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Partnership Between Iraqi Families With Refugee Backgrounds And School Professionals

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PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN IRAQI FAMILIES WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS AND SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

Research shows that partnerships between families and school professionals can be an important factor in student educational outcomes and that such partnerships exist less for families with refugee backgrounds than for native-born Americans. There are gaps in the literature around linguistic factors and advocacy styles that could influence the relationship between families with refugee backgrounds and school professionals, especially for Arabic speakers. The purpose of this study was to deeply analyze one Iraqi family's interactions with school professionals in the U.S. to answer the following research question: What linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors facilitate and impede the formation of a partnership between an Iraqi family with a refugee background and school professionals in New England? This case study research drew on 12 interviews with family members and school professionals, observations, and field notes conducted over a four-year period. Data analysis was ongoing, and I conducted numerous member checks in Arabic while interacting with the family. Challenges to forming a successful partnership between the Iraqi family and their U.S. schools included expressions of anger and frustration, discrimination, and a lack of information. Additionally, using children as translators in advocacy was seen as risky. Overcoming these barriers required for families to have effective advocacy behaviors, continuous support for their children's education, and positive experiences with advocacy efforts. Understanding language proficiency, including language pragmatics, was also essential for fostering trust and effective communication between families and school professionals. Implications of this research include the importance of families and school professionals proactively establishing a relationship based on trust and partnership in order to advocate for the children effectively. The study also highlights the significance of Iraqi parents' pragmatic competence when advocating for their children in American schools. Through explicit instruction in English classes for adults and in schools, pragmatic competence can be improved. In addition, school professionals should be trained in pragmatic differences, and educational systems should consider teaching pragmatics to Iraqi families, engaging families in the educational process, revising the EL program, investigating patterns of discrimination, developing a plan to combat bullying, and facilitating a road map for professionals from immigrant or refugee backgrounds to become school professionals. By implementing these recommendations, school professionals and policymakers in New England can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Iraqi families and students.

Dedication

To my late, cherished grandmother, Adal Assaf, who instilled in me a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning. Throughout my academic career, your resolute care has been a constant source of motivation. You are no longer physically present with me, but your memory will remain in my heart and mind forever. This dissertation is devoted to you out of gratitude for everything you've done for me.

Acknowledgment

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As a new Vermonter, I am grateful to the people of Vermont for their warm welcome and friendly environment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

After a tiring day at work, I stopped at the closest store on my way home to get some groceries and snacks for my children. I saw Som and his spouse, Nira, near the children's department; they looked happy and healthy. They were carrying bags of clothes from that department while their children asked the salesperson in English about one of the toys. Samir, the salesperson, had come here as an Iraqi refugee with a special immigrant visa (SIV) after working as a translator for the American Army. He earned his math degree in Iraq and worked as a math teacher there. He started to attend college recently in one of the local state colleges. When I first met Som's family six years ago, they had arrived as refugees from Bhutan, and they did not know how to speak English at all. I met them three days after their arrival. They had looked exhausted from the trip and from leaving behind a memory of a lost home and a camp where they did not expect to spend 15 years of their lives. Som had told me they would learn English and find a good job, and they would make sure that their children have a good education. However, Som and Nira could not attend regular English classes because of Som's work schedule. I assigned them a tutor whom they later considered as a part of the family. They are now American citizens, and their two children are attending school; both of them are able to attend parent-teacher conferences and understand some language and cultural norms. Som was happy to know that his children will get a good education.

I met Samir five years ago; he told me that his dream was to teach math again in school, and I had told him that it would be a great idea, as he knew the needs of students

with a refugee background and understood the families' advocacy efforts and their relationship working with SPs. At the department store, Som brought his two hands together, put them under his face, and nodded his head. He told me this is a greeting of appreciation for seeing an old friend. Samir shook my hand and greeted me in Arabic.

At this moment, I was struck by the amazing strengths these individuals have and bring to our community. As a scholar studying educational leadership and as an employee of the refugee resettlement agency, I recognized that numerous aspects of their commitment to education might go unnoticed by schools in the United States. The school system might not recognize their strengths because they are different from what is expected. However, there at the store, in a human moment of interaction, I recognized how important it is for school professionals (SPs) and refugee families to build a relationship in order to partner to support student development.

Refugee Crisis

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; 2022) estimates that global forced displacement topped 89.3 million in the end of 2021. More countries worldwide were affected by wars, forcing 8.7 million more people than the prior year to seek refuge in other countries than their own, which means one person became a refugee every three seconds throughout that year. One of the three internationally acknowledged solutions for cross-border displacement is resettlement, which offers refugees the necessary rights and protections as well as a safe and secure environment (Koser, 2016; Van Selm, 2014).

Definition of Refugee

The Geneva Convention of 1951 defines a refugee as follows:

> A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and is unable, or, is unwilling to return to their country for fear of persecution. (UNHCR, 2020)

Since the United States is one of the countries that have signed the convention, it follows this definition. According to the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS, 2021), a refugee is defined as someone who:

> lives outside of the United States, is of humanitarian concern to the United States, establishes that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group and is not relocated to another country and is permissible to the United States

One big shift for families from refugee backgrounds is adapting to the new education system in the United States (Roy & Roxas, 2011). In this dissertation research, I will explore the family's role in education for children, which differs greatly from the norms that Iraqi refugee families are accustomed to in their previous experience with education (Sengupta, 2011). In order to understand this shift, we must understand the expectations of families in the education system in Iraq, analyzing especially how families' advocacy efforts and expectations differ from the expectations in the United States educational system.

Definition of Family-Professional Partnership

Many terms have been used to describe the partnerships between families and SPs; however, these terms differ in their meaning and implications. This section presents the differences in family involvement, family engagement, and family partnership with SPs.

Feuerstein (2010) defined "parent involvement" as encompassing "a broad range of parenting behavior, ranging from discussion with children about homework to attendance at parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings" (p. 29). Reynolds and Shlafer (2010) made the distinction in the concept of family "involvement," which is used to refer to activities that are authorized and created by the school whereas the term "family engagement" is defined as the activities families choose for themselves and are self-directed.

Haines et al. (2017), in their Sunshine Model, defined family-professional partnership (FPP) as a distinct term from the ideas of "family involvement" and "family engagement" in that the terminology stresses reciprocal connections between educational professionals and families as well as the family members' participation in cooperating on choices connected to their children's education. According to the Sunshine Model, schools should build proactive mechanisms emphasizing the critical nature of fostering FPP for all families, regardless of student age, disability status, or need. The concept features a sun representing FPPs that improve child, family, teacher, and system outcomes. Different principles of partnership surround the sun, including advocacy, respect, commitment, equality, skills, and trust. The rays of the sun focus on activities

undertaken in partnership, including identifying and fulfilling needs, getting and monitoring services and supports, integrating home, school, and community, and advocating for the development of systems. The Sunshine Model supports an approach for to empower families to advocate for choices consistent with their cultural beliefs, mitigate the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education, and improve FPP. The approach mentioned above can be applied to bridge the gap of a partnership between refugee families and SPs by giving a role to families for partnering in developing educational programs that respect their educational and linguistic background as well as their wisdom about their children.

