind can do anything. Learning makes me happy because I like history. I love learning every history (July 13, 2021).

Similarly, Samuel, who is 61 years old, explained why he enjoys learning as,

> What I study for the test is not difficult for me because it gives me a chance to know my capacity and ability to learn these. I see the question, and I understand the answer. This is not difficult for me at all, and I need to learn (June 30, 2021).

Therefore, the participants had strong internal factors for learning English, such as the excitement for continuing education and motivation to attend the class (Igoudin, 2008). They expressed their desire to learn more about the country they want to be part of while improving ESL skills and preparing for the citizenship test.

Growing and Nurturing Cultural Attachment

Cultural attachment is another aspect affected by improved language skills and civics knowledge through citizenship ESL education. Knowing more about the country's language and history makes learners feel more connected to the country's culture (Kramsch, 2014). The social empowerment due to the growth in cultural attachment that individuals experience towards the country is analyzed in this section to explore how the immigrant students find themselves in the society. According to Polek et al. (2008), cultural attachment affects immigrants' social functioning and problem-solving skills in a new environment. Immigrants face the new culture they need to adapt to construct social connections, impacting their "emotional and behavioral patterns of interpersonal relationships" (Polek et al., 2010, p. 64).

Language learning is a way of growing cultural attachment since culture and language have a significant relationship, as Kramsch (2014) claimed that "culture is encoded in the linguistic sign and its use" (p. 32). Culture consists of socially constructed values between people

with a linguistic system to convey meanings and share the values (Belli, 2018; Kramsch, 2014; Oxford & Gkonou, 2018). Therefore, as they improve their English skills, adult ESL students can embrace and understand more about the culture that encompasses the system of language. Aiyla, who moved from Turkey to the U.S. to get married to her Turkish-American husband about four years ago, explained,

> I want to learn the culture and language to prepare myself to become a citizen here. All materials I have in class and around me are helpful to me. When I'm reading, I can see the words people use. When I listen, I can make my pronunciation correct. Watching videos helps in real life, too, because these are more real sentences and more real listening. People actually use and talk like that (July 10, 2021).

In addition, Aiyla expressed her interpretation of learning a language and the culture of the country, indicating that the process of learning a language and culture is naturally a long-term goal.

> Learning a language and culture, I think, is a big journey. And it wouldn't finish. It will not finish. And I need to do that. I have to do that because this is a long process that makes me combine with other people. It is difficult, but I would like to do that. If I learn English very well, I can pass the citizenship test easily. That's why this journey is more challenging to me, but I can see the end of this journey. It will be great for me (July 10, 2021).

Ligaya, who got married to her American husband and moved from the Philippines to the U.S. five years ago, stated her thoughts about learning language and culture as she described,

> I am living here, and I want to be part of the culture. I want to embrace it all. The way I love my husband and the kids, the way I am part of them. Whatever they are, I want to be in it as part of their lives. I am learning language and culture to be with them. If you get citizenship, you will be part of the country. It's like you represent the country, and the way you love the country is to adopt the culture and everything. It's good for me to learn this and meet new people and the culture. It's very nice and amazing (July 13, 2021).

The integrative motivation of learning English is not only to learn the language itself but to learn about the culture that uses the language (Hong & Ganapathy, 2017). Agustina, who has lived in the U.S. for 29 years, conveyed her thoughts on the culture, language, and people.

> I want to be like them, know what they do, and the people around me. I want to learn. I didn't think of implementing whatever I learned into my life when I was growing up, but now I can learn, and I know it's about culture. As long as they tell me, or I learn the discipline, I can pay attention and have a bond with the people. I need them. After learning more about the culture, I can share what's good or bad (June 30, 2021).

Like Agustina, participants who have lived in the U.S. for a long time seemed to have already built a strong connection to the U.S. and its culture since the time they spent here was almost the same as they had spent growing up in their home country.

The average number of years living in the U.S. between the participants was 13.45 years, a minimum number of years was four years, and the longest time living in the U.S. was 29 years, as 45% of the participants have lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years. Consequently, participants expressed their cultural connection to the U.S. by taking the citizenship ESL class to learn more about the language and civics knowledge, including American history and government. Rafael, who moved from Mexico to the U.S. about 20 years ago when his father decided to bring his whole family here when he was 15 years old, expressed,

> I feel more connected to American culture than Mexico because I have lived here for about 20 years now. As I learn more about English, I can understand what people are going through and what they are thinking. I learn about history and government then I try to think why people say certain things and act in certain ways. I can hear more words I understand and feel more connected to the country (October 21, 2021).

Emilio came to the U.S. about 21 years ago, about 23-24 years old. He came here to live with his family members who already lived here.

> I am culturally closer to the United States, and now I know more about the government and history of the country. I know more about the U.S. than Mexican history and

> government. Don't get me wrong, I still love my country, and I am always a Mexican. My children are proud to be part Mexican, part Native American, and part American because my wife is Native American. But I feel like I belong more here in the U.S. I feel like I'm learning something that I need to live here in the class (October 16, 2021).

The participants who have resided in the U.S. for a long time demonstrated their natural motivation and excitement for growing cultural attachment to the country. Similarly, participants with relatively a shorter amount of time spent in the U.S. also described their desire to be more exposed to the U.S. culture. Aiyla has lived in the U.S. for four years, the least number of years among the participants, but described how learning more about culture is important to her.

> This is my decision to become a U.S. citizen. Because I want to be a part of this country, I would like to live like an American. That's why I want to get U.S. citizenship. I want to be with the people here, I want to live in this culture, and I want to raise my future children in this country. That's why I want to know about the culture and why learning English and American history can help me (July 10, 2021).

Therefore, regardless of the amount of time spent in the U.S., participants felt the need and desire to learn about the culture of the country, which incorporates the language system and civics knowledge about the country's history and government.

Feeling Supported in Class and Receiving Practical Assistance

Citizenship applicants who are adult ESL students enroll in community-based citizenship education programs to help themselves with the process of applying for citizenship when taking a class is not mandatory or required before applying for naturalization (Larrotta, 2009). Therefore, the students enrolled in the class are primarily self-motivated and appreciative of the opportunity to receive an education that is easily accessible through local institutions at almost no cost (Eyring, 2014; Larrotta, 2017). Locally-provided education for adult ESL students is often through community colleges, universities, non-profit organizations, or religious groups free of charge or for a considerably lower price than private institutions (Larrotta, 2019). Participants

of this study were mostly busy working every day or raising their children, which caused them to express how taking the citizenship ESL class at a local institution helped them feel supported. The feeling of being supported emerged from two factors in taking the class from the institution, which include (1) the teacher's efforts in making the content comprehensible and engaging them in English conversations, and (2) legal services provided by the institution at a reasonable price to help citizenship applicants with the application process.

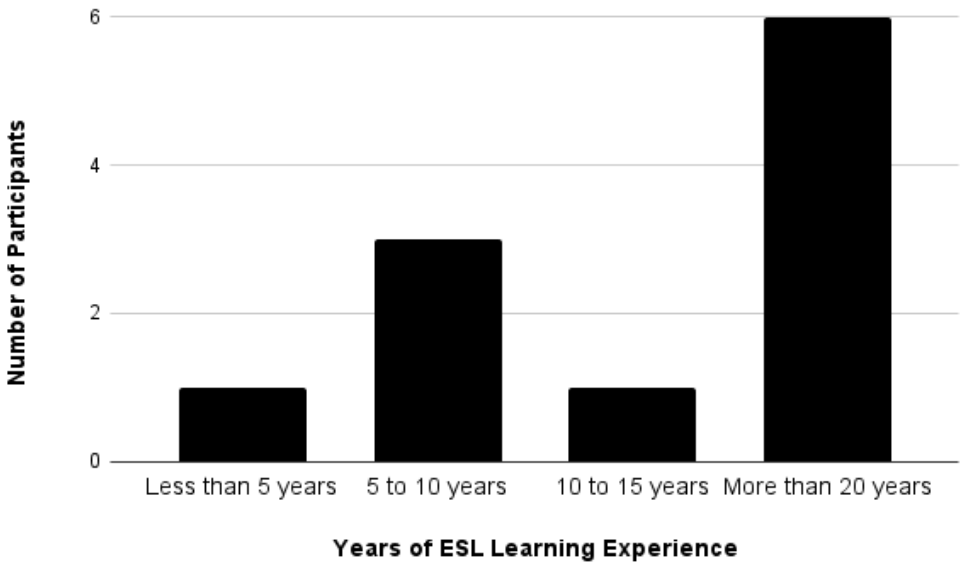
Since the citizenship test requires memorization of civics questions and answers and basic English skills for speaking, reading, and writing, citizenship applicants already fluent in English tend to not take a class before taking the test (Schneider, 2010). However, the findings indicated that even participants with a relatively higher level of English proficiency still sought help to learn the content of the citizenship test at the institution. It is because (a) the process of applying for citizenship is new and challenging for them, which takes time and effort, and (b) civics education, especially American history and government, makes more sense with teachers' specific examples and explanations to make the content memorable and comprehensible, and (c) they like having conversations in English to practice especially with the teacher who can provide them with authentic English expressions.

Even though the participants were all enrolled in a beginning-level of citizenship ESL class, the number of years the participants have learned ESL varied depending on their previous ESL learning, affecting how comfortable they felt about the English language (see Figure 4.4). The average number of years learning ESL among participants was 17.55 years, and 54.55% of the participants have learned ESL for more than 20 years. It included the number of years they had learned English outside of the U.S. Some participants had started learning English as a second language when they were still in their home country. Before enrollment, participants had

to take a proficiency test as a placement test. Still, even within the same class, some showed more confidence in using English with relatively higher proficiency in speaking.

Figure 4.4

Years of the Participants' ESL Learning Experience



All participants had the same desire to enroll in the citizenship ESL class to get help in applying for citizenship regardless of the time spent learning ESL or their actual level of English proficiency. Lucia, even though she was confident in her English since she started learning it about 20 years ago to communicate with her American husband, she still wanted to get some professional help from the institution in applying for U.S. citizenship and studying for the test.

> After finding out I could apply for my citizenship, I tried to find sources to study right at the moment when I decided to become a citizen. I tried hard to find some places to get some help, and that's how I found out about this class. I met a lot of people here, and they helped me. They told me my level of English would be much higher than this class and that I might be bored, but I told them no, I want to learn no matter what, regardless of my level of English. I might be able to speak better than others in the class, but I knew I needed help with the process, and a way to learn something is always to be involved in more practices and actually do something in class (June 30, 2021).

Many adult ESL students look for citizenship ESL classes regardless of their current level of English proficiency to receive help throughout the process of applying for citizenship (Larrotta, 2017). To find the citizenship ESL class, participants either searched online for information or their acquaintances who had taken the class before recommended them to take the class. For example, Emilio learned about the class from his friend to get help in his application process.

> I was looking for a class when I was studying for the citizenship test by myself. A friend of mine passed the citizenship test a couple of years ago, and he gave me a phone number to call. It was a number for this class, and I got enrolled. I love it. It helps me a lot. Everyone has been really nice to me, and they all helped me a lot (October 16, 2021).

A Teacher's Effort in Making the Content Comprehensible

The most frequently mentioned reason for feeling supported in class among the participants was their teacher's effort to make lessons fun and effective for learning ESL and civics knowledge. Compared to studying for the citizenship test by themselves with questions and answers to memorize, participants preferred attending a class where a teacher could explain historical events and the system of government with complex concepts and vocabulary to make the contents more comprehensible and relatable with examples.

In second language acquisition, Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input and Long's (1983) interaction hypothesis with modified input helps teachers in their practice by providing detailed explanations of linguistic and academic terms, using various teaching materials such as visual aids, pacing the speed of the listening input or the length of the reading input (Lee et al., 2019; Patrick, 2019). Lucia, one of the participants, explained,

> Before taking the class, I was only memorizing them over and over. But when I started taking the class, the teacher explained to me what those actually are, and it made me understand better. Like I was memorizing all the branches of the government just by the names, but in class, I could think about "What is this branch doing?" "How does that work?" I now understand why the government is divided. Everything started to click (June 30, 2021).

Similarly, Agustina also described how taking the class helped her learn the civics knowledge compared to when she had to repeat the questions and answers only to memorize.

> When I read the questions myself, it was only about memorization. But the teacher explained the questions like the government, the branches, and how they are working. So, I understand a little bit more because before I started taking the class, I didn't understand what the branch was. I only memorized the questions, the sentences, the answers. That's it (June 30, 2021).

Another essential role of the teacher in explaining the content was that the students could learn complex vocabularies such as low-frequency words or words with multiple meanings that appear on the citizenship application or civics questions as Rafael claimed,

> The teacher is very helpful in that he explains how to say a word and how the meanings can sometimes be many things. You will use one word or write one word, but that can have different meanings than one. That's very tricky, and questions with such words are tricky and difficult. So, it's good that the teacher tells us about the different meanings (October 21, 2021).

Moreover, the teacher's use of teaching resources such as flashcards and media sources, including pictures and videos, helped students visualize what they were learning as Samuel explained,

> The flashcards help to memorize because you are not only listening to something or watching something but also looking at the words at the same time. It makes it easier to remember. The teacher has been doing a really amazing job because he also uses videos and pictures. I feel confident about what I am learning, and I like it (June 30, 2021).

In addition to the teaching materials that helped to learn, participants expressed how the teacher encouraged English conversations and interactions in class among the students to practice small talks and ask and answer questions. The teacher's efforts to increase interactions by reaching out to each student to speak up in class worked well for Agustina as she described,

> The teacher always makes us practice by asking us questions. Everyone gets to answer them. For example, he asks me, "Agustina, I have a question for you about the civics

> questions we learned today." I like it. We practice taking the citizenship interview with him by asking and answering questions. The teacher also makes us interview each other, so we take turns asking and answering the questions (June 30, 2021).

One participant's response indicated how the teacher helped students adapt to the culture as the teacher teaches and interacts in English with a modified input. As Hayma said,

> Culture is language, and my teacher is teaching me language and culture. He makes sure I understand what he says and changes his words or the speed he speaks if I say I don't understand (June 30, 2021).

The institution offers citizenship ESL classes, but it also provides legal services that students can use when applying for citizenship. The service is cheaper than what they usually can get from outside. It is very accessible with phone calls or visiting the legal service team within the institution, which the participants found helpful. Five of the participants had already contacted the legal team for their application process, and the rest were aware of the service. Rafael shared his experience of receiving legal service from the institution.

