The International Research Foundation
for English Language Education

Title of Project:
Investigating Identities of Culturally and Linguistically
Diverse Students in an Afterschool Book Club

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Project Summary:

This qualitative research aims to investigate identity positions of elementary English Language Learners (ELLs) in an afterschool book club. The increasing population of ELLs and their learning needs have become a national focus in American schools. Scholars have highlighted that understanding students' identity positions and their interactions in social communities benefits teaching practices (Norton, 2013). Although there are increasing identity studies in language and literacy education, most focus on ELLs who are currently enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and few focus on examining ELLs' learning trajectories once they exit the ESL program at the elementary level. Research has shown that although the ELLs exit ESL programs, their culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds still have an impact on their learning. Thus, this study attempts to investigate (a) how CLD students position their identities, (b) what Discourses about CLD students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds emerge and shape their identities, and (c) how their identities affect their learning in an elementary school afterschool book club. The data sources of this study include audio and video recordings, observation field notes from the book club, semistructured interviews, and students' written responses. Additionally, Gee's (2011) and Fairclough's (2001) concepts and guidance of critical discourse analysis are applied to help interpret responses during the data analysis process. This study hopes to bring insight into teachers' understanding of CLD students' identity positions and to respond to Norton and Toohey's (2011) call of understanding how students learn in globalized sociocultural worlds.