My Personal Journey and the Journeys of Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees

As a community member and educator, I believe that education is a social justice issue; it is critical for all New England families with refugee and immigrant roots, especially new Americans unfamiliar with the American educational system. My knowledge and experience with the complexities of the American educational system have prompted me to think about families and their interactions with the educational system. A parent of three children, I had spent the majority of my career as an English teacher, teacher trainer, and university instructor in Syria before coming to the United States. However, upon arrival in the United States, I had the distinct impression that I was unfamiliar with the American educational system despite my two master's degrees in English Learner education. Despite my background as an educator, I experienced the school system as a newcomer and perceived the expectations placed on the newcomer by the school system. While working a full-time job, navigating an unknown immigration

status, and facing an uncertain future, I started this research. As a result, I felt sympathy for these families, and I understood why they might be concerned if a government document had not yet arrived or if they had received an official message from the government. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have worked with and learned about such families' journeys to the United States.

Importance of this Research

Scarce research seeks to understand Iraqi families' needs as refugees and their partnership with SPs. This proposed research study will fill a void in the literature by examining how Iraqi family and school personnel communicate and how they consider family and child behaviors meant to advocate for their dreams and desires. Iraqi families may advocate for their children in ways that contrast what the school expects. Additionally, although language barriers are often discussed in the literature (Cummins,1995; Guerrero, 2004; Jensen & Valdés, 2021; Olsen, 2000; Simons et al., 2022), specific linguistic aspects related to advocacy have been largely ignored. As a linguist and cultural insider, in this dissertation I will attempt to unravel the systematic institutional norms that inform families' partnerships with SPs and how these norms need to be reconstructed through cultural, linguistic, and advocacy lenses.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his ecological theory of human development, stated that several factors impact a child's development. Those factors occur across multiple systems. The theory is displayed as nested circles, with the developing child at the center. The immediate surrounding system is the microsystem, which represents the contexts

within which children develop and the adults within these contexts. The mesosystem, which is the following system, represents the connection between individuals within each microsystem. At this level, a connection between adults at school and adults at home can foster trustworthy relationships between families and SPs (Haines et al., 2021). Following the mesosystem comes the exosystem, which is the system in which the developing child does not participate directly but which affects adults in the Mesosystem. Next, the macrosystem is the vast overarching collection of societal values, cultural beliefs, political ideologies, policies, traditions, and laws. The macrosystem shapes and controls the broader society; therefore, it may have an impact on a family's overall transition and adaptation to the new country and the new norms of family partnership in the education system and advocacy for their children (Haines et al., 2021). The chronosystem represents how these interactions change over time.

The theoretical framework guiding this study was built on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Specifically, I investigated how pragmatics and advocacy behaviors cut across these systems and affect family-professional partnership within the mesosystem. My theoretical framework is displayed in Figure 1.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, I will discuss the history of family-school partnerships (FPP); the federal policy regarding FPP; and a brief explanation of how FPP expectations differ between Iraqi and American school systems. In addition, I will explore language factors affecting FPP construction in the context of the United States school system. Furthermore, I will review research on the importance of FPP in general and research conducted on FPP in the context of families from Iraqi backgrounds.

Historical Background of Family-Professional Partnership

According to (Hiatt-Michael, 2008) FPP in the U.S. schools date back to the country's educational system's inception. Parent-supported schools began as soon as the colonists arrived in the United States. The British granted local authority over education to settlers in North America. Additionally, they permitted religious organizations to construct their own schools. Early schools were separated by socio-economic status, with immigrants from the British middle class enrolling in established fee-paying schools. Charity schools began to educate children whose families were unable to pay tuition. Parental engagement diminished in the United States when professional teachers were hired in public schools. Numerous politicians argued for universal or public education at the time (Hiatt-Michael, 2008). During the nineteenth century, families exercised authority over educational decisions (Epstein, 1986). By the mid-nineteenth century, White children in the United States had received as much primary training as children in any other nation save Prussia, part of Germany today (Go & Lindert, 2010), and the majority of that education was provided in what were known as public or common

schools. For example, Thomas Jefferson argued that to fulfill a democratic society, American citizens should have a basic education level. In 1897, the National Congress of Mothers group, consisting of White middle-class mothers, began to meet with teachers on Saturdays and express their concerns to SPs. These mothers educated themselves on child development and the school curriculum; this group increased its influence on other Families and their advocacy and gradually developed to become a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). In the 1940s, Families considered PTA meetings as an almost mandatory community event (Hiatt-Michael, 2008). This established the expectation that families are natural partners in their children's education. By the beginning of the century, educators were encouraging families to be involved in almost all aspects of schooling for their children on a regular basis (Cowan, 2003; Goldin,1999). Their collaboration and advocacy began with the payment of fees or taxes as part of a democratic society. However, not all families were given the right to advocate for their children's education; Native Americans, Black Americans, and later immigrants were not given this privilege.

Richard Pratt founded Carlisle, the first non-reservation boarding school, in 1879. Its policy's claimed rationale was to "Kill the Indian and save the Man." Over 100,000 indigenous students were compelled to attend these schools (Smith, 2004). Education for Native Americans was characterized by "civilizing" the natives. It was a federal policy for assimilation through boarding schools, where students were exposed to deculturation, and education was an extension of stripping Native Americans from their lands. This policy excluded the opinions and cultures of the families from the equation (Davis, 2001).

Similarly, Black students in the United States have a history of segregated schooling under Jim Crow policies. African American schools saw themselves as disadvantaged due to a lack of resources compared to White schools. As a result, integration was difficult for Black Americans even after the Jim Crow era. The schools expected families to participate in a similar manner, oblivious to the social differences between the two groups as well as the absence of social justice and prejudice in Black neighborhoods (Alexander, 2010).

Consequently, immigrant and refugee families have long been excluded from being active partners with the educational system. Many families from refugee and immigrant backgrounds believe that total faith should be granted to school personnel for children's education (Doucet, 2011). As a result, families retreat from the school's education scene in order to provide school personnel the necessary independence to teach their children. Refugee families, like other families who are adjusting to a new school system, typically have a lot to learn about the American's educational system, particularly in terms of pedagogy and disciplinary approaches (Haines et al., 2021). Furthermore, most immigrant families confront two separate challenges: language barriers and a lack of understanding of the host country's educational system. Given that most immigrants are not native speakers of the host country's official language, a lack of competence in the majority language is often seen as a barrier to participation by in the social aspects of the new country, including education (Berry, 2003). The language barrier can reduce the frequency and breadth of home-school contact. Furthermore, the United States, family involvement and partnership, as ritualized activities implied by

institutional norms, marginalize families who lack the insider knowledge assumed in local settings. Strong partnerships are particularly critical for refugee families who also are newcomers to the American school system and have grown accustomed to different requirements of teacher collaboration and interactions in prior settings (Christenson et al 2010, Haines et al., 2017; Haines et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2021). The result of these barriers is that families in the United States from nondominant backgrounds are excluded from the visible "core" parental group in schools (Antony-Newman, 2019; Doucet, 2011).

FPP for Families from Refugee and Immigrant Backgrounds

Despite the critical nature of FPPs with families from refugee and Immigrant background (FFRIB), there is a dearth of research on the factors that influence FPPs with this varied population (Haines et al., 2018). Lack of knowledge of the norms of participation from FFRIB may be interpreted by SPs as them being uninterested in their children's education (Doucet, 2011). For example, researchers have found that refugee families regard teachers as educational experts and do not expect to partner in their children's education as this education is the role of the instructor (Eisenbruch, 1988; Trueba et al., 1990). However, SPs may perceive this as families' lack of motivation to participate in the school system (Haines et al., 2017; Haines et al., 2021; Lawson, 2003). Partnership could be negatively impacted by a lack of trust between families and educators, as well as by conflicting demands on educators' time (Haines et al., 2017).

