

## ABSTRACT

Exploring the experiences of Syrian refugee Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and their teachers in English and Literacy Development (ELD) classrooms is an emergent topic of interest in the field of education in Canada. There is a need to understand the ways in which ELD teachers respond to the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Syrian refugee SIFEs and create learning opportunities for those students while supporting them emotionally, socially and academically. Thus, the aim of this research is to explore the nature of the experiences of high school Syrian refugee SIFEs and their teachers in ELD classrooms in Ontario. The research focused on (a) exploring classroom practices and supportive pedagogies, specifically caring and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) pedagogies enacted in ELD classrooms, (b) social structures and power relationships reflected in ELD classrooms, and (c) resources and constraints to the implementation of caring and CRT. The major research question was *What is the nature of the experiences of high school Syrian refugee students with interrupted formal education and their teachers in ELD classrooms in Ontario?* The theoretical framework drew on critical theory, CRT, and Ethics of Care (EoC). The methods used are semi-structured interviews, documentation and the researcher's reflective notes. The analysis revealed (a) the complexity of the nature of Syrian refugee SIFEs' and their teachers' experiences in ELD classrooms, (b) caring and CRT practices enacted in ELD classrooms, (c) power and privileging, and (d) resources and constraints to the implementation of caring and CRT. Key recommendations included embedding equality and diversity in the ELD curriculum and putting more emphasis on caring and CRT in ELD classrooms and teacher education programs. The practical and theoretical recommendations aim to disrupt deficient institutional and classroom practices and emphasize supportive pedagogies in ELD classrooms.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

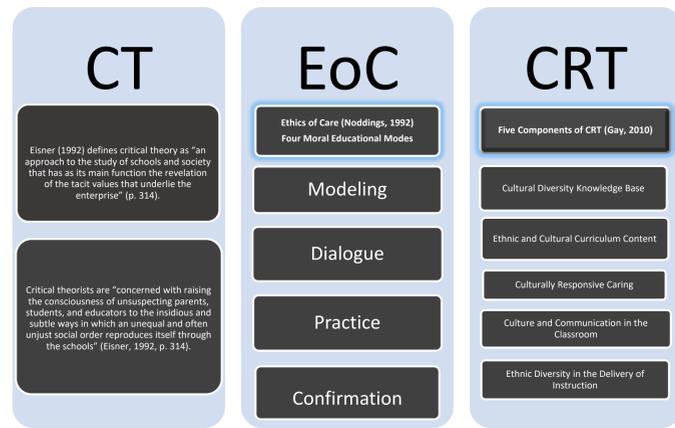
- Explore the nature of the experiences of high school Syrian refugee SIFEs and their teachers in ELD classrooms in Ontario.
- Examine teaching and learning experiences, resources and constraints to supportive pedagogies, ways in which knowledge is created and validated and ways in which identities are collectively negotiated in the classroom.
- Stress the importance of considering the social, emotional and academic adjustments and fund processes of Syrian SIFEs and allow a more holistic view of this group of students that goes beyond academic achievement.
- Give voice to Syrian refugee SIFEs and ELD teachers.

## SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

- War in Syria - 2011 until present time
- 4.8 million Syrians were displaced (UNHCR, 2016)
- Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

### Qualitative Design – Case Study

A qualitative approach endorses an **interpretive practice** that makes the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

### Exploratory Case Study

- Creswell (2014) defines case studies as a design of inquiry through which the inquirer develops a thick description and "an in-depth analysis of a case" (p. 14) followed by analysis of the data for themes or issues (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994).
- Based on the study research questions, the unit of analysis in this research is the critical incident of **group experiences of Syrian refugee SIFEs and their teachers in ELD classrooms**.
- Those experiences include ELD classroom practices and pedagogies, enablers and constraints to supportive pedagogies, and teacher-student relationships.

- Participants: 10 high school Syrian refugee SIFEs  
5 ELD teachers, 1 ESL teacher, 1 Social Worker

### Materials

- In-depth Semi Structured Interviews
- Document Data
- Researcher's Reflective Notes

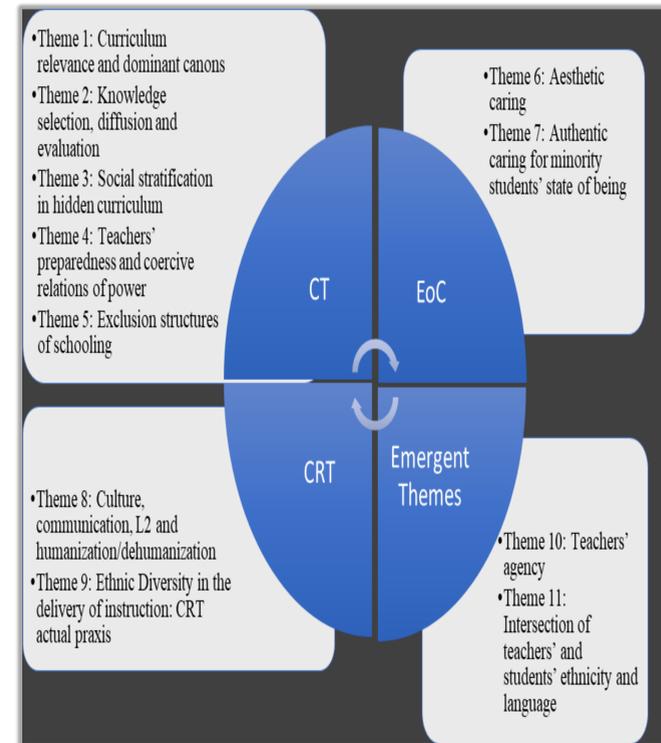
**TEACHERS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Document Data e.g., Leveled book – Silent e**

