



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2021 Volume II: Developing Anti-Racist Curriculum and Pedagogy

Using Multilingual, Immigrant, and Refugee Students’ Voices to Disrupt Racism in English Language Instruction

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.02.02
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The purpose of this unit is to allow middle school students the opportunity to learn English language skills while uplifting and honoring home language, culture and identity to disrupt the racist ideas that permeate teaching English as a “second” language (ESL). Through culturally responsive materials, discussions, and experiences that amplify student voice and identity as immigrants, refugees and/or multilingual learners, students will work toward developing English language skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The central message that students should take from the unit is that their language and identity are valued equally to that of their English-speaking peers. The unit will begin with observations taken from traditional ESL and Newcomer textbooks, literature and other sources. We will analyze the messages that these creators are projecting and discuss how this promotes racism through the focus on a “proper” form of English and White, Eurocentric language and culture. Students will analyze different depictions of immigrants from literature and the media to find what narrative racialized American society tells about immigrants, refugees and multilingual learners. We will contrast these messages to those in the core text for the unit, *Other Words for Home*, by Jasmine Warga. As we read the novel, we will spend time discussing and writing about experiences with immigration, learning English, and personal identity to create authentic narratives of immigrants, refugees and multilingual learners. These personal narratives will be compiled into an anthology that can be used as a resource for the school in the future. As a parallel project, students will work together with native English-speaking peers to create a simple website for the school that helps students and staff learn and practice all represented languages, not just English.

(Developed for English Language Instruction to Multilingual Learners, grades 6-8; recommended for English Language Instruction to Multilingual Learners and Language Arts, grades 6-8)

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