As previously discussed, lower-income and immigrant families are typically less influential and have more ambiguous relationships with SP than middle class families (Auerbach, 2007). Teachers may believe that families of color don't care about their

children's education because middle-class White families are more likely to attend typical school activities (such as teacher conferences, performances, and sports activities) than lower socioeconomic status (SES) minority families (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). SPs may be frustrated when families do not appear to be involved in their children's education as implicitly expected based on institutional norms in the U.S., education system (Blakely, 1983). On the contrary, families may welcome the opportunity to partner in their children's education if they understand it as their responsibility. Families' initial hesitation to partner in school activities generally results from feelings of low self-worth and alienation from a system that they do not readily understand (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992).

Louie and Davis-Welton (2016) found that FPP is significant for academic success for students from refugee and immigrant backgrounds, However, there is a critical need to understand how the families need to communicate and when (Lee & Bowen, 2006). When developing FPP programming, understanding the challenges families from immigrant and refugee backgrounds may face is crucial to fostering FPP and supporting students' academic success. Likewise, when children believe their culture and language are valued, their academic performance improves and they develop a stronger sense of school loyalty. (Celik, 2019).

Federal Policy and Family Professional Partnership

On the federal level, No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001) required that families have a voice in their children's education. Later, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA;

2015) emphasized those obligations; the majority of districts and schools' efforts to engage families under the new law. Accordingly, the school district should:

- offer programs that involve family members and engage them in "meaningful" dialogues
- develop a formal family engagement policy in collaboration with families and assess the school's family engagement policy and practices
- actively engage families in Title I school programs by offering training to families on how to work with their children
- educate school personnel on how to involve families effectively

Furthermore, ESSA places a greater focus on FPP than NCLB Act of 2001 did; ESSA compels states, districts, schools, and educators to ensure that all families are involved in their children's education (Haines et al., 2017). These laws are a natural development from what was historically developed as families' engagement in the school system, which was widely accepted by the educational culture of the United States.

As previously stated, the partnership and advocacy between families and SPs have historically been defined by White middle- and upper-class expectations; new social justice movements have provided an opportunity to decolonize the interpretation of the partnership between families and SPs (Ishimaru, 2020). Those expectations for FPPs are unique to a western educational system, specifically the culture of the schools in the United States.

A Brief Explanation of How FPP Expectations Differ in Iraqi Schools vs. American Schools

The history of parent participation in Iraq has been shaped in distinctive ways by educational history. To begin, Baghdad served as the capital of the Islamic empire, with several universities and schools established to serve the empire. Subsequently, during the Ottoman occupation, small schools were constructed adjacent to mosques. SPs played a critical role in ensuring that students are literate enough to read the Quran. Schools and SPs were well respected, which they earned through their religious mission. As a result, families were unable to intervene in the learning process. Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq also faced a similar situation. Education became the main disciplinary institution in Hashemite Iraq, which was a state located in the Middle East from 1932 to 1958, possibly only surpassed by the army. With the growth of primary school enrollment, the ministry of education hired authors, journalists, poets, serving as educators and educational supervisors. Numerous teachers and officials believed that good national education would eradicate sectarian and religious distinctions. The first distinguishing characteristic of the state's secular education under British mandates was its focus on the pupils' bodies. In the mid-1930s, schools began to include clinics, and physical education became a required component of the curriculum to fight moral and physical diseases. The obsession with the physique was connected to the goal to create soldiers for the country's army (Bashkin, 2006).

In the 1970s, Iraq was ruled by the Ba'ath Party, whose educational institutions dictated party ideology. The educational system became more centralized, which meant

that all schools had to adhere to the same curriculum and teaching methods. Teachers and school administrators exercised absolute authority. Families had little involvement because the teachers were party members. Families could not visit schools in general unless their children were having behavioral problems at school. Additionally, the teacher was viewed as the child's parent, and there was a motto that school was the child's second home. Therefore, it was considered inappropriate to interfere in the teachers' job of educating the children as teachers were perceived as always right.

After 2003, following the Gulf War and the later sanctions on Iraq that affected education and educational infrastructure, and later the war in Iraq followed by sectarian conflicts, contributed to a decline in student attendance as well as the number of teachers, many of whom had fled the country. Regarding the teachers and students remaining in Iraq, Abood and Ghabanchi (2021) expressed that FPP was absolutely necessary for success in education and particularly in foreign language acquisition. They added that Iraqi instructors must learn how to communicate with families in order to increase FPP. For many families, their individual experiences with schools that did not welcome families may act as a barrier to participation. Additionally, many SPs in Iraq are not prepared to partner with families as it is a novel phenomenon (Abood & Ghabanchi, 2021).

Many Iraqi refugee families in the United States fled Iraq for safety and enrolled their children in schools in bordering countries, like Syria and Jordan, where FPP is neither expected nor required (Bushaala, 2016). Al-Qdah and Lacroix (2011) proposed educating families about the value of education and including them in school activities

for Iraqi refugees in Jordan; furthermore, they recommended providing competent and specialized teaching personnel and educating school counselors on dealing with Iraqi student behavioral issues. Finally, they linked the high dropout rate of Iraqi students, particularly those over 15, to the lack of parental monitoring (Al-Qdah & Lacroix, 2011).

Similarly, in Syria, enrollment for Iraqi refugees was high due to free education and increased demand. This unplanned enrollment resulted in school and classroom congestion for Iraqi immigrants in Syria, preventing equal access to learning and education and the health of students and instructors (Al-Miqdad, 2007). The overcrowded school environment and budgetary constraints hindered Iraqi families further from the possibility of forming partnerships or advocating for their children enrolled in Syrian schools.

Due to previous cultural differences in how families encountered SPs (Haines et al., 2017; Reyes et al., 2021), combined with limited English skills and educational experience in the United States, families with Iraqi refugee backgrounds may feel confused by school expectations of families. As a result, they may rely on the school system to make the best decisions for their children. However, a lack of appreciation for the family's strengths, dreams, and needs may cause families frustration and contribute to their strong desire to advocate for their children.

Family-Professional Partnership in the United States

As discussed earlier, family partnerships have a long history in the American educational system, dating all the way back to the first colonies, when settlers established their first schools. A substantial body of research has established a positive correlation

between family partnership and academic success. The American educators and policymakers have recognized the critical role of family involvement in students' academic success. As previously stated, much educational research has focused on strengthening the connection between school and home. Numerous studies have demonstrated that school partnerships result in improved academic outcomes for students (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Park & Holloway, 2017).

Doucet (2011) advocates that the crucial first step to partnership is to reframe the connection between home and school as a partnership rather than competing forces. Policymakers, educators, and school personnel in the United States must reframe their thinking and realize that continuing to force all families into a limited mold is impracticable at best and insulting and divisive at worst. As a starting point, it is worth noting that the mainstream model of FPP is far from the norm for institutional involvement with schools on a worldwide scale. FPPs benefit children, educators, families, and communities through increased student achievement, positive behavior, and regular attendance, as well as a narrowing of achievement gaps among student groups (Haines et al., 2017). Additionally, these collaborations enhance educators' abilities and instruction, including the development of cultural sensitivity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012), and increase ties between families and educators which may help improve cultural practices and resources available to the families (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014), resulting in culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2011).