> I am in the process right now to fill in and submitting my application. It required some document work and things to look at before submitting it. I was doing it with a different lawyer, but it was expensive. I found out that the institution has legal services provided for ESL students. It was cheaper, so I switched to the legal service they have here [the institution] (October 21, 2021).

Overall, participants were satisfied to receive help in class with the teacher modifying the input to make the content more comprehensible, interacting with the teacher for more English conversations, and using legal services provided by the institution to get assistance in their citizenship application process.

Family-Level Social Empowerment: Reduction of the Generational Gap

In addition to the individual level of social empowerment and satisfaction, the participants had another strong motivational factor for learning ESL and civics knowledge. It

was to reduce the generational gap between themselves as the first-generation immigrants and their children. All of the participants described one of the reasons to apply for citizenship was to help their children receive the same rights and benefits as other children of American citizen parents. Ten participants had children among the 11 participants, and one participant did not have a child. However, all participants indicated providing a better environment and more opportunities for their future children growing up in the U.S. as a reason for applying for citizenship. In addition, seven of the 11 participants (63.64%) had their children currently attending K-12 schools.

ESL and Civics Learning to Connect with the Second Generation

Based on the participants' responses, it was a legal and administrative benefit for their children and creating more connections between the parents and the children that they are taking the citizenship ESL class. The children speak English as the main language at school in addition to speaking their parents' first language at home. Lee et al. (2015) stated that almost 20% of children in the U.S. speak more than one language at home, which leads to a fast-growing number of multilingual children. Many studies have focused on how multilingual children's education should be in schools to support their academic and linguistic development (Lee et al., 2015; Mosty et al., 2013). However, it is not only the children who are becoming multilingual but also the parents who strive to learn ESL to communicate more and better with their children even if they both can speak in their first language (Gallo & Hornberger, 2019). One of the participants, Samuel, is from Haiti and moved to the U.S. about 20 years ago. He now has three children, and they were all born in the United States. He is trying to teach them French, which is his first language, but also, he is learning English for them.

> I speak French and Creole. I try to teach my kids some French, but mostly they speak in English at home and learn things in English at school. I want to speak English better to talk about what they learn in school with my kids (June 30, 2021).

Correspondingly, Hayma is from Myanmar and speaks Zomi, and she has been learning ESL for about four years now to help her children's schoolwork since they are in middle school and elementary school in the U.S.

> I live in the United States, and my children are going to school here. I speak Zomi to my mother and husband all the time, and I go to a Zomi-speaking church. But my children are learning English every day at school, and sometimes they need help in their school work in English. I need to talk to the teachers sometimes, too. I have to communicate in the language to know what my kids are learning and how I can help them (June 30, 2021).

Ivan is from Russia and moved to the U.S. about eight years ago to live with his daughter studying and working in the United States. He now has a grandson from his daughter, and his motive to apply for citizenship and learn English was to support his 4-year-old grandson in the future.

> My grandson was born here in the U.S., learning English very fast. Faster than he learns Russian. Speaking Russian with him will be good, too, but I want to learn English and study what he learns in school to speak with him more in the future (June 29, 2021).

Participants' motive for learning ESL was strong even when their children were not multilingual. The participant who showed a powerful desire to communicate with their children in English was Ligaya, who moved to the U.S. from the Philippines to marry her husband five years ago to find out he already had seven children from his previous marriage.

> I knew I had to raise my kids no matter what. I love them so much, and I want to learn more about the kids. I want to know what movies teenagers like and their culture at home and school. So, I am trying to get my kids' attention. I can show them how much I am growing in my English. I always think, "How can I make them like me?" I want to be in a good relationship with them. I don't want to offend my kids. To be more connected, I am learning about their lives and culture (July 13, 2021).

Participants whose children have already graduated from schools in the U.S. still wanted to learn ESL to connect more with their kids. Agustina has raised four children born in the U.S., and even though her children speak fluent Spanish, Augustina wanted to learn more English.

> My daughters are all grown up and got a job here. If I learn more and study the language and what they learned in school, I can maybe understand more about what my daughters are going through in their lives and how they are doing (June 30, 2021).

Samira came to the U.S. to support her son's higher education eight years ago. She expressed that she took the citizenship ESL class to learn English and civics to have more conversations with her son on various topics, including his life achievements, since he now has two doctoral degrees in the U.S.

> It was a long time supporting and helping my son get his degrees. At first, I did not want to stay here because I didn't even know the English alphabet. But it is what moms do to help their children. I want to keep learning the language and everything about this country to show my son that I can learn and understand the difficult things he is going through and what he is doing at work and school (July 13, 2021).

Adult ESL students applying for citizenship were striving to learn English and civics to connect with their children growing up and living as part of the U.S. This effort from immigrant parents to learn what their children are studying in schools attempts to prevent miscommunication and language difficulties between family members that can influence the family's bonding (Ho, 2010; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Santisteban & Mitrani, 2003). In addition, different levels of acculturation and educational experience between generations in immigrant families significantly impact how the family as a subdivision of a society successfully functions to be engaged in the community (Albertini et al., 2019; Ho, 2010; Wakil et al., 1981).

Community-Level Social Empowerment: Increased Engagement in Social Interactions

Being able to interact and communicate in one's surroundings is essential for adult ESL students to learn English. It is a foundation for promoting social interactions within a community for immigrants (Cun et al., 2019; Ho, 2019). Larrotta (2009) explained that community-based ESL programs positively influence adult ESL students' development of literacy skills in English, which can help them learn the basic survival level of English to use practical communication skills in English at their workplaces. Citizenship ESL programs improve students' language skills and provide civics knowledge. Thus, taking a citizenship ESL class helps English conversations with improved ESL skills and expands the topic of conversations to the U.S. history and government, allowing students to have more diverse topics of discussion while interacting with other people. Participants described how improving ESL skills helped them interact more with their coworkers and engage in English conversations for daily activities such as grocery shopping, talking to the teachers of their children's schools, and making doctors' appointments. In addition, learning about the U.S. history and government helped them catch more of what they hear on the news and join conversations when people talk about historical and political issues.

Gaining Confidence in Social Interactions Through ESL Learning

One of the advantages adult ESL students can achieve by improving English proficiency is to extend their social boundaries to interact with more people around them (Larrotta, 2017; Wrigley, 2007). The extended social boundaries can include (a) workplaces where they interact with their coworkers, managers, and bosses, (b) daily activities such as ordering food at the restaurants, doing grocery shopping, meeting with teachers for their children, or making doctor's appointments, and (c) socializing and making friends in social events and gatherings.

Six of the 11 participants were currently employed (54.55%). Two worked at construction sites, two worked at a company's marketing department, one was a nutritional service assistant at a hospital, and the other worked as a software engineer. All six expressed how they felt more confident in talking to their coworkers who are native English speakers after taking the ESL class and improving their English proficiency. Emilio recently got promoted at his work to be a manager of a construction site, and he was eager to develop English skills for more interactions and conversations with his coworkers.

> I just want to get better at English. It is important to me and my job. Now I have to speak to many people at work as a manager. Sometimes I have to speak to them all at once. Some of them can speak Spanish, but many only speak English. So, it is better to learn how to use English more (October 16, 2021).

Agustina has worked at one company for more than 13 years now, and she was proud to have gotten a raise this year as a reward for her dedicated hard work. She described,

> I'm working at a company where there are many people, and they only speak English. No one speaks Spanish, so I have to speak more English. At first, my first day there was very hard because I couldn't understand them so much. I have been working there since 2008, and I am still always learning English. Now I feel more confident because I am taking the class and working with the teacher (June 30, 2021).

Samuel works as a nutritional assistant at a hospital, and he has to speak in English to interact with the patients and his coworkers. He has been working there for 17 years now, and he still wants to improve his ESL skills to not make any mistakes at work and have more conversations.

> At work, I only speak English. What I want is that when people speak to me, I can understand them, and they understand me when I reply to them. I want to give them the right answer when they ask me. I want them to trust me because I trust them. Learning English is important to me because you know more words and expressions to use in speaking. I want to feel more confident that anyone can come up to me and ask me some questions, and I can answer them (June 30, 2021).

Similarly, Lucia, who works in a marketing department, described how much ESL skills she has improved to have English interactions at her workplace.

> All through the time I have worked at the company, the only thing I needed to keep in my mind was "I can improve my English." You know, one thing that I hated when I came to the United States 20 years ago was that I wasn't able to speak any English. I always had to say, "I'm sorry." I was envious of how other people could say whatever they wanted in English because I couldn't say what I wanted to say. I could only understand what they were saying at my work, but I couldn't speak, so I couldn't give them what they needed. I felt frustrated, so I worked hard to improve my English by taking ESL classes. Now I don't struggle as much because I can always express my thoughts and feelings in English (June 30, 2021).

Aiyla recently got a job at a company to work as a software engineer, which was her dream job. She expressed how English skills helped her interact with her coworkers.

> Even when I'm just having small talk with my coworkers, I can feel the difference as I improve my English. It helps me better understand what I have to do at work because I do not want to make any mistakes. After all, I love my job and want to make people there happy. I can always ask questions if I need to, and I know they can always answer me. I learned how to ask and answer questions in class. I can make friends at work, and every interaction I have with people there helps me improve my English, and I can feel it (July 10, 2021).

Besides feeling more confident at the workplaces, participants who were not currently working also indicated that they were making the most out of their improved ESL skills in daily activities such as grocery shopping and making doctor's appointments. Hayma stays at home taking care of her three children, and two of them are attending schools in middle school and elementary school. Her biggest concern was communicating with her children's teachers in English and making doctors' appointments for the family.

> I came here about five years ago, and when I just got here, I didn't know how to do anything in English. I didn't know how to make a doctor's appointment or call my children's doctors. But now I am taking a class, and I practice more, and now I'm confident. I go to the children's school and talk to the teachers, and I can do more things now in English (June 30, 2021).

Comparably, participants also expressed that they gained confidence in interactions using English for making friends at social gatherings. Ligaya shared that she goes to a Christian church every weekend, and she volunteers for events held at the church to interact with more people.

> Since I started going to the ESL class, some people have noticed I am improving my English, even at church. I feel more confident. Before, I didn't speak up. I always speak up now because I can say more things. I used to only sit in the corner and do nothing at church, but I go to church almost every day to meet people and do things together. I told my husband and my church about my feelings, and they were happy for me (July 13, 2021).

Samira, the oldest participant who is 65 years old, explained that taking the ESL class had improved her life in the U.S. contrast to her first year here when she had to start from the alphabet.

> I had to learn from the English alphabet to words to sentences to read, write, and speak in English. I am happy to take a class now because I had to use my hands and face to say what I wanted before. I can read now, practice in class, and write sentences in class. Now I can go to restaurants with my friends and order any food I want. I can also call a doctor for my husband (July 13, 2021).

Consequently, the participants benefited from learning ESL skills in class to use in their social interactions in their increased social boundaries such as workplaces, daily activities, and socializing in general.

Expanding ESL Topics to History and Politics

A unique feature of a citizenship ESL program is that the students can expand conversation topics to American history, the system of government, and the values of democracy. Wrigley (2009) stated that adult ESL programs in the U.S. typically focus on "life skill topics (family, community, health, holidays, work) and personal storytelling" (p. 172). Starting from the beginning-literacy level of English proficiency, adult ESL students develop

skills in English, but the extent of content covered in class often does not go further than essential conversation skills for life and job (Wrigley, 2009). Indeed, those basic skills and understanding of conversing in survival English can help students start socializing and adapting to their new surroundings. However, citizenship education can open a door for adult ESL students to participate in various discussions of issues, including topics of politics and history (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016; Wrigley, 2007).

The expansion of conversational topics helped the participants connect more at their workplaces with coworkers to join more diverse English conversations. As Rafael described,

> At my work, we have a team for the construction site, and my team right now has two men who were in the army before. They sometimes talk about wars and the news in other countries and wars. Before, I was just listening to what they said and trying to understand by myself. But now I learned about the American government and history, and I can understand more about what the guys are talking about, and I can talk about those with them (October 21, 2021).

Moreover, knowing more about the history and government of the U.S. allowed participants to be informed about current political issues and social problems that they hear from media sources such as news or by socializing with other people. Emilio explained how he understood more about the news he wanted to pay more attention to.

> I hear a lot about the border states on the news. Like the states that are close to Mexico. I am interested in what is going on down there. I used to just listen to the news before, but now in class, I learned about different government branches and a little bit about the history of the U.S. and Mexico. I still don't know 100% about what is going on and what I can do, but I know more about the wars such as the Civil War, WWI, WWII, and relationships between the countries. It's good to hear something on the news and understand what they are talking about (October 16, 2021).

Participants also indicated how learning about the system and structure of the government and politics helped them be well-informed about different parties and branches, which can be useful

to know, especially during the presidential election or other voting seasons. Samuel recollected how he felt when he learned about the government and the different political parties in class.

> Before I took the class, I was always busy working at the hospital, so I didn't know about many things when I was not studying for the citizenship test, like the law of this country and how the government is working. When it was the election season for the president, I heard a lot on the news about them and what they were going to do for the country. I just listened to them, and I didn't know what was important. Now, I know more about the government system and how different two parties exist (June 30, 2021).

In short, civics learning through the citizenship ESL program has introduced adult ESL students who are immigrants of the country to be more knowledgeable in various topics, including American history and government. According to Wrigley (2007), citizenship education programs for adult ESL students "teach the civic values upon which the United States is built: tolerance for diversity, democracy, freedom of expression, and a legal system that promises due process… civics rights and responsibilities, including the right to challenge the system and advocate for change" (p. 19). The following section presents how participants interpreted their experiences of learning ESL and civics education about their societal-level of social empowerment and how it affected their social status within the power structure.

Sub-Question II: How Do the Students Interpret Their Learning Experiences in Terms of Power and Social Status?

Understanding immigrants' adjustment to the new life has multiple layers to uncover, such as their socioeconomic status and the country's immigration policies that can affect their settlement and cultural adaptation. Paloma et al. (2018) stated that "interactions with the new environment [for immigrants] might represent a stressor for immigrants because of limited language proficiency, loss of family and friends, and uncertainties deriving from different cultural values and social, economic, and political norms" (p. 41). The relationship between the

receiving members of the country and the immigrants is also complicated since the local members can be anxious about having the newcomers threaten their social positions by owning more properties and taking job opportunities away from them (Buckingham & Brodsky, 2021; Paloma et al., 2018).