**Researcher's Reflective Notes**

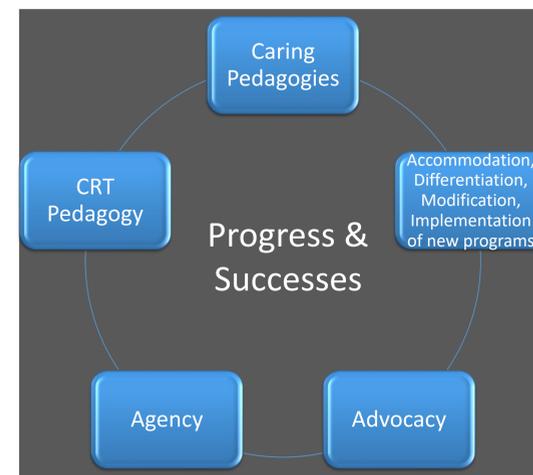
## RESULTS

### Themes Generated From the Study



## ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

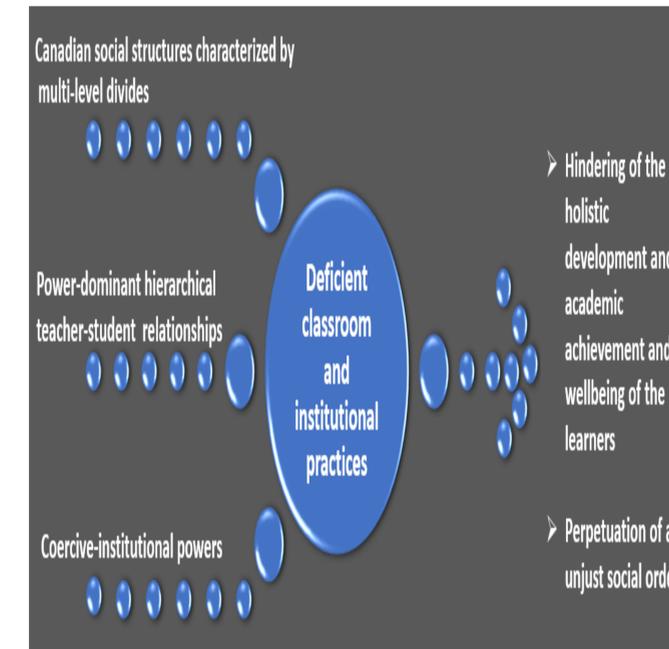
### RQ # 1 What practices and pedagogies are enacted in ELD classrooms?



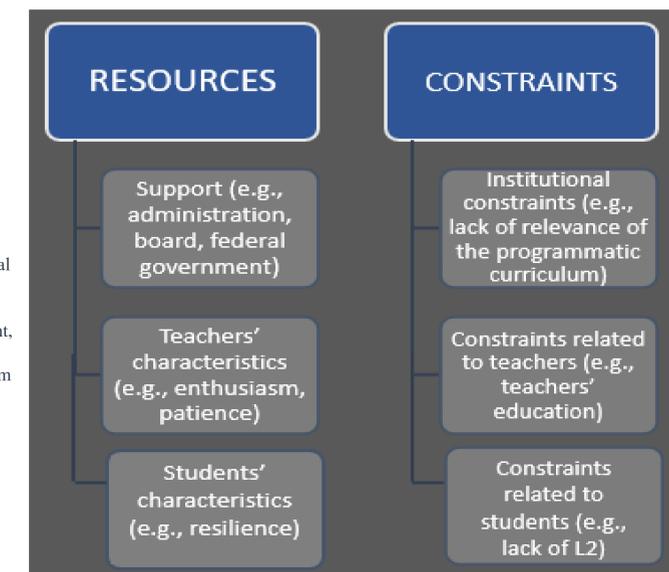
Such supportive pedagogies enhance Syrian refugee SIFEs' social and emotional development, academic accomplishments and wellbeing (Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2003)

## RESULTS

### RQ # 2 What social structures and power relationships are reflected in ELD classrooms?



### RQ # 3 what are the resources and constraints affecting the implementation of caring and culturally responsive teaching practices in ELD classrooms?



## CONCLUSIONS

- The findings from this study contribute to scholarly knowledge by filling a gap created by the dearth of research related to the nuances and complexities of the classroom experiences and practices of Syrian refugee SIFEs and their teachers in ELD classrooms in Ontario (e.g., content and knowledge processes, teacher-student relationships, culture and structures in the classrooms, school structures and programmatic constraints).
- Findings from this study showed:
  - ❖ Enactment of supportive pedagogies specifically caring and CRT
  - ❖ Advanced caring teacher-student relationships
  - ❖ Resources to the implementation of caring and CRT pedagogies (e.g., advanced teacher-student relationships, teachers' empathy)
  - ❖ Deficient classroom and institutional practices
  - ❖ Power hierarchical relationships
  - ❖ Constraints to the implementation of caring and CRT pedagogies (e.g., lack of teachers' preparedness to teach ELD)

## IMPLICATIONS

- This study informs education practice and theory e.g., ELD curriculum making, curriculum enactment and classroom pedagogies, and teacher education curriculum, programs and instructions.
- This research redirects the attention of teachers and stakeholders to the importance of the ethic of authentic care and CRT pedagogies in the education of refugee students with interrupted formal education in Canada.

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Hiba Barek, PhD  
Curriculum Studies  
The University of Western Ontario

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Thesis Supervisors: Dr. Immaculate Namukasa, PhD  
Dr. Mi Song Kim, PhD