Research on the Importance of FPP

Federal family engagement frameworks could expand further than the endeavor of individualistic academic achievement of students to create a road map that centers families and communities in the systemic and institutional educational transformation of every student. Park and Holloway (2017) tried to see if federal and state support for family involvement is the right cause. They distinguished between three kinds of parental involvement (PI): private-good PI (i.e., when the involvement in events relate to an individual child), public-good PI (i.e., when the involvement aims for the progress of a group of students in a classroom or a school), and parent networking. Furthermore, they investigated the effects of these three parts of FPP on specific student accomplishment and school accomplishment. Lastly, they used curve modeling techniques to analyze the relation between school-based FPP and individual and school outcomes in the long run. The sample consisted of randomly selected 17,385 students who entered kindergarten in the 1998–1999 school year and were tracked through Grade 5 and had at least one or more grades in mathematics and reading. They interviewed families by telephone and asked about family types of FPP with their schools' events. They concluded that private-good FPP increased students' reading and mathematics attainment, especially in families with high socio-economic status. However, they found that public-good FPP was active in increasing achievement for the whole school, mainly for schools serving low-income students. Parent networking was a potent tool to predict school accomplishment. The authors suggested that they agree with both local and federal laws to encourage families'

involvement and suggested more culturally appropriate involvement for low-income families.

In 1986, Epstein began investigating families' involvement in the educational system and fostering more positive school, family, and community connections, and many schools have adopted her approach. She has implemented specific initiatives to engage families in school-centered activities. She established a framework for six distinct forms of parental involvement. This approach is intended to help educators evaluate their efforts in establishing family involvement, and stresses the importance of facilitating family and teacher's communication regarding school programs and student improvements. Additionally, Epstein's framework involves recruiting and organizing families to assist the school via volunteerism and educating families on how to support children at home with assignments and other curriculum-related tasks.

Epstein's approach promotes involving families in school-centered choices, cultivating parent leaders and representatives, and identifying and incorporating community resources and services to bolster school programming. Her framework has been viewed as empowering communication from the schools' side, whereas families' advocacy and knowledge were absent. Epstein is criticized by a large number of critics in the sense that the voices, advocacy, and input of families were largely non-existent. Epstein's framework has been noted for reinforcing White normative conceptions of involvement that are held in higher esteem than other behaviors. Fennimore (2017) asserted that Epstein's theory and framework represent the "traditional parent

involvement frameworks that silence the need for nondominant parents to actively resist school-based inequities" (p. 163).

Bower and Griffin (2011) provided data addressing the limitations of Epstein's current parental involvement methods. They explained that new practices that incorporate culturally-relevant strategies are needed, such as a system of building rapport with families, advocacy, and respecting parental background and effectiveness in supporting their children. These strategies have been shown to be effective in working with a 347-student population that includes African Americans, Latinos, and students from low-income families. Bower and Griffin (2011) worked in an elementary school with a majority of African American, Latino, and students from low-income families that struggle with low student achievement. These researchers used Epstein's model to inform the methodology of their study, defining parental involvement in terms of Epstein's seven criteria. A micro ethnographic framework enabled them to gain a detailed examination of one facet of a culture's larger belief system. Their research objective was to advocate for initiatives that increased students and families' views of postsecondary preparation. The researchers noted that Epstein's suggested approaches, such as inviting families to school activities or assisting families in becoming more involved in class content, fall short of incorporating family members from diverse backgrounds and low-income families. Additionally, their research indicates that Epstein's model fails to comprehend how families from minority backgrounds desire to collaborate on their children's education; new partnerships with families that address their needs are necessary.

On the other hand, Ishimaru (2019) emphasized the value of community organizing theory as a lens through which to view families' SP partnerships. Her comparative qualitative case study examines what makes meaningful and impactful FPP in children's education (Ishimaru, 2019). While other approaches highlight "deficit-based strategies," Ishimaru (2019, p.351) emphasized equitable community-school education, in which goals shift structurally rather than superficially. She emphasized that relationships and aptitude are developed to serve the community, and that nondominant families should be consulted in education as experts and equal peers (Ishimaru, 2019). Finally, she argued that educational transformation is a necessary component of greater political transformation (Ishimaru, 2019).

Ishimaru's (2019) research encompassed three initiatives. The first took place in the western part of the United States, with the objective of preparing children for college pathways. The study enrolled 120,000 students from a variety of backgrounds, with 16% classified as ELs. A portion of the funding was used to improve communication between families and SPs in the three schools, particularly between families from immigrant, refugee, and diverse backgrounds. Between November 2012 and June 2013, 68 interviews and five focus groups were conducted by a team of five researchers. The methods of family capacity-building appeared to pave the way for a new mutually comprehensive manner of partnering with families; nevertheless, such approaches are geared to work with and influence educators' expectations for how families should interact with school personnel. Even when cultural brokers or community liaisons are used, the school's power structure is typically predetermined; Ishimaru's (2019) study

used relationship-building tactics to modify that dynamic by empowering community members, families, and employees who reflect student diversity. Cultural liaisons/brokers serve as a link between the schools and their students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The technique, however, continues to translate school expectations and reflects the school's authority over families.

In Ishimaru's other study, about the Kellogg's Parent-Students Success program, the families were engaged with family leadership roles with their children and other children in the school and district. In this program, families could become leaders and have a role in training other families; however, this also positioned the family to respond to the educator's needs and enforced the asymmetric power dynamic. However, the practice continues to represent school expectations and the school's influence over families.

Family Partnership in Education with Iraqis from Refugee Backgrounds

Most Iraqi refugee families reside in a third country before their final resettlement in the U.S., and they have interacted with the education system there. In their 2020 qualitative research, Soylu et al. interviewed 14 Turkish instructors at one school and identified the absence of family support as a significant element in the education of refugee students in Turkey. In terms of characteristics such as resource scarcity, cultural differences, and the significance of education, the research reveals that family engagement may have an influence on the education of refugee children. The research discovered that a lack of family engagement in educational processes is a significant aspect of the disadvantaged living situations of refugee children in their educational lives.

The absence of family participation at school and at home results in inadequate family support for students. The research implies that, given the impoverished circumstances of the families, their lack of active participation in the educational process is expected. In addition to the lack of resources, cultural hurdles often impede families from connecting with schools. Furthermore, their research revealed that a lack of understanding about students' cultural backgrounds, as well as systemic challenges, are barriers to providing refugee children with culturally relevant education. The research recommends that culturally responsive education should take into consideration the previous experiences and present circumstances of students in order to effectively manage the education of refugees from various cultural backgrounds. In addition, the study emphasizes the significance of teachers being more qualified, knowledgeable, and responsive to the past experiences and learning needs of refugee students, as well as the need for knowledge of students' past experiences and cultural heritage in order to create a supportive learning environment for their integration into the new education system. In addition, the research indicated that a lack of family support is a significant issue affecting refugee students' education. While the degree that the mainstream model of family advocacy is individualistic and oriented on the advancement of one's own child, mainstream families are seen as adhering to the prevailing advocacy system in the United States. However, non-mainstream families who participate in such behaviors are more likely to be seen adversely at school. Even if they are not, they may feel uncomfortable about this possible perception and limit their school appearance (Doucet, 2011). Despite the critical need for

FPPs with refugee families, there is a dearth of research on the factors that influence FPPs with this varied population (Haines et al., 2018).