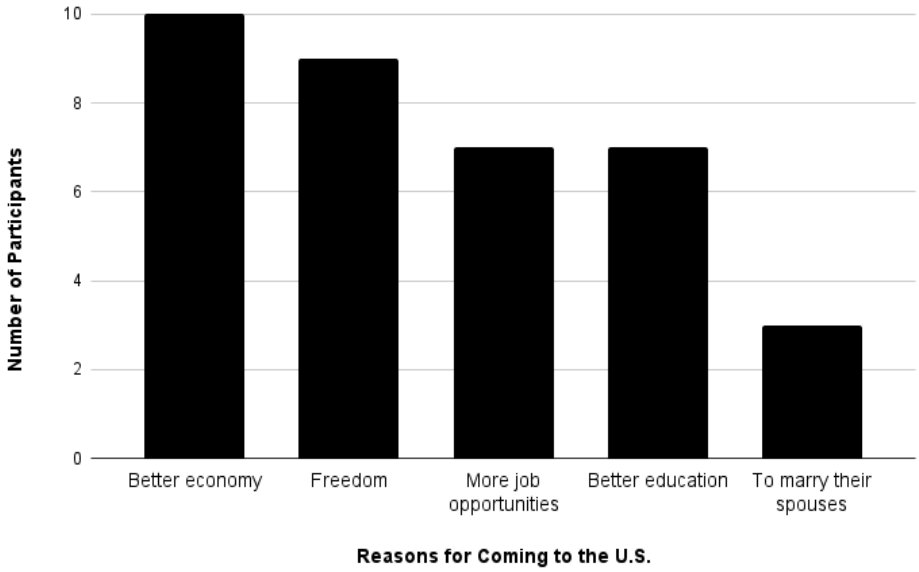
Therefore, immigrants often feel isolated and discriminated against in an attempt to be more included in society with little support provided (Buckingham & Brodsky, 2021). This sub-question aimed to examine the education provided for immigrants that can enable adult ESL students to know more about the society and community they are living in by learning the language and the history and political system to become citizens. This findings section focused on the participants' perception and interpretation of becoming a citizen and what aspects of their social status and power they expect to change after being naturalized.

Reasons for Coming to the U.S. and Applying for Citizenship

Immigrants have various reasons that made them decide to move to the U.S. After settling down and achieving a green card to become a lawful permanent resident, different factors cause them to apply for U.S. citizenship (Aptekar, 2015; Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). It is important to recognize why they came to the U.S. and what they had expected to see in the country to inspect and understand the perceptions and interpretations of becoming a citizen of a new country from the citizenship applicants. The participants of this study described their reasons for coming to the U.S., as shown in Figure 4.5. The most frequently mentioned reason for coming to the U.S. was for a better economy (27.78%), followed by to have more freedom (25.0%), more job opportunities (19.44%), a better education system for their children and future generation (19.44%), and to marry their spouses (8.33%).

Figure 4.5

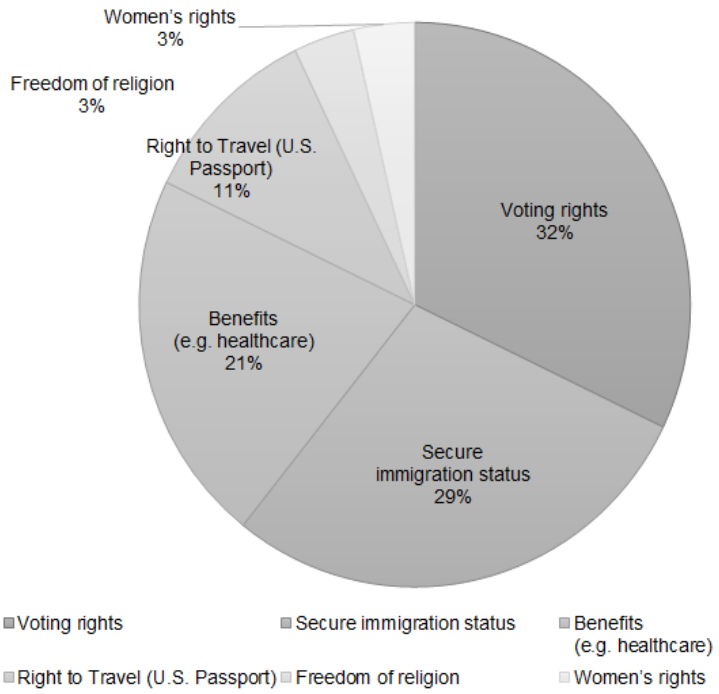
Reasons for Coming to the U.S. from the Participants



After moving to the U.S., the participants had lived an average of 13.55 years in the country as permanent residents before they decided to apply for citizenship. Notably, participants had waited longer than the required minimum years before being eligible to apply for citizenship, which is five years as a lawful permanent resident. Aptekar (2015) explained that citizenship applicants might take longer than the minimum required years to apply for citizenship because of the expensive application fee ($725), complicated legal paperwork, and not having time to study for the test requires a lot of memorizations. Sometimes legal permanent residents consider their status sufficient if they successfully renew the green card every ten years, which can lead to waiting a more extended period of time not applying for citizenship or deciding not to apply at all if they do not feel the need for it (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016). The participants described their reasons for applying for citizenship, as shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6

Reasons to Apply for U.S. Citizenship from the Participants



Participants could answer with multiple reasons, and to vote as a citizen was the most addressed reason for becoming a citizen (32.14%). Other reasons included having a secure immigration status (28.57%), receiving benefits such as health care (21.43%), achieving a U.S. passport for more freedom in traveling (10.71%), freedom of religion (3.57%), and women's rights (3.57%).

Knowledge is Power: Being "Equal" to Natural-Born Citizens

"Knowledge is power," from Francis Bacon to Foucault, knowledge determined the amount of power one can have as an individual in society (García, 2001). Therefore, it has been one of the strong motives for providing quality education for students or any group of people seeking education. However, because it contains socially defined values, knowledge can be a source of power based on how much knowledge is delivered to whom and how (Foucault, 1980;

García, 2001). In modern days, educational institutions provide knowledge to students who are in the position of a novice who possesses less knowledge and power than the education providers. Poststructuralists interpreted the relationship between the knowledge givers and receivers as power dynamics between the dominating and dominated, in which "knowledge tames the minds of the dominated classes in much the same way as carceral" (García, 2001, p. 112). Foucault (1980) perceived socially constructed dialogues, including what is being taught at schools, as a discourse from an underlying power that forms knowledge, which supposedly dispatches certain purposes to control the selection of what should be considered truth.

Immigrants in power dynamics are the less powerful class than the government since the government has the power of accepting and rejecting the applicants to be naturalized or not. Therefore, the education provided for citizenship applicants who are willing to learn the English language and civics knowledge can function as a ladder or a scaffolding for immigrants to reach the next level of being accepted as a member of society. The applicants are hoping that they can be considered the same and "equal" as other native-born citizens once they speak the same language and learn about the history and government of the country. Participants expressed satisfaction in taking the citizenship ESL class that can help them become more like the natural-born citizens born with the language and have the civics knowledge gained through K-12 education. Hayma was satisfied to be in class and learn about the language and civics of America as she described,

> I like to study the language, history, and everything about the United States. I study the citizenship test, and this is what I should know about this country, like who is in the government and how things work. The citizens here already know about the government and the country's history. I have to memorize everything first to be the same (October 3, 2021).

Aiyla, who was eager and motivated to learn English and U.S. civics knowledge, also expressed,

> The meaning of citizenship, I think, is that you have to be the same as the other citizens who are already here. You came here because you love the environment, which was your choice, and you want to be part of everything in this country, like the culture. You have to learn the language and history and the law here. Everybody should know the same thing to be the same (October 9, 2021).

Similarly, Agustina stated how citizens who already went through K-12 education in the U.S. know about the things the adult ESL students learned in the citizenship ESL class.

> The citizens living here already went to school and learned everything like history and government. But I didn't. I came here 29 years ago when I was already all grown-up. That is why I need to learn now because it is my country (October 8, 2021).

Lucia also explained why she needs to learn civics for the naturalization test even though history is not her favorite subject to study.

> The civic knowledge part is honestly not very fun, like the historical facts with all the names and vocabulary. It is not a fun part. But I know it is important because we have to understand how this country is working and know what is currently going on. Everyone here knows those already, so you have to know. It is better safe than sorry to study civics hard. I am trying to learn as much as possible to get all the information I need (October 9, 2021).

Moreover, Lucia claimed how grateful she was to learn civics which made her feel like she was being included in the society more than before, as a welcoming sign from the U.S.

> As I learned civics, I felt like somebody was telling me, "Welcome to my world, welcome." Everything made me feel I was really finally here in the country. Welcome. Welcome. Welcome. I can now listen to the radio, watch the news, and understand what is happening around me. I am learning history, government, and everything, and I know more now (October 9, 2021).

Overall, participants experienced a positive and satisfactory feeling of learning the language and civics in the citizenship ESL class. It made them feel like they were learning what they needed to be equal to other natural-born citizens by possessing more knowledge that could give them power, such as language and civics knowledge of history and government.

Societal-Level Social Empowerment as Future U.S. Citizens

Participants' responses on their expected changes after naturalization had one thing in common. They were excited to share the same rights as citizens, especially the right to vote, with explicitly high hope and trust for American democracy. This findings section presents societal-level social empowerment that the participants experienced by taking the citizenship ESL class, compared to the previous findings defined as adult ESL students' individual, family, and community-level social empowerment. Nine of the 11 participants (81.81%) mentioned voting as one of the preceding rights they desire to have as a U.S. citizen related to their social empowerment. One of the main reasons for expecting voting rights is that they want their voices to be heard to help people with less power, such as immigrants, refugees, and children. Therefore, having the right to vote was considered a direct source of having more power, which the participants anticipated the day they could impact society as naturalized citizens.

Learning About American Democracy and Freedom

As found in the document analysis, the most emphasized section of the civics knowledge on the curriculum was the system of American government (34.23%), followed by rights and responsibilities (12.16%), and the principles of American democracy (11.26%). Similarly, eight of the 11 participants (72.73%) expressed how they were impressed by the government system of America. Participants from countries with a different government system demonstrated how they feel about the principles of American democracy, such as the separation of powers between government branches, as they learned in class. Samuel from Haiti compared his home country regarding the government system to the U.S.

> Haiti's government is really different from the United States. Because in America, people fought for power, and the power is distributed to different parts of the government. This country found a way to distribute power. I can find it everywhere in the society where

> people share the power like the checks and balances. In other countries, when the power is not like that, only the government has the power, and they call it the dictatorship. Because only the president can tell you what to do, I think that is not right. That is the big difference I see in the United States (October 3, 2021).

Ivan from Russia also mentioned the power distribution in the American democratic system.

> In Russia, I think power and control are not really for the people. Here it's different. I learned in class to know more about the government in America, and then I could compare it to my country (October 2, 2021).

According to the participants' responses, they seemed to find it impressive learning about the principles of American democracy and how it distributed the power between different branches of the government to prevent one of them from getting too powerful. According to Orgad (2010), the citizenship test promotes societal values by assuring that "immigrants have the essential knowledge needed to keep America stable based on the premise that some shared history and civic values are required to maintain a stable society" (p. 1248). Therefore, it is assumable that the emphasis on the aspects of American democracy in citizenship education was because it teaches the essential values to immigrants who are future U.S. citizens.

Another feature related to American democracy that was considered memorable by the participants was how the U.S. guarantees freedom for every individual living in the country regardless of where they are from and what religions they have. Samira from Iran stated how freedom was important to her and how she appreciated the U.S. Constitution for supporting it.

> I believe in the United States Constitution and how it allows people to be free to do what they want to do, like the freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Also, here they have women's rights and freedom of clothing, which are very important to me. I can wear whatever I want here, and I don't want any government or people to tell me what to wear. To me, it's important. If I cover my shoulders here, it is because it's cold. I don't need somebody to tell me, "You need to cover your shoulders" when it is not cold. After studying the Constitution, I believe in it and this country (October 10, 2021).

Ligaya from the Philippines also expressed how freedom is essential for equality among the people, which she considered the most valuable right to have in the U.S.

> Freedom is the most important right to have here. That is why I love the United States. When you believe in freedom and have freedom, you know others have freedom. Everybody becomes the same. We are the same people. I believe that is equality. There is no favoritism here. They respect each other, everybody. Because it is the law here, they have to follow. Everybody is equal, and we are all the same people (October 10, 2021).

Moreover, participants were aware that freedom throughout history exists because the people achieved it after a series of battles and fights for democracy and freedom. People should not take freedom for granted. As Samuel explained,

> People's freedom as they live in the United States was not given for free. The U.S. fought for freedom because they didn't have it before. They had to fight for it very hard. The liberty came from a lot of people fighting in many battles. Those battles allowed us to have this freedom today. I appreciate the freedom here, and without the freedom, people would not be interested in coming here (October 3, 2021).

Similarly, participants found the history of freedom achieved for different races in the U.S. remarkable. Therefore, freedom is a value that people should protect for everyone regardless of their identities, including their race. Lucia explained learning about Abraham Lincoln and how he freed the slaves, a significant moment in the U.S. history of freedom.

> To me, how Abraham Lincoln changed the country with the emancipation proclamation is interesting because it changed the lives of African Americans. How it protects the rights of everybody is important. It was not always like that in the United States. It was a big moment for this country, and I was glad to learn about it (October 9, 2021).

Hayma from Myanmar stated, about freedom, how people fought for true freedom and social justice for African Americans through the civil rights movement in the 1950s-1960s.

> I want to learn more about Martin Luther King, Jr. I want to know more about how the civil rights movement happened and how people fought for freedom. I can memorize more about that part of history if I learn more. It is very important because everyone loves freedom, and it is hard for some people to have freedom (October 3, 2021).

Augustina explained how she found it interesting that the U.S. also had to fight for its independence from Britain, which might have affected the country's value of freedom.

> I liked learning about how the U.S. got its independence how it declared independence from another strong country. The United States now is so big, but it had to fight hard to be freed from Britain back then. Because it was hard like a battle, maybe the U.S. likes freedom because it's what they started with as a country (October 8, 2021).

Believing in American democracy and its appreciation of freedom, which many people had to fight for, led participants to anticipate their participation in democracy as citizens. It further motivates them to prepare for the citizenship test to have the right to vote in a system they learned to value. Therefore, the citizens' rights that they can have after naturalization were considered significant and essential for the participants, especially the voting rights.