Haines et al. (2021) examined partnerships within two school districts that support refugee students through the eyes of ten recently resettled refugee families, their children, their teachers, home-school liaisons, and administrators (I participated in this study as one of the graduate research assistants.) We sought out these perspectives because the education community should take part in a dialogue in which those with the most influence learn to listen to and collaborate with those with less influence. Using an embedded case study design, we conducted numerous interviews with families, adolescents, liaisons, teachers, and administrators to conduct qualitative research on the phenomenon of FPP (Haines et al., 2021). Our research team had numerous deep ties to the community and made an effort to humanize the study through their approaches (Reyes et al., 2021). We recruited families that arrived in the United States within the prior 36 months and resided in two northeast refugee resettlement areas as refugees (Haines et al., 2021). We recruited through informal networks rather than school to avoid families feeling pushed into participation or as an extension of the school system (Haines et al., 2021). We found that connections between newly arriving immigrant families and their adolescent child's teachers were not always trusting and collaborative, and a variety of variables influenced these relationships (Haines et al., 2021). While both teachers and refugee families showed a desire to collaborate, they developed assumptions about one another that harmed their partnership. Families and instructors have divergent views on

what constitutes student performance or growth, and families were reliant on others to gain access to information that needed literacy or technology literacy.

The same theme of the need for SPs to gain a better understanding of their students' families and cultures, as well as to gain a better understanding of their families' expectations, was discussed by Roy and Roxas (2011) in two studies conducted in 2007 and 2008 with Somali Bantu refugee families in South Texas and Michigan. The study's objective was to gain a better understanding of the families' educational experiences; thus, they interviewed students' parents, elders, and siblings, as well as school personnel. They discovered that teachers have a preconceived notion about the culture and believe that the home culture does not value education (Roy & Roxas, 2011). Additionally, teachers disclosed some behavioral issues with students, and the EL teacher was frequently asked to remove "her students" from the class. The families exchanged stories about the value of education and how one of the older brothers enquired about his younger brother's school. The researchers discovered that teachers overgeneralized and committed microaggressions. Rather than hearing the voices of the families trying to provide information, they assumed that the family's culture was the source of learning difficulties. The school has sent some EL students to alternative schools, and their families were unaware of the consequences of their removal from the school and the impact on their learning and future. Rather than that, some community elders proposed relocating all Somali students to alternative schools. The researchers suggest that the best way to communicate with the district is to work with the community and families to

understand their culture. On the other hand, they provide instructors with real-world training that prepares them to communicate effectively with their students.

The review of the literature on Iraqi and school professional partnership in education is scant; Few studies discuss refugee partnership with SPs in general and even fewer articles discuss Iraqis who have come from refugee backgrounds. The majority of the literature I found for this literature review was doctoral dissertations; however, the literature reveals a need for more in-depth studies focusing on the factors that need to be addressed in order to facilitate a more culturally appropriate partnership.

Kolif (2018) conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with Iraqi mothers on the United States' west and east coasts (five Iraqi refugee mothers who had been in the United States for 4–8 years). The central research question was "How do Iraqi refugee mothers perceive their role in their children's education in the United States?" Kolif (2018) focused on two major issues:

- Identity, which encompasses ethnic, gendered educational, religious, and professional, as well as self and collective identity
- Parental and educator advocacy

Kolif's (2018) research demonstrated that the family left the second country of refuge primarily to provide better futures for their children. Kolif (2018) found that nearly all of the participants revealed that they were subjected to discrimination at school: they were judged on the basis of their ethnic origin, gender, and/or religion. Discrimination was pervasive throughout the institutional systems they engaged with, and the school was a microcosm of those systems. She cited the "Muslim ban" as an example,

in which immigrants are demonized as a threat to the United States. One of the solutions suggested by study participants is for teachers to be personally introduced to Iraqi culture, meet with families, and educate themselves about the country's history. Additionally, through her interactions with the instructors, she discovered widespread belief that refugees were frequently perceived as marginalized, disadvantaged, or even uneducated, which was not true for all families in the study. Importantly, Kolif (2018) evidenced the critical role of an Iraqi mother in their child's education. This identity has shifted in the United States, where mothers lack language skills and knowledge of the educational system; these same obstacles have brought Iraqi mothers together to share their stories. When the family advocated for the child, the mothers felt empowered by liaisons who assisted in negotiating the SPs' concept of advocacy. According to the researcher's example, advocacy was direct and forceful. Kolif (2018) emphasized the importance of a policy that is inclusive of diversity and begins with the needs of families, specifically calling for policy that honors and builds on their experience rather than assuming their needs.

Miller's (2019) article echoed the change in policy and dismantling of the inequality associated with minority families' lack of voice in partnerships. She examined historical and contemporary understandings of professional collaboration between families and schools, as well as how this understanding has influenced current ties (Miller, 2019). She emphasized the importance of rebuilding the partnership between SPs and Iraqi families in the U.S. in order to serve diverse linguistic and cultural populations (Miller, 2019). She explained that the culture of SPs is typically represented by middle-

class White women who assume the needs of the minority culture (Miller, 2019). As a result, they worked with families based on their assumptions, which are frequently incorrect. While her primary focus was on special education, she expanded the reconstruction transformation for personal interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse families in the classroom (Miller, 2019). Miller proposed rethinking the power dynamic and redesigning the school system to accommodate participants' linguistic and cultural needs, as well as a mechanism for involving the community, including families, in reimagining the power dynamic (Miller, 2019). Generally, FFRIBs raised in a new culture are unable to rely on the host culture to transmit their heritage. As a result, FFRIB children raised in their family's culture and language frequently struggle to maintain their cultural identity while also establishing a new one. The road to successful adaptation in the host culture is frequently viewed as difficult, distressing, or traumatic for FFRIB children (Paat, 2013). While foreign-born children of FFRIBs seek to establish new ties and acclimate to a new culture in a new nation, the additional strain of fast acculturation may have a negative impact on their families. Nonetheless, FRRIBs may often provide a protective atmosphere for their kid (Paat, 2013).

Similarly, Rizkallah (2020) interviewed seven adolescent Iraqi refugees between the ages of 13 and 15 in Connecticut and Massachusetts for her doctoral dissertation, using constructivist grounded theory research techniques. The study demonstrated the critical role of peers, school, and families in sustaining and enhancing school belonging. In a similar vein to Kalof's (2018) study, participants discussed the effect of discriminatory rhetoric on the perceptions of refugees from that country and how this

rhetoric manifested itself during the Trump administration. One of the key themes emerging from the data is that Iraqi students view their families as instrumental in school, belonging and advocating for them, particularly mothers; this support varied from providing emotional support and advice to advocating during bullying incidents. Additionally, participants acknowledged that a significant part of leaving the country was ensuring a prosperous future for their children through quality education. Additionally, participants expressed a desire to repay their families for their sacrifices in order for them to succeed in school.

Martin (2016) conducted a mixed method study with 12 Iraqi students in two New Hampshire high schools. His study revealed that selecting courses in high school can be challenging for refugee students because guidance counselors may not encourage them to select courses that align with their career goals. In order to be culturally sensitive and respectful, the study suggests that educators who work with refugees should be aware of their cultural background and adapt instruction accordingly. English language teachers, culturally-competent counselors, and community leaders who are familiar with each culture can create professional development programs.

By partnership with families in the school redesign process, SPs can develop a better understanding of their students and their families, which benefits the students. Koyama and Bakuza (2017) conducted a 26-month ethnography of students from refugee backgrounds, including Iraqis, in their research. They interviewed refugees, resettlement personnel, and SPs (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017). The researchers demonstrated that students can influence proposed policy changes through their families' participation in

public school system decision-making. They found that the majority of families who can communicate in functional English can advocate for their children, but other families from refugee backgrounds stated that a barrier to attending teacher conferences and advocating for their children is a lack of English. Additionally, the lack of bilingual SPs made it difficult for them to advocate for their children. Another issue is that families were not given an opportunity to understand their role; while teachers solicited assistance from families, families were perplexed as to what was expected of them. Iraqi participants expressed concern about the school "wall," which limited families' access to SPs and contrasted to their experience in Iraq where they have an open door to teachers.

Attending a workshop on how the school operated and hiring Iraqi refugees as paraprofessionals helped Iraqi families understand how to engage in school activities.

Linguistic Factors that Influence Family-School Professional Partnership

The literature on this topic discusses English proficiency as a barrier to communicating with SPs; however, there is no indication of which aspect of the language Iraqi families may find difficult while communicating with SPs. Thus, I analyzed a few linguistics aspects that affect communication between families and SP in the sections below. By acknowledging these difficulties, I hope that both SPs and adult English educators will conduct additional research into the family and, occasionally, the learners' English communication styles and, at the same time, develop programs and activities for families that are tailored to their interests and linguistic preferences. The majority of Iraqis speak Arabic, share pedagogical systems with neighboring Arab countries, and share the same issues of learning English. The advocacy style affected by different

linguistics norms was understudied in the literature I have reviewed. By exposing the different layers of the advocacy style for Iraqi families related to the linguistics aspects and cultural norms, I went in detail into exposing the issue of different advocacy styles between Iraqi culture and the Western educational system.

Hasan (2006) found that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking for specific classes is artificial and not authentic. The teachers control most of the speech, which contributes to the students' inability to express themselves in real communication. Hasan (2006) found that the use of simplified input through display questions, repetition, and expansion provides little opportunity for the students to use authentic communication in English, "… consequently inhibiting the natural use of language, which requires a much larger variety of linguistic forms than these features" (p. 17). He called for a change in the way English speaking is taught in the Middle East to make it more authentic and to reflect the world outside the classroom (Hasan, 2006). Students need to express their feelings, give their opinions, and negotiate to mean without feeling that they are continually being monitored. This authentic interaction requires learners to understand the pragmatics of the target language. Pragmatic awareness constitutes an integral part of an authentic conversation.

Issues with Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a subdiscipline of linguistics that examines how context influences meaning. Pragmatics is defined as the study of language use and its relationship to context. Pragmatics is essential to language comprehension because it involves drawing inferences based on the context and prior knowledge of the speaker and hearer.

Pragmatics also assists in addressing issues of perspective and mutual comprehension between the speaker and the listener (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics is a critical feature of a language, and it is usually acquired from authentic interaction. Pragmatics is neither introduced explicitly nor implicitly, which affects the use of proper pragmatics by EFL teachers in their teaching. For example, they fail to address idiomatic expressions or speech acts, including complimenting, suggesting, preferring, requesting, and advising. These problems are shared with a broad spectrum of EFL teachers and learners around the world. There is a need to teach pragmatics explicitly as demonstrated in Soler's (2008) study, in which he compared the effectiveness of teaching explicit and implicit pragmatics with Spanish EFL students who were learning request forms in English. Soler examined two experimental groups and one control group. The first group received explicitly metapragmatic input on requests in English. The second experimental group was provided with implicit awareness-raising tasks that exhibited enhancement input, such as capitalization or bold type for request forms. However, they did not receive metapragmatic clarification. The control group received neither implicit nor explicit instruction in pragmatics. In the post-test, the three groups were tested on identifying samples of requests and were asked to rationalize their selections. Both experimental groups improved significantly compared to the control group. However, no considerable differences were noticed between the two experimental groups. On the same topic, Cohen (2008) stressed the importance of including the teaching of pragmatics in L2 instruction. He gave an example of how the internet makes it easier for L2 learners to learn

pragmatics. Currently, there is a tendency in EFL teaching worldwide to address pragmatics explicitly.

Pragmatics transfer between languages. Nelson et al. (1996) asserted that learners occasionally transfer their native language's pragmatics to the target language. However, this may be only partially appropriate or may result in a communication barrier or misunderstanding. Meanwhile, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) discovered that similarities in behavioral patterns between the first (L1) and second (L2) languages generally result in communication success. Hurley (1992) discovered that similarities between the native and target languages frequently result in form overgeneralization and improper usage in the target language. Nelson et al. (1996) compared the responses of refugees and Americans to compliments. They discovered some parallels, such as accepting or reducing the magnitude of a compliment rather than rejecting it entirely. However, some critical distinctions were discovered. "In an attempt to sound sincere to their own ears, Arabic-speaking ESL/EFL students use more words than a native English speaker… causing native speakers to perceive a lack of appropriateness" (Nelson et al., 1996, p. 430). According to Grice (1975), this case violates the quantity maxims because the contribution must be as informative as necessary in a conversation. On the other hand, academic teaching requires the use of an appropriate register. Due to a dearth of communication in the target language, EFL Arab teachers may struggle to find the appropriate register for the conversation.

Using closed role plays, Ghawi (1993) examined the speech act of apology among Arabic learners of English. The data gathered from the role-plays and interviews with 17

Arabic speakers assisted in determining the degree to which pragmatic transfer may be correlated to the learners' perceptions of the specificity or universality of language. The study revealed that Arab participants believed that Americans apologize differently than Arabs, particularly that Americans apologize more often and sometimes without justification. In addition, they believed that although Americans apologized more frequently, they were less sincere in their apologies. Arab participants believed that apology strategies depended on pragmatics specificity. The study revealed that Arab participants seemed to tolerate only the direct apology method, although their usage of the direct apology strategy in L2 English differed considerably from L1 English norms. The conclusion of the research was that pragmatic transfer events may be transferrable across diverse native and target languages.

Umar (2004) compared the request strategies of 20 advanced Arab EFL students and 20 native English speakers from the United Kingdom. He discovered that the requests were similar in terms of formal language and the use of extremely polite language when addressed to people in positions of authority. However, the requests varied in their directness, depending on whether they were addressed to a person with whom the speaker felt a strong connection or to people in lower positions. Umar (2004) stated: "Indirect requests in the English sample are denoted by explicit elaborations and explanations. On the other hand, it is discovered that the Arabic sample requests are rather brief and imprecise" (p. 80). Arab students were more direct in their requests than British students. This may be due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary or a lack of an appropriate pragmatic medium of request.