Voting Rights and Making Their Voices Heard

One of the rights participants anticipated the most to get after naturalization was voting rights. As mentioned earlier, to vote as a U.S. citizen was the most important reason for applying for citizenship among the participants. Based on what they learned about the system of the government and the principles of American democracy, participants believed in their role as future citizens to participate in voting as one of their valuable rights. Participants were expecting the right to vote were (a) to choose a political party and candidate of their preference and (b) to make their voices heard for themselves and other immigrants and refugees who need help. Samuel indicated the need for civic education for adult ESL learners to be aware of the different political parties and their campaign promises to think critically about who to vote for. He described voting rights as a "privilege."

> I think it's very important to know about the system of government to know what each of them is doing. When you vote, you have to know who is in which department and what

> they believe and stand for. So that you will know who to vote for and why they should get the vote, I can choose the senators and other positions, even the president. That is a very nice privilege (October 3, 2021).

Samira was also expecting the right to vote to help the American system maintain its power with good candidates taking charge.

> To be able to vote is, for me, very important. Because I want to feel like I live in this country and that I can do something good for this country. I want to decide my senator and representatives. I want to choose good people and happy people that I like and believe will do a good job. For me, voting is to keep the U.S. Constitution that I believe in. So, I need to vote for people who can help me (October 10, 2021).

The positive anticipation and excitement to have the right to vote were expressed by Lucia as well, who believed that to be able to vote implies that she is becoming a part of society.

> Being able to vote means that you are part of the voting system. You are part of where you belong. Isn't that exciting? Maybe I can choose a better president. I am so excited. I will be a part of this country, and my voice will matter. If I can vote, I will be able to help people, which I enjoy doing. Immigrants and their children here need a lot of help, and I want to be someone who can do something for them (October 9, 2021).

Notably, participants considered voting rights as a given right for citizens that they can simply participate in democracy. Still, they expressed why voting is essential for themselves and to have their voices and opinions heard for other people who need more help. Samira explained in her response why caring for people with less power, such as immigrants, is important and how voting can help them as a representative voice for people in need.

> So sad. Immigrant people live here, and their life is so hard. So hard. Because you move from your country for your own life, and you risk everything you have. You wanted to come here just for the better things. But after you come to the new country, people find it hard to live. English is hard, you don't understand people, and people can't talk to you when they don't understand you. That is why you need to learn English and help other people. I will vote so I can help people (October 10, 2021).

From participants' responses, the curriculum succeeded in emphasizing the system of government and principles of American democracy as core values of the United States that immigrants would want to be part of. It is also noteworthy that out of all rights provided for citizens, participants picked voting rights as a priority to be a member of the society, which can help make their voices heard to help other immigrants and people in need.

"This Country Is Powerful, so I'll Be Powerful, too": Expectations in Social Status Changes

Immigrants come to the U.S. for a better economy, job opportunities, freedom, human rights, and a safe environment (Mayda et al., 2018), which corresponds to participants' motives. Immigrants risked what they had in their home country to pursue a better life in the U.S., a country that they consider as the most powerful and beneficial for themselves and their children. For participants, the underlying thought of believing in the U.S. to be their safe nest was the belief that living in a globally strong country guarantees safety and success for its people. Samira described the feeling of applying for citizenship as if she was applying for a prime membership of a big company that provides benefits of better service and more content to enjoy.

> I feel like I am getting the prime membership. Citizenship is my prime membership. I feel strong and big to be part of the United States. This country is big, the number one country in this world. If I am a citizen here, I feel like I am also very big and strong. I can enjoy things that others cannot enjoy without the prime membership. You have to pay for it, but it is good and worth it (October 10, 2021).

Aiyla also stated how the U.S. is powerful that can make its people also powerful, which she considered as significant in her decision to settle in the country for her future children.

> I want to live in the U.S. for the rest of my life, so I have to become a citizen here. This country is very strong and huge. I'll have a child in the future, and I want them to grow up in a big country where they can have more freedom. If a country is powerful, the people live happily and grow the same power as the country. The culture and education system here is more powerful than in other countries. Honestly, the health insurance here is higher than in my country, even as a citizen. But still, I think the American system is

> more reliable with its doctors and instruments. That's how much I think the United States is strong (October 9, 2021).

For immigrants, "being powerful" also meant the social status of going anywhere they want due to the power of the U.S. passport, which makes it much easier to travel internationally (Aptekar, 2015). U.S. passports allow citizens to travel to 186 countries without a visa, making the U.S. passport the 6th strongest passport (O'Hare, 2022). Therefore, participants expressed that they prefer the U.S. passport to their current one since it is relatively stronger in international relationships. Samuel showed a strong belief in the future changes of his social status about traveling to other countries.

> I think my life will be different before and after I have citizenship. Because when I have citizenship, my passport will be powerful enough to go to other countries without going through so much process and paperwork. I do not need to get a visa, and it will take a short time (October 3, 2021).

Emilio specifically hopes for his social status to change with the U.S. passport. Airport officers often stop him and force him to stay in a detention room for several inspections.

> After getting citizenship, I am looking forward to getting a U.S. passport. My family and I like to travel, but every time I go and come back to the airport, they pull me into a room at the airport and ask me a bunch of questions. I am very tired of that. I don't like that at all (October 16, 2021).

In addition to a more powerful passport, getting citizenship can help immigrants achieve a safe and secure social status as proof of identification as Samuel stated,

> It is even hard to get a driver's license for me now. It is such a pain to do all the paperwork and prove what I am. I hope after getting citizenship, it will be easier for me to apply for and get a driver's license so I can do more things with it freely (October 3, 2021).

Participants recognized becoming a citizen in a powerful nation as a direct gateway to becoming strong as an individual. They were expecting to feel stronger to engage more in the society they

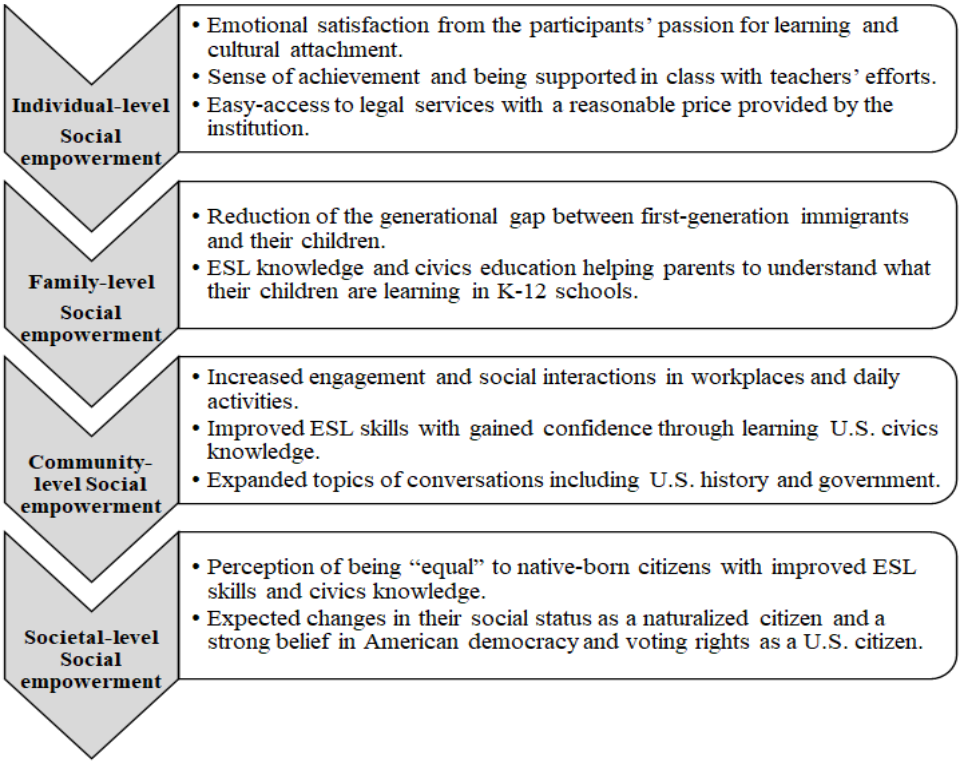
think is the most powerful with benefits and rights to share as a citizen, since having control over resources is the definition of power (Fiske et al., 2016). They believed in American democracy and its power to provide them with a safe and secure environment where they can live freely, such as having a U.S. passport to travel with less stress for proving their identity.

Interpretation of the Interview Data as a Discourse

Different levels of social empowerment that the participants experienced (e.g., individual, family, community, and societal) as they were taking the citizenship ESL class to learn English skills and civics knowledge to become a U.S. citizen are as described in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7

Different Levels of Social Empowerment of Adult ESL Students



At the individual-level social empowerment, the satisfactory emotions for being in a class were from getting help in preparing for the citizenship test and applying for citizenship, and growing

cultural attachment. Emotional well-being and engagement for students in education are essential for psychological development, which leads to a deeper understanding of what they are learning and the application of knowledge into their life (Cohen, 2006; Ecclestone, 2007). The family-level of social empowerment was described as a strive for family, especially for the parents who are first-generation immigrants, to learn ESL and civics knowledge to communicate with their children who are growing up in the U.S. taking K-12 education. As community-level social empowerment, participants became more engaged in social interactions at workplaces and daily activities in their expanded social boundaries. This level of social empowerment can be related to the sense of belonging within a community. Amit and Bar-Lev (2015) explained that individuals' satisfaction from gaining membership in a community is related to increased cultural attachment with the help of language learning. Lastly, the societal-level of social empowerment that participants interpreted was considered inherently power-entailed in being a U.S. citizen, which is automatically reckoned as powerful due to the country's power. In addition, participants believed taking citizenship education to be a guaranteed opportunity to improve their English skills and learn what natural-born citizens already have learned in their K-12 education.

Each different level is not necessarily in a sequence that requires one level to experience the other. Still, it represents the order of a social subdivision that individuals experience as their boundaries expand with increased social interactions and engagement. The social empowerment that the participants interpreted and experienced seems to positively affect their lives in the U.S. and their perception of their social status due to the expected changes in their social status. However, the analysis of experienced social empowerment in terms of being affected by taking a certain type of education should focus on how the education and knowledge it conveys make changes in students' life and, especially, their social status (Ball, 2012; Fiske et al., 2016).

Therefore, the different levels of social empowerment that the participants experienced represent how the students interact within the academic discourse of a curriculum for citizenship education which entails the civics knowledge selected by the USCIS, the dominating class of social structure compared to immigrants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed and presented the findings from the two data sources of document analysis and interviews. The preliminary findings revealed that the curriculum's content knowledge consisted of the civics questions and citizenship applications containing many trauma-related vocabularies, which can be challenging to learn for adult ESL students with immigrant or refugee backgrounds. The document analysis indicated that the curriculum preferably emphasized the values and principles of American democracy and government while eliminating civics questions about Native Americans from U.S. history. The distribution of the civics knowledge in the curriculum showed what the developers regarded as necessary. However, the knowledge delivery through content-based instruction for ESL teaching was not effective. The lessons had too many content standards to follow, and trauma-related vocabulary used in the content knowledge lacked instructional scaffolding in the curriculum.

Interview data from the participants were interpreted, which revealed that adult ESL students had primarily positive experiences which induced intrapersonal, interpersonal, family, and community-level satisfaction due to learning ESL and civics at the same time through citizenship ESL education. Specifically, participants experienced satisfactory feelings in taking the class for being supported in learning during the citizenship application process while engaging in more social interactions at the workplaces and other daily activities in English. Participants also described their expectations of changes in social status after naturalization, and

a majority of them anticipated voting rights to make their voices heard more in society. Most importantly, participants claimed that they felt closer to being "equal" to native-born citizens in terms of improved English language skills and civics knowledge of U.S. history and government, which native-born citizens already had learned in K-12 schools. The document analysis and interview data findings are in Table 4.8 for reference.

Table 4.8

Summary of Findings of the Research Questions

Preliminary Analysis
● Citizenship application (N-400) contained low-frequency words and vocabulary that can cause traumatic stress such as *genocide, torture, prison camp, prostitution, killing, hurting,* and *sexual contact*. ● Civics questions on social structure and power lacked information and detailed explanation for ESL students.
Document Analysis
RQ#1: How does the citizenship education curriculum communicate social structure, power, and justice with adult ESL students?
SQ#1: How is the curriculum's civics knowledge distributed and represented?
● Emphasized content knowledge of the curriculum included the system of American government, rights and responsibilities, and principles of American democracy. ● Civics questions about Native Americans were excluded from the curriculum. ● A mismatch between the representation of content knowledge for applicants in different age groups (65 years+)
SQ#2: How does the curriculum combine ESL learning and citizenship education?
● Too many content standards can cause ineffective content-based instruction (CBI). ● Selected and represented ESL knowledge of the curriculum was highly grammar-based. ● Not enough emphasis was put on vocabulary learning.
Interview Data Analysis
RQ#2: How do adult ESL students experience taking a citizenship ESL class?

SQ#1: In what ways do the students experience learning ESL and civics knowledge at the same time to become U.S. citizens?
● Individual-level social empowerment with emotional satisfaction and the sense of achievement due to passion for learning, growing cultural attachment, receiving practical assistance. ● Family-level social empowerment by reducing the generational gap with ESL and civics knowledge. ● Community-level social empowerment due to increased engagement in social interactions at workplaces and daily activities.
SQ#2: How do the students interpret their learning experiences regarding their power and social status?
● Reasons for coming to the U.S. and applying for citizenship included achieving more freedom and the voting rights. ● The power of knowledge and trying to be equal to natural-born citizens with ESL skills and civics knowledge. ● Societal-level social empowerment was based on the voting rights, freedom, and becoming a citizen of a globally strong country.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This study aimed to examine a curriculum of citizenship education for adult ESL students provided by the USCIS and analyze students' lived experiences of taking the citizenship ESL program at an institution that had received grants from the USCIS. This research considered a curriculum as a discourse that emerged from social interaction between the curriculum developers as knowledge providers and the students as knowledge consumers through a meaning-making process (Fairclough, 2001; Harb, 2017). This study had two research questions:

(1) How does the citizenship ESL curriculum communicate social structure, power, and social justice with adult ESL students?

(2) In what ways do the adult ESL students experience taking the citizenship ESL class as future U.S. citizens?

This study used critical phenomenology to describe not only the first-hand experiences of the students but also the social hierarchy and system affecting the development of the curriculum and students' learning experiences. Data analysis used an analytical tool of critical discourse analysis to inspect what is beyond the curriculum's surface level and reveal what was *not* experienced by the students compared to the analyzed intentions of the curriculum (Fairclough, 2013; Oughton, 2007; Van Dijk, 2003).

As a result of analyzing the two data sources, the curriculum conveyed limited knowledge with excluded contents to adult ESL students. At the same time, participants eminently had a positive experience taking the citizenship ESL class. From the interviews, participants expressed their learning experiences related more to social empowerment and feeling stronger than experiencing marginalization or feeling detached from the culture. This chapter argues that the current curriculum might be functioning as a hidden curriculum for

immigrants who are “shaped” to be satisfied even with the limited knowledge for social reproduction. The social positionality of the immigrant students as subjects with less power may have caused them to experience a sense of social empowerment even with the basic level of civics education. Therefore, the meaning of the partially selected knowledge should be interpreted for its hidden meaning based on critical discourse analysis to reveal the use of a curriculum as a disciplinary power over immigrants that can perpetuate social inequality with unfair distribution of resources and rights of citizens.

Discussion

The content knowledge represented in the curriculum was fragmented and limited, with missing information in certain sections such as U.S. history and rights to have as naturalized citizens. However, the overall satisfaction and positive emotions participants experienced in taking citizenship ESL education affected them to experience social empowerment as the curriculum functioned as a disciplinary power implanting only the favorable perceptions and interpretations of U.S. citizenship. The citizenship applicants are programmed to think that the limited knowledge is sufficient to be accepted as official members of society like native-born citizens. Especially when the target students are beginning-level ESL students, they are not likely to be in the position of questioning the quality and the meaning of the education they are receiving. As long as students succeed in memorizing the set of questions and answers given by the government, they tend to believe the education was satisfying and meaningful that helped them pass the test.

However, the disproportionately distributed civics knowledge in the curriculum can limit citizenship applicants’ empowerment. Instead, the partial knowledge and imposed belief in America's political system can marginalize applicants even after naturalization. As Aptekar

(2015) described, naturalization operates as a "mechanism of exclusion and privilege, reproducing larger processes of social and economic polarization" (p. 5). Naturalization induces social reproduction by perpetuating social inequality. It can cause the unequal distribution of benefits between naturalized citizens and native-born citizens.

Participants' noticeable satisfaction with the citizenship ESL education with positive learning experiences affected their perceived social empowerment at different levels even though the curriculum was not communicating fully about the social structure and had missing parts in civics knowledge. According to Fairclough (2001), in applying critical discourse analysis, it is crucial to consider the "interaction and social context—with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects" (p. 26). Therefore, the relationship between the knowledge providers and consumers is involved in a citizenship ESL education discourse, which requires critical discourse analysis. In addition, citizenship ESL education needs to implement culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy to utilize the cultural capital and funds of knowledge for the students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Disciplinary Power and Implicit Marginalization

Disciplinary power, related to Foucault's cautionary approach to discipline, "works not from the outside but from within, not at the level of an entire society but the level of detail, and not by constraining individuals and their actions but by producing them" (Mitchell, 2018, p. 178). Disciplinary power tells how to act and behave rather than what not to do. The selected knowledge society wants to deliver to students and learners contains the disciplinary power of teaching them how and what to think and say, which is likely to reproduce the values considered "good" in the current system (Lambert, 2017). Lambert (2017) criticized the disciplinary power

of a curriculum that can be represented by "the delivery of authorized, given and predetermined contents that need to be memorized by the student and reproduced in a test" (p. 16). Moreover, education based on disciplinary power aims to reproduce certain conditions and behaviors in students, using specific discourses and academic practices (Llamas, 2006). Popkewitz (1997) questioned the selection of the knowledge being used in a curriculum by stating, "What knowledge is of most worth? Information is selected from a great array of possibilities. The selection of curriculum shapes and fashions how social and personal events are organized for reflection and practice" (p. 144). Thus, the selected knowledge can put students in a specific position of society as implicit marginalization perpetuated by the disciplinary power as a hidden curriculum providing applicants with partially distributed knowledge of the country.

A hidden curriculum allows a school and institution to have "limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths" (Apple, 1976, p. 210). Giroux and Penna (1979) insisted that teachers and educators should be aware of the hidden curriculum that contains "the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through underlying structure of meaning in both the formal context as well as the social reactions of school and classroom life" (p. 22). However, when a hidden curriculum tacitly places a group of students in a social position with the help of selected norms and values delivered to the students, a concept of a *null curriculum* focuses on what is missing to the students and things that are left out of the curriculum (Eisner, 1985; Flinders et al., 1986; Rajurkar et al., 2019). Eisner (1985) argued that what a curriculum does not teach is equally important as what it tries to teach since "ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or a problem (p. 97). Likewise, Flinders et al. (1986) emphasized the need for a thorough inspection

on the inclusion and exclusion of content knowledge reflected on a curriculum since selecting knowledge and content of the curriculum can affect "certain feelings and degrees of feeling" in students (Flinders et al., 1986, p. 36).

The Hidden Meanings of the Curriculum

The findings from the document analysis in this research revealed the aspect of the citizenship education curriculum for adult ESL students being both a hidden curriculum and a null curriculum. First, the hidden meaning of the curriculum was that it favored the knowledge of the principles of American democracy and the system of government, which implies that the government wants naturalized citizens to learn and remember more about the government structure and the democratic values that need to be maintained and protected in society.

The curriculum may be only designed according to the representation of civics knowledge required for the set of 100 civics questions. However, the number of civics questions distributed for different civics categories does not necessarily match with the amount of content knowledge represented in the curriculum. For example, within the 100 civics questions, the "Rights and Responsibilities" section has only ten questions. Still, it is represented more in the curriculum (12.16%) than the section of "Colonial Period and Independence," which has 13 questions but is less represented in the curriculum (9.91%). Furthermore, the "Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information" section from the 100 civics questions has 13 questions. However, it is only represented 4.95% in the curriculum. Here, it is important to note that this section contains civics questions about racial discrimination and Native Americans, such as "What movement tried to end racial discrimination?" and "Name one American Indian tribe in the United States." Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret that the selection of civics

questions and contents was based on the developers' intention of what needs to be prioritized and transmitted to the citizenship applicants.

Secondly, removing the civics questions about Native Americans from the content knowledge indicates that the curriculum functions as a null curriculum that does not teach a certain part of the U.S. to future citizens. Not only were the questions removed from the curriculum, but also none of the unit lessons within the curriculum were devoted to Native American history. It demonstrates that the curriculum developers or the government were not considering the history of Native Americans essential to be learned by the citizenship applicants. It aligns with the exclusion of Native American history in the K-12 schools as Benally (2019) described that there is a "lack of Native American history content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge about teaching Native American history" (p. 20). However, schools and citizenship education classes should teach the history that is foundational and fundamental for understanding the background of the U.S. as a country. Thus, the citizenship education curriculum that is missing certain knowledge and information discloses its aspect as a null curriculum that has left a part of content knowledge out of the curriculum.

There remains a question of *why* certain sections were hidden and removed from the curriculum. Therefore, even if the participants of this study experienced taking citizenship ESL education with a high level of satisfaction and a sense of social empowerment, the curriculum must be critically inspected. It is to see if the curriculum shapes students to be content with the limited knowledge and missing information that can marginalize them in the social structure than have them empowered as U.S. citizens with shared rights and knowledge. The integrated discussion of the document analysis and interview data focused on understanding "why" the curriculum hides and excludes specific knowledge, considering the disciplinary power reflected

in the citizenship ESL curriculum. This section of discussion presents the following topics, including (1) social reproduction through instilled patriotism, (2) highly expected values of American democracy and citizenship, and (3) the imagined community of naturalized citizens.

Social Reproduction Through Instilled Patriotism

The curriculum of citizenship ESL education conveyed the content knowledge of U.S. civics concentrated on American government and history to help students pass the civics portion of the citizenship test. However, the information on civics knowledge was very basic and limited in details on the curriculum. Aptekar (2015) criticized that "the civics and history testing of applicants for citizenship reflects the idea that immigrants must be instilled with patriotism and the assumption that this patriotism will be strengthened by learning a particular set of facts and ideas" (p. 31). Correspondingly, the disproportionate emphasis on the American government and democracy reflected on the curriculum produced a strong belief in America's government system and democratic values from the participants. Eight out of 11 participants (72.73%) responded that the most interesting and impressive section of civics knowledge was the fair distribution of power in government branches based on the U.S. Constitution. As can be seen in the response of one of the participants, Samira, learning about the Constitution impacted her to build a strong trust in the U.S. as she stated, "After studying the Constitution, I believe in it, and I believe in this country" (October 10, 2021). In addition, four out of 11 participants (36.36%) compared the government system of their nation of origin and claimed that the American system is preferable to other government formats.

Promoting values of democracy and emphasizing the need for reproducing the current system might have affected the removal of the U.S. history portion of Native Americans. The three questions excluded from the curriculum were explicitly about the colonial period and

Native American history that attest to the country acting as a colonizer, which can reduce the work of the U.S. as a democratic nation valuing freedom and human rights. With the fragmented and limited information about parts of U.S. history, citizenship applicants and adult students are forced to believe the country's illustrious achievements in building a fair and "good" nation. Loring (2013) described the basic and limited knowledge of U.S. civics required for the citizenship test as rather "cultural and linguistic assimilation" (p. 199) to compel immigrants to believe the test material objectively covers an adequate amount of information needed to become a citizen.

Highly Expected Values of Citizenship and the Voting Rights

From the interview data, nine out of 11 participants (81.81%) explicitly claimed the right to vote as a reason for applying for citizenship. The strong belief in the American government system and principles of democracy protecting the rights of citizens and freedom for everyone, as the curriculum was designed to convey it through the civics knowledge, might have led citizenship applicants to grow their longing to participate in voting as a citizen. The positive impression of the American government distributing equal power to different branches and people in charge of different positions seemed to have affected participants to believe in fairness and justice in making their voices equally heard in the society. One of the participants, Samuel, explained, "This country found a way to distribute power. I can find it everywhere in the society where people share the power like the checks and balances" (October 3, 2021). Ligaya expressed "There is no favoritism here" (October 10, 2021). Therefore, the participants considered achieving voting rights after naturalization as having equal power as native-born citizens and making their voices impactful to society.

However, simply emphasizing the voting rights can give applicants false hope if the students do not realize the actual voting system and the social structure that makes it hard for immigrants to be naturalized and become eligible voters. In the curriculum, lessons on voting rights simply state the right as an essential value and privilege of American democracy and U.S. citizens. However, they do not expand on how the voting system works nationally and locally in the U.S., and there is no discussion on current issues related to elections and voting. The U.S. voting system entails complicated regulations which can be difficult for naturalized citizens. It can affect the low turnout rate among the naturalized populations in national and local elections in the U.S. (Bass & Casper, 2001; Budiman et al., 2020; Jones-Correa, 2001). Bass and Casper (2001) explained that regulations could limit naturalized citizens' participation rate, such as the requirement of registering every time voters move to a different place. It can cause naturalized citizens who are not aware of the regulations to have a low registration rate resulting in low voting participation.

Naturalized citizens compose 10% of the eligible voters in the U.S., and only 49% of the immigrant population is naturalized (Budiman et al., 2020). Most notably, the large population of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. consists of the majority of undocumented and documented immigrants, but only 38% of Hispanic immigrants were naturalized to vote in 2018 (Budiman et al., 2020). Aptekar (2015) explained that the low rate of Hispanic immigrants applying for citizenship “indicates that access to the privileges of citizenship is particularly low among Hispanic immigrants who are eligible to become citizens” (p. 55). The low naturalization rate can be due to the expensive application fee, complex test materials, and lengthy application process (Aptekar, 2015; Loring, 2013).

Without learning about the complicated voting system and what makes it easier or more difficult for different groups of immigrants to become naturalized to have the right to vote, citizenship applicants' hopes for the voting rights to make their voices heard is hard to achieve. When the naturalization system has an unequal distribution of citizenship involving racial and ethnical inequality, voting rights cannot help marginalized immigrant populations (Aptekar, 2015; Feuerherm & Roumani, 2016). Therefore, citizenship applicants and naturalized citizens face a bigger problem, the unequally distributed citizenship status.

The Imagined Community of Naturalized Citizens

Even though most participants experienced inclusiveness to their communities with increased social interactions by improving English skills and learning more about American civics, one participant described their perceived sense of belonging as limited and unequal to the native-born citizens. Emilio, who has lived in the U.S. for more than 21 years, was not expecting much change regarding his feeling of being "equal" to the other native-born citizens.

> I will stay away from trying to be too same or equal. That's not my job. Not really. Besides my work, where I interact with other people, I like to keep things to myself. I don't want to mess with anybody else after getting citizenship. Like I don't want to go around and tell people what I can do now. I just want to do my work and live with my family (October 16, 2021).

From his response, getting citizenship did not mean a quick shift in his mental and social status that could bring about a change for him and his family. As Aptekar (2015) stated, citizenship applicants without much cultural attachment described citizenship as a "piece of paper" that is "less significant or durable than the consequences of living in the country, or the essential identity of a person" (p. 79). Therefore, even though citizenship ESL education can help students

grow cultural attachments and a sense of belonging, it does not fully guarantee the true feeling of being equal and connected to the country.

Comparably, the trauma-related vocabulary found in the document analysis impacted one of the participants' naturalization interview experiences. Lucia had taken the citizenship test just a week before the interview. The officer asked the word "genocide" to her, and the test anxiety she was already having grew even more.

> I am a singer, and I know how to control the feeling of nervousness. But during that interview, I was very nervous. I had a problem with how fast the officer was talking to me. From the beginning, he seemed to be not in a good mood, maybe because I was his last person to interview. He talked very fast from the start of the interview. And he asked me, "Have you ever been involved in a genocide?" and I said, "No, never." The word made me scared and worried. He went on to ask me, "Do you know what genocide is?" and asked if I could elaborate and explain what it is. I tried my best, but my body was almost shaking. I passed the test, but I didn't like that experience (October 9, 2021).

Without helping citizenship applicants with actual connotations of words used in the citizenship application and the naturalization interview, the reality they face is harsher since the curriculum only delivers limited knowledge about American civics. In contrast to the welcoming community that participants were expecting to face in the process of naturalization, what citizenship applicants witnessed at the citizenship test site was quite ruthless. Samira also had taken the naturalization interview about a month before the interview, and she described the experience as scary and uncomfortable.