In her doctoral dissertation, Kerkam (2015) examined parallels and contrasts between Arabic and English in terms of directness and indirectness, as well as the link between the two languages and politeness and impoliteness. There was a total of 50 participants, with Arabs and Brits each making up half of the group. The concepts of directness and indirectness are understood in the same way by Arabs and English speakers alike. In spite of this, the fundamental characteristic that differentiates the two communities is that Arabs, in general, have a negative attitude toward indirectness. This negative perception is mirrored in the definitions and examples offered by the Arabic speakers about the meaning and purpose of indirect speech in the different categories of data that were gathered. In addition, it was found that the idea of reducing the negative effects of being direct appears to be the same in both Arabic and English in circumstances that are similar; however, the way in which this is accomplished is different because different cultures have different ideologies and norms. This was discovered to be the case despite the fact that the concept appears to be the same in both languages. She has shared some examples of how the Arabic and English cultures perceive directness and indirectness differently:

- When making requests in English, it is considered courteous to use certain linguistic structures and politeness expressions, such as "please." In Arabic, however, a particular intonation may be sufficient to soften the impact of direct requests.
- In certain situations, it is considered impolite to be too direct in English, and indirectness is frequently employed to avoid confrontation. In Arabic, indirectness

may be viewed negatively, whereas directness may be used to denote social proximity between the participants.

- In English, indirect requests such as "Could you possibly do this for me?" may be considered more courteous than direct requests such as "Do this for me." In Arabic, however, a direct imperative form may be used for less serious requests in order to indicate social proximity and be considered politer. Those issues with register and pragmatics may affect translations as well.

Bani-Younes (2015) explored the cultural and linguistic issues that may result from translating English collocations (combinations of words that frequently occur together in natural language) into Arabic. The study analyzed the collocation translations of 40 Master of Arts in English Language students from three public universities in Jordan. The statistical results showed that the participants struggled with cultural and sociolinguistic challenges during translation and lacked the necessary knowledge and skills for translating collocations accurately. The order of words in a collocation can vary between Arabic and English, which can lead to mistranslations. In addition, the availability of cultural and sociolinguistic equivalents posed a problem, as certain collocations may not have a direct translation in the target language. In addition, the study highlighted issues pertaining to religious words, as these words can have different connotations and meanings in various cultures and societies.

Research Questions

After reviewing the literature, I recognized several gaps that the literature did not address, particularly around linguistic factors and advocacy styles that could influence the

relationship between families with refugee backgrounds and SPs. This led me to pose the following question concerning the topic of partnerships between Iraqi refugee families and their children's teachers in New England:

RQ: What linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors facilitate and impede the formation of a partnership between an Iraqi family with a refugee background families and school professionals in New England?

Chapter 3: Methods

The goal of the present study is to gain a deeper understanding of advocacy behaviors that facilitated or hindered the formation of a partnership between Iraqi refugee families and New England SP. In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Family-School Partnerships, the researcher conducted a case study of a specific family who participated in previous research. The case study design is particularly useful in this context because it permits an in-depth examination of the dynamic and complex nature of FPP and the exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Previous Research

This study stemmed from data collected in a previous study. I added to the data we had already collected to gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors that facilitated and impeded the formation of a partnership between this Iraqi refugee family and the SPs who interacted with the children. The team included the two principal investigators (PIs) (Dr. Reyes and Dr. Haines), one Educational Leadership and Policy Studies doctoral student with a Bhutanese refugee background,

two undergraduate students-one Somali American studying middle-level education and one American-born student studying sociology, - and myself, with a Syrian immigrant/Asylee background. Each team member had numerous strong ties to the community. For example, the principal investigators supervised student teachers and had trained several teachers who had participated in primary research; they had also volunteered to assist families who arrived in the region via refugee resettlement agencies and provided professional development in local schools. The Doctoral students served as leaders in the refugee and immigrant communities and collaborated with educational organizations dedicated to refugee issues. Additionally, undergraduate students volunteered and worked with refugee-focused organizations.

We investigated the phenomenon of FPP through qualitative interviews with adolescent students, families, teachers, liaisons, and administrators. The study took an appreciative approach, motivated by the desire to demonstrate the participants' perspectives and implement data-driven adjustments aimed at increasing equity and partnership with participants, the methods we used when working with participants (Reyes et al., 2021). Using an embedded case study design (Yin, 2009), we sought agreement from the two school districts and found participating families through personal, informal networks. We then used a sampling grid to recruit a diverse population of families with refugee backgrounds in two New England states. In all, we included 32 families, 45 students, and 25 teachers in the study. We interviewed families twice per year (with an interpreter), the youth once per year, and a minimum of two of the student's instructors each year of the study.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to three and a half hours, for a total interview duration of around 150 hours. The time and venue of the interviews were determined by the participants. At least two researchers performed all interviews with families and children, asking questions based on a semi-structured procedure in English, while interpreters offered real-time translations for interviews with families and students. The initial family interviews focused on getting to know the family and gaining an idea of their children's educational path and their engagement in their children's schooling (see protocol in appendix). During the second session with families, we presented a synopsis of the first interview along with additional information gleaned from interviewing the child's instructors (see protocol in appendix). Families were requested to provide feedback on these summaries in order to confirm their correctness and identify any changes that had occurred after the first interview. The purpose of the student interviews was to learn more about the student and how he or she saw the interaction between their family and instructors. The purpose of the teacher interviews was to learn about their history, their perspectives on FPP with immigrant families in general, and their interaction with the families of the focus children (see protocol in appendix).

The central family in this case study participated in the second year of this research. I participated in all family interviews, but I was not involved in interviewing the SPs. I analyzed the data specific to this family's case before collecting more data around this family's advocacy behaviors and overall partnership with SPs.

Rationale to Use Case Study

Qualitative research is especially beneficial when studying systems such as FPP in their natural environment, whether as a group, community, or even a natural context (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This research aims to gain a thorough understanding of the FPP's underlying issues and how Iraqi families and SPs communicate and act toward one another in real-world social situations, which provides more valuable insights and information than abstract theoretical approaches (Erickson & Schultz, 1988). Additionally, case studies can be used to examine specific advocacy and partnership efforts that result in particular difficulties and provide context for the participants' perceptions of their social place (Harold, 2007). The emphasis on comprehensive description and educational inquiry, in addition to the experience of the families, prompted me to use a case study to illustrate the relationship between the study's setting and the variables examined, such as family members and SPs (Merriam, 1998).

Additionally, given my position in the study and my relationship to the participants, a case study design enabled me to elicit detailed and complex data by describing events in depth using materials gathered through observation, interviewing, and recording. Those techniques constitute effective methods for describing and comprehending complex issues such as trauma, policy change, and social change (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). A case study approach can be used to develop theories, comprehend patterns and cycles, identify knowledge gaps, and propose a solution (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further, as Creswell (2003) stated, case studies are used to enhance educational quality and address social needs, which is the ultimate goal of this study.

Numerous authors have used case studies to examine various aspects of the subject, including FPP (Haines et al., 2015; Lawson et al., 2003). According to Creswell (2003), using a case study demonstrates the validity of data. The researcher could use the method to sift through the dense description of the case, investigate the rationale for the behavior, and make inferences about the structure of things. By employing the case study method, the researcher can unearth the research participant's tacit knowledge (Creswell, 2003). Merriam (1998) stated that researchers acquire tacit knowledge through participant observation, dialog with participants, and in-depth interviews (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2015). Additionally, Merriam (1998) stated that case studies enable researchers to gain an understanding of what community members do, how they think they do it, and their future plans.