> When I got to the interview location, I saw people crying out of the office because they couldn't pass the test. It made me very scared. I had to take three deep breaths. During the interview, the first thing I did was take the oath to tell only the truth, and I focused hard on understanding everything the officer was saying to me. The officer talked very fast, but I didn't want to stop him or ask him questions because I didn't want him to think I was not good at English. I tried hard not to miss anything important (October 10, 2021).

Unlike the citizenship education curriculum, the reality is quite different from learning only about the greatness of the American government system and the partial history of the U.S. focusing only on its triumphs and accomplishments. Anderson (1991) defined "imagined communities" as a nation that is in the imagination since "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). Kanno and Norton (2003) emphasized the creation of imagined communities, especially by immigrants of society, as they are involved in "issues concerning language, identity, and education" (p. 242). Therefore, the gap between the imagined community and the real world of the immigrants is important if the goal of having them involved in the community is to make them as equal as possible with shared benefits of the society (Simon, 1992). Naturalized citizens should be able to use the promised rights and benefits in practices with a true sense of belonging. Education should be the bridge to shorten the distance between imagination and reality.

The Role of Cultural Capital and Valuing the Funds of Knowledge

The implicit marginalization and the limited sense of belonging in citizenship applicants and adult ESL students could be due to the curriculum treating the students as a "blank" paper that needs to be filled with patriotism for the country and a basic level of civic knowledge to become U.S. citizens. None of the areas within the curriculum emphasized the characteristics of adult students who already have their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds and the meaning and concept of citizenship. Therefore, the curriculum should focus on the cultural capital and funds of knowledge of adult ESL students that are valuable to themselves and society (Genzuk, 1999; Liscio & Farrelly, 2019; Oughton, 2010). In addition, it is significant for immigrants to realize their funds of knowledge to experience social empowerment since it is their advantage

and strength in learning different cultures and languages (Atkinson, 2014). Therefore, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, which aims to ensure valuing students' cultural capital, should be applied to the citizenship ESL curriculum to make students realize that they are contributing to society by having the funds of knowledge on their own (Genzuk, 1999; Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Oughton, 2010).

Citizenship Capital as Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1984) used the term *cultural capital* to describe factors that make differences in student outcomes in academic success depending on their social classes. Considered to be essential and valuable by the dominant groups of society since it determines students' success, also defined by society, cultural capital is a type of capital that is "legitimated, usually to the exclusion of other non-dominant groups' cultural capital" (Liscio & Farrelly, 2019, p. 135). It makes it easier for groups with the power to succeed more efficiently within a hierarchical society, which attributes to social reproduction for the dominant and privileged class. Such cultural capital can be students' learning styles, ways of thinking affected by their culture, linguistic and religious practices. Yosso (2005) stated, "whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted?" (p. 69) to criticize the process of shaping students into a standardized form by a culturally biased society. Such presumptions assume that certain people in society lack the cultural and social capital mandatory to achieve social mobility (Yosso, 2005). In the end, education that injects a particular set of cultural capital to be appreciated and accepted in society functions as Freire's (1970) "pedagogy of the oppressed," which aims to explicitly and implicitly force students to learn culturally dominant knowledge and values.

The citizenship education curriculum for beginning-level ESL students revealed that a selected set of knowledge and language skills and enduring trauma-related vocabularies are

needed to become a U.S. citizen. Loring (2013) coined the term *citizenship capital* based on Bourdieu's (1991) idea of linguistic capital as a type of cultural capital. Linguistic capital represents the linguistic ability used in interactions between language speakers, defined by how much linguistic competence each speaker possesses. It implies that it is ideal to have a comparable competence in language with one another among the speakers to equitably communicate in a social structure (Loring, 2013; Roth, 2019). Citizenship capital involves language proficiency, and this can perpetuate the idea of what has to be "corrected" in an individual and the language they as a naturalized citizen. According to Loring (2013), "the inherited citizenship capital from one's home country does not necessarily transfer into appropriate citizenship capital in another country" (Loring, 2013, p. 202). Consequently, beginning-level adult ESL students applying for naturalization possess lower citizenship capital, making them experience more difficult times than other applicants with higher English proficiency.

English language as cultural and citizenship capital is excessively powerful and unquestioningly mandatory for all newcomers in English-speaking countries. Curtis and Curan (2015) argued that English as a privileged world language has to be carefully examined for teaching and learning in educational programs, especially for students with different linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, teaching English to students who are required to improve their skills to pass the citizenship test has to be carefully approached concerning the power of the language as citizenship capital and cultural capital.

Funds of Knowledge from the Naturalized Citizens

Developed in the work of Moll et al. (1992), the notion of the funds of knowledge emphasizes the value of "a wide variety of skills, knowledge, and competencies forged in

[immigrants'] working lives and community history" (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 146). Funds of knowledge explain that knowledge is "embedded in the labor, domestic, family and community practices" (Thomson & Hall, 2008, p. 3). Funds of knowledge are precious since they represent households' and communities' knowledge that can contribute to creating more diversified shared knowledge (Genzuk, 1999; Oughton, 2010). Oughton (2010) emphasized the relationship between funds of knowledge and cultural capital that they are both "characterized by sets of gradually-acquired and long-lasting dispositions and manifested in skills, know-how, and competencies" (p. 8). The differences between the cultural capital and funds of knowledge are that cultural capital is exchangeable for other forms of capital, such as economic capital that is more privileged and dominated by elites than the funds of knowledge, which is more about common-sense knowledge (Oughton, 2010).

Promoting the value of funds of knowledge in citizenship ESL education can benefit citizenship applicants and the children of the applicants. Marshall and Toohey (2010) studied the benefit of connecting different generations of immigrant families by sharing the funds of knowledge in a household with storytelling activities. Families could learn from each other about different languages and experiences at schools. Citizenship ESL education can also engage more teacher education and design resources to help students realize their possession of funds of knowledge which can be their strength.

Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy for Citizenship Education

One of the ways to highlight the value of cultural capital and funds of knowledge from the students is to apply culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy into the curriculum and education (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2021; Paris, 2012). The development of culturally relevant pedagogy was to prepare teachers to be able to "support equitable and just educational

experiences for all students" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 466). For educational equity, students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds were necessary for culturally relevant pedagogy based on the critical view of the academic success defined by a society that tries to shape students into a standardized format regardless of students' race, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic class (Marciano et al., 2020). Furthermore, following the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy focuses on "creating a pedagogy that explicitly embodied resistance to the status quo and encouraged marginalized communities to fight for their linguistic and cultural sovereignty" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 351). Therefore, culturally sustaining pedagogy can emphasize the need for valuing students' cultural capital and funds of knowledge when applied to a curriculum. It embraces students' *cultural competence*, "the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75).

Citizenship ESL education provided for adult ESL students who are immigrants and citizenship applicants can benefit a lot from culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy that promotes cultural competence to strengthen students' identity as a newcomer with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It is not only because the students are socially and culturally marginalized as immigrants but also, as Atkinson (2014) explained, adult ESL students possess "a personally constructed world" (p. 7) in their minds that consists of their language, identity, and meanings of society. The constructed meaning of the world and their identity related to language and social status such as their citizenship, therefore, constantly interacts with their cultural values in their minds and newly adapted culture through interacting and socializing in a different environment (Norton, 2006).

The participants experienced changes in their identity concerning language learning and growth in cultural attachment due to learning more about the country and its culture. The changes seemed to occur naturally through the time spent in the U.S., with increased social interactions and taking citizenship education as they learn more about the country. Rafael stated in the interview, “I feel more connected to American culture than Mexico because I have lived here for about 20 years now” (October 21, 2021). Emilio said, “I am culturally closer to the United States that now I know more about the government and history of the country” (October 16, 2021).

However, participants were still strongly connected to their cultural background, such as Emilio, who expressed, “Don’t get me wrong, I still love my country, and I am always a Mexican” (October 16, 2021). Similarly, Aiyla from Turkey, who has lived in the U.S. for about four years, had passed the naturalization test a couple of weeks before the interview. She was applying for multiple citizenships to keep her birth citizenship of Greek and Turkish in addition to the newly achieved U.S. citizenship.

The citizenship applicants constantly adapt to the new culture in addition to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy implements the value of students’ cultural capital that affects students’ language and social status. To apply culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy to the curriculum, students should be able to use their funds of knowledge, such as a history of their home country with world history and knowledge about different systems of government in the lessons. The following section suggests ways to improve the citizenship ESL curriculum by acknowledging citizenship discourse from social reconstructionist perspectives and applying culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy into lessons.

Implications

The curriculum for citizenship ESL education can be analyzed as a hidden curriculum for social reproduction that aims to instill patriotism into students with unequal distribution of civics knowledge. In addition, the curriculum lacked emphasis on students' cultural capital that can strengthen the value of knowledge the students already possess. Therefore, implications and suggestions from this study for citizenship ESL education and future studies include (1) teacher education based on social reconstructionism, (2) curriculum improvement by applying culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, and (3) creating a community of practice where immigrants and naturalized citizens can become practitioners of their knowledge.

Citizenship ESL Teachers as a Social Reconstructionist

Education and curriculum can be geared towards reforming society as Dewey (1897) emphasized the function of education in social reconstruction since "education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction" (p. 16). Therefore, social reconstructionists would be able to question the current society and the educational system for being unhealthy and work to make changes as Schiro (2012) claimed that "social reconstructionists assume that something can be done to keep society from destroying itself" (p. 151). Moreover, Apple (1996) explained that social reconstructionists have an educational vision that focuses on

> People from diverse situations to rise above their particular circumstances to see social crises as a whole (as, for example, when African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans see that they are all oppressed), allows them to share a common vision

> of a better life, and allows them to act together to meet common needs and to collectively better themselves and improve society as a whole (p. 14).

Teachers as social reconstructionists should constantly question the system to be aware of the education and curriculum that would strengthen the imbalanced distribution of power or resources that can reproduce an unfair social structure. Counts (2013) insisted that "teachers should deliberately reach for power and then make the most of their conquest… to the extent that they are permitted to fashion the curriculum and the procedures of the school, they will definitely and positively influence the social attitudes, ideals, and behaviors of the coming generation" (p. 29). Therefore, a social reconstructionist teacher should always be aware of the power structure to look beyond the curriculum created to fit in the structure to see a deeper meaning of education. In the end, it is to emphasize how teachers and educators should think of a curriculum and education "as a force for social regeneration [that] must march hand in hand with the living and creative forces of the social order" (Counts, 2013, p. 30).

In addition, teachers of citizenship ESL education should understand that teaching citizenship education to students who are becoming a citizen in their new home is quite different from teaching it to students with citizenship given from birth. Morgan and Fleming (2009) asserted that teachers should approach differently to the meaning of citizenship between citizenship as birthright and through naturalization as "notions of *being* or *becoming* a citizen of any nation-state require consideration of how identities or, more specifically, political subjectivities are formed and prepared for civic life and continuity" (p. 266). Furthermore, Wrigley (2007) argued that ESL teachers who accommodate teaching for civic-related themes are "expected to develop or deliver a curriculum that connects immigrants and refugees with the wider community, help them understand local services, and engage them in dialogue around

community issues" (p. 231). López (2015) suggested a social reconstructionists' perspective of approaching citizenship ESL education which emphasizes the role of teachers that work with students on how to "deconstruct and analyze their own positioning within the social, cultural, political, and economic life of the U.S." (p. 120). Therefore, citizenship ESL teachers should be able to analyze the curriculum based on social reconstructionism and help students understand the meaning of achieving citizenship and learning English as a second language.

Social Reconstructionism and the Use of Discourse

Almost inevitably, providing education and the development of a curriculum entails the use of discourse generated through the interactions between different subjects within power dynamics involving the knowledge provider and the knowledge consumer (Fairclough, 2013; Harb, 2017; Oughton, 2007). Freire (1993) viewed *discourse* as a source of educational and social reform since it is a way of communicating and sharing each other's thoughts to initiate a discussion of a problematic system. However, Foucault (1969) cautiously examined the use of institutional discourse as a means of oppression that perpetuates social hierarchy. The definition of discourse as a product of social interactions can be interpreted and used depending on the subjects' intention. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, discourse is used to pass down socially accepted and praised knowledge through institutions that have the power of forming a bigger narrative that controls society (Fairclough, 2013; Oughton, 2007). Thus, Foucault's (1969) perspective on discourses and knowledge generation was that those processes require critical analysis before having the members of society be the recipient in consuming the socially-prescribed knowledge. Individuals' awakening of the social narrative, including a curriculum as a product of social discourse, is crucial in analyzing the education system and what it conveys to students (Harb, 2017).

The teacher's role based on social reconstructionism is to be critically aware of the existence of institutional discourses and a curriculum functioning as disciplinary power, often in the form of a hidden curriculum or a null curriculum that affects what knowledge students are receiving or not receiving at all (Alsubaie, 2015; Eisner, 1985; Flinders et al., 1986; LeCompte, 1978). Teachers are, at the same time, both the knowledge provider and the knowledge consumer as they interact with the students to deliver the knowledge and use the curriculum to know what they should teach to the students. As a mediator in education using institutional discourse and a curriculum, teachers should understand the impact of a hidden curriculum on themselves and their students (Jerald, 2006). It can be difficult for a teacher as an individual to change the hidden or null curriculum and reconstruct the whole system since teachers are also part of the system. As LeCompte (1978) asserted, "teachers seemed to be institutionally constrained to elicit from students' certain kinds of behavior pertaining to time, work, authority, and order" (p. 34). Therefore, Alsubaie (2015) suggested reducing the burden on teachers who have to deal with a hidden curriculum, encouraging teachers to require more information and explanations about the intention and the meaning of a given curriculum directly to the curriculum developers and school administrators. However, teachers can apply teaching methods or pedagogy that can compensate for the curriculum's disciplinary power in controlling students' behavior and minds if the teacher finds it difficult to approach the hidden curriculum. In the following section, this study suggests using culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as one of the ways to improve the curriculum. It is not only for teachers to apply to their teaching of a given curriculum but also for curriculum developers to consider when improving a curriculum for citizenship ESL education.

Applying Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy

Curriculum developers for citizenship ESL education should consider improving the content and design of the curriculum based on culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy for several reasons. First, for social justice, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy should be included in the curriculum to positively impact students' daily lives and a settlement in the United States (Borrero et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2019). Secondly, meeting the needs of growing diversity in students is important for both teachers and students, especially in urban areas (Brown et al., 2019). Most citizenship ESL classes take place in an urban area since many immigrant students reside in a city area for job opportunities and educational support for their children (Larrotta, 2017; Loring, 2013). Therefore, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy supports students and can meet the teachers' needs for a tangible and practical curriculum that can communicate well to the students (Borrero et al., 2018). Lastly, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy can promote community advocacy and engagement in long-term inclusion for the students (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). The role of educational leaders and curriculum developers is to advocate for the community of students to affect relevant policies surrounding the students can become cultural liaisons for equity work (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, thus, can support students both inside and outside the classroom to help create a healthy and inclusive community.

The purpose of culturally relevant pedagogy, as Ladson-Billings (2014) explained, is to "produce new generations of teachers who would bring an appreciation of their students' assets to their work" (p. 74). Therefore, this teaching pedagogy of valuing students' cultural capital and funds of knowledge should affect teachers' beliefs and ideas on the underlying structure of their practices that can accommodate to welcoming students' diverse cultural and linguistic

knowledge. Based on the findings from this research, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy can be implanted into citizenship ESL education, focusing on areas including (1) improvement on vocabulary instruction for words that can cause stress and trauma to the students, (2) filling up missing contents such as U.S. history on Native Americans and rights for immigrants and naturalized citizens, and (3) connecting civic knowledge to that of students which they have constructed in their cultural background and experiences.

Trauma-Informed Practices for Vocabulary Instruction

One of the findings from the document analysis was that the content knowledge involved a lot of trauma-related vocabulary, which can be challenging to learn, especially for adult ESL students with traumatic immigrant or refugee backgrounds. However, the use of such vocabulary is almost unavoidable in citizenship ESL education since the words are involved in the questions of the citizenship application that all students need to fill in and submit when they are applying for U.S. citizenship. Examples of such words include “genocide,” “torture,” “prison,” “labor camp,” “prostitution,” “killing,” “hurting,” “threatened,” “detention facility,” and so on.

A way of approaching education for students with traumatic experiences is referred to as *trauma-informed practices.* Berger and Quiros (2014) explained that trauma-informed practices should happen in an environment that makes students feel safe by providing culturally appropriate boundaries with predictable, consistent care. Therefore, teachers need to work with students to rebuild trust. As Finn (2010) described, “A slow, sustained effort to rebuild trust in this population is crucial, and by doing so, students will come to see themselves as equal members of the classroom, and teachers will create a more effective community of practice” (p. 591). Specifically for teaching vocabulary that can cause traumatic stress to students, Finn (2010) suggested instructors and educators communicate with students to foster trust between the

teacher and the students and build confidence for learning in students to emphasize the ownership of knowledge.

In addition, providing students with classroom routines that are comfortably adjusted for students can help build trust between the teacher and students (Guo et al., 2019; Windle & Miller, 2012). Students with immigrant or refugee backgrounds who might have had traumatic experiences would need a classroom routine to feel safe to know what to expect in the classroom and be aware of lessons and the learning environment they are involved in. Guo et al. (2019) emphasized the need for "stability, support, and for building a sense of routine and belonging" (p. 99) for students with refugee backgrounds to start rebuilding trust and to acquire knowledge that might be difficult for them, such as trauma-related vocabulary.

Trauma-informed practices are becoming increasingly important and relevant to the current time of education, with a growing number of global issues taking place that can affect students' learning experiences, including the COVID-19 pandemic and global migrations of refugees due to ongoing wars (Kasper, 2021; Koyama & Kasper, 2021; Roman, 2020; Taylor, 2021). Recent studies on trauma-informed practices emphasize the importance of creating a physically and mentally safe environment for students going through trauma by focusing on "safety, trustworthiness, transparency, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, voice, and being considerate of cultural, historical, and gender differences" (Taylor, 2021, p. 126). Therefore, implementing trauma-informed practices in citizenship ESL education should also be crucial for the growing number of immigrant and refugee populations coming to the U.S. to provide students with safety and trust in the classroom (Kisiara, 2021).

Providing Missing Contents for U.S. History and Rights

The missing contents of the civics knowledge in the curriculum have to be added with more details and explanations for adult ESL students. The removed civics questions were about Native Americans and the colonial period of the U.S. However, adding those questions to the curriculum would not guarantee increased awareness of Native American history. Therefore, teachers can design ways of bringing the topic as authentic and meaningful as possible into the classroom for citizenship ESL education. Loring (2009) suggested using "Native-authored books, poetry, art, plays, museum exhibits, and documentary films" in education for learning about the history of Native Americans. Inviting speakers from indigenous tribe members and connecting the U.S. holiday of Indigenous Peoples' Day with citizenship lessons can also be a way of approaching the specific civics knowledge.

The rights of citizens mentioned in the curriculum only partially cover a few of the rights, such as voting in a federal election and running for federal office (USCIS, 2020). The curriculum does not fully address the rights that can help immigrants and naturalized citizens, including "Miranda rights, witness-protection rights, and the right to interpretation and translation" (Loring, 2013, p. 216). In addition, the right to a fair trial is also missing from the civics knowledge and the curriculum, which is specifically essential for immigrants and adult ESL learners who are underrepresented populations of the U.S. (Aptekar, 2015). Therefore, lessons dedicated to having citizenship applicants know more about the rights and justice to activate those rights should be emphasized in citizenship ESL education. Most of the time, the classroom hours are the only time for adult ESL students to learn about rights and social justice as U.S. citizens. Some participants expressed that they were scared of showing weaknesses in their language proficiency from the interview data. They did not want to ask any questions about

English sentences or bring interpreters or translators even if it was their right. Thus, lessons on rights should cover examples of situations when the rights are needed, how to ask for help and rightly use the rights, and most importantly, the meaning of rights that they do not have to be afraid of or be "sorry" to exercise the rights.

Matching Relevant Historical Events and Translanguaging

Citizenship education for adult ESL students is unique. Students are adults with a previously constructed meaning of citizenship from their national backgrounds and awareness of their nation's history and world history based on their educational backgrounds and cultural experiences. Participants from the research described how they were interested in learning U.S. history while finding similarities and differences from the history of their home countries, such as the history of achieving independence. Martell (2013) suggested a way of applying culturally relevant pedagogy that focuses on finding matching events in U.S. history and world history to view different perspectives related to historical events by including "missing events related to the history of people of color" (p. 72).

Citizenship ESL teachers can apply culturally relevant pedagogy for teaching history based on students' cultural backgrounds to find relevant historical events that can create more connections with history lessons, which can also develop students' awareness of global history and cause-and-effect relationships between social and political events. At the same time, culturally relevant history teaching should aim for a long-term education with a "continual, recursive, and reflective process" (Martell, 2013, p. 73). Acknowledging the limit in time and space for citizenship applicants, Liscio and Farrelly (2019) proposed using translanguaging and storytelling in-class activities since "multimodal and multilingual meaning-making utilizes and builds on students' linguistic capital and mediates effective communication" (p. 148). Therefore,

in-class discussions on current society can use translanguaging by providing students with learning materials in their first languages. It can be helpful for students to stay connected to their linguistic backgrounds and community issues and develop their own opinions on approaching social problems (Liscio & Farrelly, 2019). Multimodal resources such as "oral recordings, video presentations, drawings, and other art forms" (Liscio & Farrelly, 2019, p. 148) can be used in class, especially to help beginning-level ESL students to understand historical issues or events.

Naturalized Citizens and a Community of Practice

According to Freire (1993), the goal of education is to let students realize their limited situations. Education should make learners notice what is unjustly given by society as a norm, and students should be able "to recognize that we are all *subjects* of our own lives and narratives, not *objects* in the stories of others" (as cited in Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 120). Therefore, students falling under unfair or unequal educational conditions should receive attention and support from educators to eventually break the norm that oppresses them. Educational objectives should always move towards releasing students' potential in learning. Once students become active subjects in their learning based on a curriculum designed to help them develop a sense of leadership in life, education can generate fruitful outcomes for them and society. Freire (1993) dreamed of education filled with dialogues since "dialogue, for Freire, is defined as collective reflection/action. He believed that dialogue, fellowship, and solidarity are essential to human liberation and transformation" (as cited in Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 121).

Adult ESL students aiming to achieve U.S. citizenship learn English as a second language and civics knowledge of U.S. history and government to have more dialogues with the community and society. The adult ESL students attending a citizenship ESL class share the same

goal and motivation of becoming a U.S. citizen and living in the U.S. as an official member. This form of a group of students can be considered a *community of practice*, which can be an apt and effective organization for the students. Wenger (2011) defined "communities of practice" as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1). In detail, a community of practice refers to a learning community that shares three aspects—the domain, the community, and the practice—which can be applied to forming a community of adult ESL students and citizenship applicants where they can become practitioners of their knowledge.

The Domain, the Community, and the Practice of Citizenship ESL Education

In a community of practice, *the domain* is an area of interest shared by the group, which can help create the members' identity. An expertise of the area is not necessary, and the subject matter that people involved in the group value and collectively want to learn about is a domain (Smith et al., 2019; Wenger, 2011). A fundamental characteristic of an area of interest to become "a domain" is a powerful sense of membership that can be built within the area (Smith et al., 2019). Applied to this study, adult ESL students who are citizenship applicants share an interest in U.S. citizenship. They spend their time and effort studying for the English language requirements and civics knowledge. They can share their experiences or struggles of living in the U.S. as immigrants and learning English as a second language since they are in a classroom where they build membership as they understand what each other is going through. Therefore, adult citizenship ESL education for the U.S. naturalization test can become the domain of the students.

The community is a concept referring to a group of learners gathered together for a shared interest. The identities of the members are defined by the relationships and roles in their group

activities (Smith et al., 2019). The citizenship ESL class that students decided to enroll and take lessons in is “a community” where they are motivated to learn about their role as future citizens of the country. They are learning English, and the aspect of learning another language is that there are constant communications between the students that entail social interactions while learning together. Thus, the adult students learning ESL and civics knowledge simultaneously for the citizenship test can be considered a community.

The last component of a community of practice is *the practice*. This study especially highlights the practice's core part of becoming U.S. citizens through naturalization since the practice emphasizes the members’ ability to become the practitioners of learned knowledge (Li et al., 2009). As Wenger (2011) puts it, the members “develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems-in short a shared practice” (p. 2). The students in the citizenship ESL class share their experience as a community, and from that interaction, they can find ways to become practitioners for applying knowledge to their life. For example, active civic participation such as voting and volunteering after becoming a citizen can be a type of involvement in a community as a practitioner, which this study aims to develop in citizenship ESL education.

As the participants from this study sought ways to be more involved in the community as a volunteer or a member of their faith group, citizenship ESL classrooms should provide a space for promoting practical engagement in the community and society. The citizenship test asks students about ways they can participate in democracy. The sample answers include that they can vote, join a political party, or write to a newspaper. However, participating in democracy starts from engaging in a community. Naturalized citizens and immigrants should know who to vote for and ways to solve community issues as a member. Aiyla, one of the participants, expressed,

> I worked as a volunteer at a library in Florida when I first came to the U.S., worked with other librarians, and gave lessons to children. By doing this, I could interact with other people, and I felt like I was part of a community as a team. My language was not perfect, and it was sometimes challenging to speak with others, but that was one way to be where I am and to know I was there as a member (July 10, 2021).

According to the participants, a true sense of belonging comes from engaging in a community. A citizenship ESL class can be a space for enhancing language skills and civics knowledge that can be helpful in more community engagement.

Therefore, citizenship ESL education should aim to introduce and provide practical ways to participate in a democratic society where every individual is recognized and valued as an active member. In addition, teachers and institutions should study ways to include practical activities to help adult ESL students apply civics knowledge into real-life to promote community engagement through citizenship ESL education. First, to learn about the voting rights and voting system, practical activities such as (a) visiting the state's official website for voter registration to learn about the process together as a class, (b) examining government official candidates' campaign promises and how they are related to community issues and students' daily lives, and (c) practicing how to vote with sample ballots and learning related vocabulary. Second, field trips to museums to learn the history of the nation and, more importantly, the history of different ethnic groups and races living in the community should be encouraged. Lastly, community engagement through volunteering for local libraries and faith groups can be a good way for communicative language learning and community participation to increase a sense of belonging. All activities and in-class lessons should be interconnected to make students active citizens.

Conclusion

Citizenship ESL curriculum is designed to teach adult ESL students English skills and civics knowledge to help them pass the citizenship test and be accepted as U.S. citizens. However, the fragmented knowledge with missing parts of U.S. history and not enough explanations on the rights of naturalized citizens make the curriculum function as a disciplinary power that limits citizenship applicants' development as an active participant in democracy. Even though the participants of this research experienced positive emotions and different levels of social empowerment, it has to be critically analyzed that the students may be shaped to feel satisfied with the limited knowledge as a small amount of citizenship capital. Immigrants and naturalized citizens relatively have low positionality in social structure. It is difficult for the students to see what is missing from the curriculum and what they are not learning. It works as a built-in limitation that students are not in the position to have the recognition to notice the ways of education which function as a tool of social reproduction and that they are being marginalized and disempowered by the disciplinary power of a hidden curriculum.

The setting of their education is unique in that it is almost free at cost and accessible to adult ESL students through community-based institutions. The participants of this study were appreciative of their education at the institution. The citizenship ESL class was so popular among local students that they were only allowed to enroll once a year to take a course of lessons. The participants expressed how they noticed the differences and similarities between their government and the U.S. government. Still, nothing was discussed further, such as cultural differences and how they can practice their learned knowledge as active participants in their communities. The curriculum emphasized voting rights as a value of U.S. citizenship, but how to participate in voting and the complicated voting system were not explained to the students. They

just move on. They do not get to learn deeply about their funds of knowledge, which they bring from their culture and home country, and how much they can contribute to U.S. society was not encouraged in the current curriculum. The students do not necessarily see that as a problem since the students are learning very basic knowledge on U.S. history and government. Students can become even more marginalized through the current curriculum for citizenship education. This research suggested one possible way for teachers to apply in their teaching practices: to implement culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy into the curriculum. By emphasizing students' cultural competence with their cultural capital and funds of knowledge, students can grow source of social empowerment.

The practice of democracy as a naturalized citizen can start from the citizenship ESL classroom by opening up discussions on how to live in a democratic society. The premise of U.S. democracy supports every individual's civic participation. It is an appealing aspect for immigrants to be naturalized since not everyone was born in a democratic nation to have rights and freedom. As a leading nation of democracy, citizenship education in the U.S. should aim to provide spaces for the people living in the country to actively engage in the community and society as a member rather than to place them in a specific position with limited knowledge and participation. It is for both naturalized citizens and natural-born citizens as well as newcomers, including immigrants and refugees, to live together in the land of inclusion, opportunities, and justice.

Suggestions for Future Research

For future studies, more emphasis can be put on citizenship ESL teacher education and teachers' experiences in teaching the class and interacting with the students who are citizenship applicants. Based on the findings of this study, the curriculum has significant gaps in U.S.

history, a lack of information on the rights of naturalized citizens, and it does not utilize culturally relevant or sustaining pedagogy that can value students' funds of knowledge in the curriculum. Therefore, future citizenship ESL education should engage more teacher education to focus on learning how to use teaching resources and ways to apply culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy for adult students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to facilitate students' cultural capital and funds of knowledge.

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about the U.S. as a nation, such as their political stance and personal opinions on immigration and naturalization policies, can affect how different teachers approach citizenship ESL education. Examples of teachers' lesson plans and the curriculum design with program objectives from the coordinators of different institutions can be analyzed in future studies to understand how teachers and institutions function as mediators between knowledge providers and knowledge consumers. For example, the relationship between a teacher's political beliefs and the lesson's content can be studied to examine how the teacher uses the curriculum in their teaching practices. Classroom observations, in-depth teacher interviews, and interviews with program coordinators alongside student interviews from the beginning and end of a citizenship ESL program can provide thorough descriptions of the current academic situation with citizenship ESL education.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

(**After the participant reads and signs the consent form.)*

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in studying adult ESL students' experience of taking citizenship ESL classes in terms of second language learning and getting ready to be more involved in society as a citizen. This interview will take about 1 hour. If you do not understand any questions, please tell me, and I will reword them. You can always decide not to answer any of the questions at any step of this process. Do you have questions before we start?

Interview Questions

I. Demographic Information and Motivation to Apply for Naturalization

1. How long have you been living in the U.S.?
2. Where are you from, and what is your first language?
3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
4. How old are you, and what do you do for a living?
5. How long have you been learning ESL?
6. Why did you choose the current institution for learning ESL?
7. Why do you want to improve your English skills?
8. What motivated you to apply for U.S. citizenship?
9. Which step of the process are you in for U.S. naturalization?
10. What do you want to do after getting U.S. citizenship?

II. Citizenship ESL Program and ESL Learning Experience

1. How do you like learning ESL in a classroom?
2. Which of the English tests (speaking, reading, writing) is the most difficult for you and why?
3. How do you practice each skill needed for the test?
4. How do you feel when you see a word you don't know its meaning, and what do you do?
5. Why do you think the English test is needed to become a U.S. citizen?
6. How do you feel about the U.S. and its culture?

7. How does learning ESL make you feel about the U.S.?
8. What do you want to learn more about English?

III. Civics Education: American Government and History

9. What is a *citizen*, and why do you want to become a U.S. citizen?
10. How do you feel about learning civics knowledge in a classroom?
11. What was the most interesting thing about the American Government?
12. What do you think about the rights of U.S. citizens?
13. What was the most interesting thing about U.S. history?
14. Why do you think we have to study civics knowledge to become U.S. citizens?
15. How does learning about the American government and history make you feel about the U.S.?
16. What do you want to learn more about the American Government and History?

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information. Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information?

Appendix B: Codes for Interview Data Analysis

Codes	Sub-Codes	Count
Demographics	Home country	11
	First language	11
	Reason to come to the U.S.	13
	Reason to become a U.S. citizen	15
	Educational backgrounds	10
	Family information	36
	Jobs in the U.S.	15
	Time lived in the U.S.	10
	Years of learning ESL	11
Naturalization Process	Naturalized and have naturalization interview experience	14
	In the process of applying for U.S. citizenship	16
U.S. Civics Learning Experience	Civics knowledge learning experience	29
	Interesting/memorable thing about the American government	12
	Interesting/memorable thing about American history	13
	Why civics knowledge is needed to pass the U.S. citizenship test	14
	How to practice/study outside the classroom about U.S. civics	24
ESL Learning	Reason for learning ESL	37

Experience	How to practice/study outside the classroom about ESL	20
	ESL learning experience in the classroom	22
	Teacher's effort in helping students learn ESL	11
	Why English test is needed for the U.S. citizenship test	14
	What they need more in learning ESL	20
Culture	Comparison between being a citizen in their home country and in the United States	13
	Cultural attachment to the U.S. and expected changes	10
	Things they want to do after getting the U.S. citizenship	14

Appendix C: Codes for Document Analysis

I. Civics Questions Analysis Represented in the Curriculum

Section	Subsection	Question#	Count	Percentage (%)	Question
American Government Count=57	Principles of American Democracy Count = 12	1	2	0.90	What is the supreme law of the land?
		2	2	0.90	What does the Constitution do?
		3	2	0.90	The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
		4	2	0.90	What is an amendment?
		5	2	0.90	What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
		6	4	1.80	What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?*
		7	2	0.90	How many amendments does the Constitution have?
		8	2	0.90	What did the Declaration of Independence do?
		9	2	0.90	What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?
		10	2	0.90	What is freedom of religion?
		11	1	0.45	What is the economic system in the United States?*
		12	2	0.90	What is the "rule of law"?
	System of Government Count =35	13	7	3.15	Name one branch or part of the government.*
		14	2	0.90	What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?
		15	2	0.90	Who is in charge of the executive branch?
		16	2	0.90	Who makes federal laws?
		17	2	0.90	What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?*
		18	2	0.90	How many U.S. Senators are there?
		19	2	0.90	We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?
		20	2	0.90	Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?*
		21	2	0.90	The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
		22	2	0.90	We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?
		23	2	0.90	Name your U.S. Representative.
		24	2	0.90	Who does a U.S. Senator represent?
		25	2	0.90	Why do some states have more Representatives than other states?
		26	2	0.90	We elect a President for how many years?
		27	2	0.90	In what month do we vote for President?*
		28	3	1.35	What is the name of the President of the United States now?*
		28	3	1.35	What is the name of the President of the United States now?*
		29	2	0.90	What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?
		30	2	0.90	If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
		31	4	1.80	If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
		32	2	0.90	Who is the Commander in Chief of the military?
		33	2	0.90	Who signs bills to become laws?
		34	2	0.90	Who vetoes bills?
		35	2	0.90	What does the President's Cabinet do?
		36	2	0.90	What are two Cabinet-level positions?
		37	1	0.45	What does the judicial branch do?
		38	1	0.45	What is the highest court in the United States?
		39	1	0.45	How many justices are on the Supreme Court?
		40	1	0.45	Who is the Chief Justice of the United States now?
		41	2	0.90	Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?
		42	2	0.90	Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?
		43	2	0.90	Who is the Governor of your state now?
		44	4	1.80	What is the capital of your state?*
		45	2	0.90	What are the two major political parties in the United States?*
		46	2	0.90	What is the political party of the President now?
		47	2	0.90	What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now?
	Rights and Responsibilities Count=10	48	4	1.80	There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.
		49	2	0.90	What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?*
		50	4	1.80	Name one right only for United States citizens.
		51	2	0.90	What are two rights of everyone living in the United States?
		52	1	0.45	What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance?
		53	2	0.90	What is one promise you make when you become a United States citizen?
		54	2	0.90	How old do citizens have to be to vote for President?*
		55	4	1.80	What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?
		56	4	1.80	When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?*
		57	2	0.90	When must all men register for the Selective Service?

American History Count=30	Colonial Period and Independence Count=13	58	0	0.00	What is one reason colonists came to America?
		59	0	0.00	Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived?
		60	3	1.35	What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?
		61	2	0.90	Why did the colonists fight the British?
		62	2	0.90	Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
		63	2	0.90	When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
		64	3	1.35	There were 13 original states. Name three.
		65	2	0.90	What happened at the Constitutional Convention?
		66	2	0.90	When was the Constitution written?
		67	2	0.90	The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.
		68	2	0.90	What is one thing Benjamin Franklin is famous for?
		69	1	0.45	Who is the "Father of Our Country"?
		70	1	0.45	Who was the first President?*
	1800s Count=7	71	4	1.80	What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803?
		72	4	1.80	Name one war fought by the United States in the 1800s.
		73	3	1.35	Name the U.S. war between the North and the South.
		74	3	1.35	Name one problem that led to the Civil War.
		75	3	1.35	What was one important thing that Abraham Lincoln did?*
		76	2	0.90	What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?
		77	2	0.90	What did Susan B. Anthony do?
	Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information Count=10	78	1	0.45	Name one war fought by the United States in the 1900s.*
		79	1	0.45	Who was President during World War I?
		80	1	0.45	Who was President during the Great Depression and World War II?
		81	1	0.45	Who did the United States fight in World War II?
		82	1	0.45	Before he was President, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in?
		83	1	0.45	During the Cold War, what was the main concern of the United States?
		84	2	0.90	What movement tried to end racial discrimination?
		85	2	0.90	What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do?*
		86	1	0.45	What major event happened on September 11, 2001, in the United States?
		87	0	0.00	Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.
Integrated Civics Count=13	Geography Count = 8	88	2	0.90	Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States.
		89	2	0.90	What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?
		90	2	0.90	What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?
		91	3	1.35	Name one U.S. territory.
		92	2	0.90	Name one state that borders Canada.
		93	3	1.35	Name one state that borders Mexico.
		94	5	2.25	What is the capital of the United States?*
		95	1	0.45	Where is the Statue of Liberty?*
	Symbols Count=3	96	3	1.35	Why does the flag have 13 stripes?
		97	3	1.35	Why does the flag have 50 stars?*
		98	2	0.90	What is the name of the national anthem?
	Holidays Count=2	99	3	1.35	When do we celebrate Independence Day?*
		100	9	4.05	Name two national U.S. holidays.
	total		222		

II. Sections of U.S. Civics Knowledge Represented in the Curriculum

Section	Count	Percentage (%)
American Government	**128**	**57.66**
Principles of American Democracy	25	11.26
System of Government	76	34.23
Rights and Responsibilities	27	12.16
American History	**54**	**24.32**
Colonial Period and Independence	22	9.91
1800s	21	9.46
Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information	11	4.95
Integrated Civics	**40**	**18.02**
Geography	20	9.01
Symbols	8	3.60
Holidays	12	5.41
Total	222	100.00

III. Civics Questions Related to Social Structure and Power

Civics Questions Related to Social Structure or Power		
Section	**Question**	**Answer**
Rights and Responsibilities	#51. What are two rights of everyone living in the United States?	freedom of expression, speech, assembly, petition the government, religion,
	#53. What is one promise you make when you become a United States citizen?	give up loyalty to other countries, defend the Consitution and laws of the United States. Obey the laws of the United States. Serve in the U.S. military (if
	#55. what are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?	vote, join a political party, help with a campaign, join a civic group, community group, call Senators and Representatives, run for office, write to a
Colonial Period and Independence	#58. What is one reason colonists came to America?	freedom, political liberty, religious freedom, economic opportunity, practice
	#59. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived?	American Indians, Native Americans
	#60. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?	Africans, people from Africa
Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information	#84. What movement tried to end racial discrimination?	civil rights (movement)
	#87. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States	Cherokee, Navajo, Sioux, Chippewea, Choclaw, Pueblo, Apache, Iroquois, Creek, Blackfeet, Seminole, Cheyenne,...

IV. ESL Skills Combined with the Content Knowledge

ESL Skills Combined with Content Knowledge					
Week/Day	**Lesson**	**ESL**	**N-400**	**Speaking Test**	**Civics Questions**
Week 3 Day 2	Your Government and You	Past tense of the verb TO HAVE	Part 8 - Information About Your	4t: Students can understand the	#50, #53, #55
Week 4 Day 1		Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g., have	Part 9-time outside the U.S.	4v: Students can understand the	#50, #53, #55
Week 5 Day 2	Legistlative Branch	Simple wh-question and	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	#55
Week 6 Day 1		Other common irregular verbs in	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	#55
Week 6 Day 2	Judicial Branch	There is/ There are	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	-
Week 7 Day 2	Thomas Jefferson and the	Simple past with high frequency	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	-
Week 8 Day 2	Benjamin Franklin and the	Past tense of the verb TO BE	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	-
Week 9 Day 2	Bill of Rights and Other Amendments	Past tense of the verb TO HAVE	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	#50, #51
Week 10 Day 1		Conjunctions-and/or	Part 12-Additional Information	4bb: Students can understand the	#50, #51
Week 10 Day 2	Equality and Freedom	Past tense of the verb TO DO	Part 13-Applicant's Statement,	4dd: Students can understand the	#84
Week 11 Day 1		Flex day	Part 14-Interpreter's Contact	4ff: Students demonstrate their	#84
Week 12 Day 2	Abraham Lincoln	Other common irregular verbs in	Part 16-Signature at Interview	4jj: Students can respond orally and	#60
Week 13 Day 1	Civil War	Subject-verb agreement	Part 17 Renunciation of Foreign	4kk: Students can understand the	#60
Week 13 Day 2		Adjective + noun/ Future tense	Part 18-Oath of Allegiance	4mm: Students can understand the	#60

Appendix D: Bracketing Interview Questions on the Researcher

Bracketing Interview Protocol

(**The researcher reads the colleague the protocol to start the bracketing interview)*

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am studying adult ESL students' experience of taking citizenship ESL classes in terms of second language learning and getting ready to be more involved in society as a citizen. My study uses critical phenomenology, and it is important to "bracket" the researcher's assumptions about the research topic and participants to gather authentic data without preconceptions or biases. Bracketing, according to Fischer (2009), is the researcher's understanding and identification of "vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's data" (p. 583). You will be asked to inquire the researcher of the following questions. Do you have questions before we start?

(**The researcher gives the colleague the following questions to be asked to the researcher)*

Bracketing Interview Questions

1. What is your research topic?
2. What is your relationship/experience with the topic?
3. What made you choose this topic, and why are you interested in it?
4. What are some expectations or assumptions of the findings before the analysis?
5. Can you explain your educational journey or scholarly work related to the topic that might affect the data collection and analysis?

Appendix E: IRB Approval Form

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: June 22, 2021 **IRB#:** 13468

Principal Investigator: Jeonghyeon Kim **Approval Date:** 06/22/2021

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: Second Language and Second Citizenship: US Naturalization Curriculum for Adult ESL Students

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Ann M. Beutel

Ann Beutel, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board