The case study is not without limitations. The case study has been viewed as an interpretive tool from a methodological standpoint. There is a possibility of error in case study research due to the lack of systematic procedures and clear guidelines for constructing the findings (Yin, 2009). The strength of a case study is based on a single example but carefully chosen for relevance to the qualitative research question or hypothesis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). However, Flyvbjerg (2006) defined the exact strength as a limitation, "that one cannot generalize based on a single case is usually considered to be devastating to the case study as a scientific method" (p. 224). In this study, data collected from a single Iraqi family could not be extrapolated to an entire population of Iraqis living in the United States, but using thick description (Geertz, 1973)

captured in field notes and direst quotes from rich texts captured in conversation can help readers interpret the relevance of this study to other situations.

Researcher Identity

I got to know the mother of the focal family when I was responsible for placement tests and working with instructors in a non-profit refugee resettlement agency. My role was to ensure that learning the language would prepare adult students for employment and understand the fundamental cultural aspect of their new community. In my role, I worked with several community partners. I was also enrolled in the doctoral program at UVM. I am originally from Syria, and my family was in limbo during this period, as we were awaiting the results from our asylum application for several years.

I was a cultural broker and interpreter as a research assistant on the Centering Connections project with Drs. Reyes and Haines. I helped recruit Arabic-speaking participants and then acted as the interpreter, helping the PIs understand the Arabic speakers and the Arabic speakers understand the Pls. At one point, during one interview, we learned of a serious conflict that had erupted with a school, and we listened to a dire situation that required advocacy. However, it was challenging for us as researchers to advocate on the part of the family without appearing to cast doubt on the school's judgment in that situation. We witnessed a situation in which each researcher was speaking to three different family members simultaneously. To an outside observer, it appeared as if there was some arguing and yelling and anger, but the family simply wanted to be heard. Following the interview, the three of us researchers stood outside under a street light in the early hours of the night; the weather was cold and foggy, and

the snow on the edges of the driveway was freezing, but we felt compelled to speak in order to recall what had occurred and how we could assist the family. I explained that the family was advocating for themselves, even though the PIs had been confused about the situation. How could we disentangle our roles as researchers from our desire to be empathetic and to advocate on behalf of our participants?

I was caught in the crossfire between two identities: my first identity was as an advocate for social justice, and my second identity was that of a researcher who observed but stayed out of the school's conflicts except when absolutely necessary. It was fascinating to wear my first hat, that of an advocate, when I chose to attend school on behalf of the student. To protect the participants' privacy, I was unable to provide my additional researcher identification. Additionally, the school had taken note of my professional affiliation. I was not sure they would take me differently if I introduced myself as a member of the research team interviewing this family. Further, it is critical to mention that this family maintains contact with me on a non-research basis. It is with my knowledge from all of these identities that I believe this case study held powerful implications for the field.

Setting, Context, and Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this case study is an Iraqi family from a refugee background. The study was conducted in a city in northern New England with the objective of comprehending behaviors and linguistic aspects of advocacy and how these aspects influenced FPP.

Choosing Participants

The family was chosen due to the relevance of the family and their experiences in both Iraq and the United States; both of these factors are critical in elaborating on the respondent's opinion due to the time spent in both countries by this family. To protect the family's privacy, the family's name has been withheld. I chose this family because, as expressed above, we learned about problems they encountered when advocating for children in the family. We learned about these problems when interviewing other Iraqi families, as well, and this family was a case that represented the advocacy theme that emerged from the overall data.

Data Sources

Table 1 contains information about the data sources as well as the dates on which some data were collected. The interviews were semi-structured, and there was a four-year gap between the initial and subsequent interviews. I gained additional knowledge and a fresh perspective on the participants' high school and post-high school experiences. The new interviews provided a broader perspective on the shift in advocacy style and partnership between the family and SPs, allowing me to expand the scope of this study's findings. The new interviews were conducted in both Arabic and English, with the Arabic interviews being translated into English. I interviewed participants to collect information about linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors facilitate and impede the formation of a partnership between Iraqi refugee families and school professionals in New England.

Data Analysis

The data analysis examined data that pertained to my research questions. It is customary to come up with multiple themes because focusing too much on one theme diminishes the contribution of others (Saldaña, 2013). Saldaña (2013) mentioned that codes can be divided into two categories: codes that guided the research and codes that were generated from the data. As stated by Saldaña (2013), it was essential to use various tools, such as tables, to help the researcher organize the information that they believed was relevant from a piece of written literature. For data analysis, I used NVivo to organize the data, create a codebook, enter codes, and connect the codes into themes. This process is detailed in Figure 2.

Data analysis began while conducting the interviews. The linguistic aspect of the study as well as applying my own knowledge of the culture and language proved to be greatly helpful for beginning my data analysis and in comprehending the family's advocacy style. Arabic is an ancient language which mostly started as a poetic language. For instance, while introducing your topic, you may occasionally begin with a generalization and give hints to your listener about the information you need. According to Rabab'ah (2003), these difficulties are a result of the English teaching methodology and a dearth of English interaction. Furthermore, these deficiencies persist at the university level, even among English majors.

Furthermore, in interviews, the questions the PIs asked were typically direct. As an interpreter and cultural broker, I tried to make the questions less direct and, at the same time, maintain the intended content. At times, within the questions themselves

when communicating in English, it is entirely appropriate to use a few auxiliary verbs and be respectful. However, in Arabic, the query should occasionally be indirect and polite. Questions in English are straightforward, and I was afraid that if I translated them literally into Arabic, I might assume judgment of the families' responses and that the families may select an ideal response, which was not the intention of the research. For example, there was a question about comparing the educational system and schools in their new country to their own. I was concerned that the question would appear to be evaluating the educational systems and schools in the U.S. and Iraq rather than describing the differences. As a result, I periodically needed to modify the questions to reflect their actual partnership with the education system. At times, indirect translation aided me in comprehending and eliciting the response from the participants.

Coming from dictatorial regimes, the family may have believed that the system is without flaws. They may have been unaware that advocacy and partnership with school personnel can be highly effective parenting tools. During the interviews, I began comparing the English rhetorical system to the Arabic rhetorical system and the ways in which people expressed themselves in Arabic, occasionally attempting to translate it into English. Translation of pragmatics is not always straightforward, and what one culture considers normal may not have been regarded as normal in another. For instance, in Arabic culture, raising your voice, especially in informal gatherings, indicated stressing on the importance of the topic. As a refugee, it indicated that they needed to be heard. However, raising your voice in an English discussion may have been interpreted as confrontational, disrespectful, and inappropriate. In Arabic-speaking cultures, it is

common in gatherings, particularly those with more than four people, to have more than one conversation happening simultaneously. However, in English, this might give the impression of an argument for an outside observer when, in fact, it was a discussion taking place in a unique way where each person discussed, sometimes the same subject and sometimes a different topic, with a specific person. I captured these analytic thoughts in my field notes.

Thematic Analysis

According to Riessman (2008), when conducting thematic analysis, data is interpreted against a framework that has been developed by the main investigators, which may have been influenced by prior and emerging theories, the specific purpose of the investigation, the data themselves, and political commitments, among other factors. Please see Figure 1 for my conceptual framework for an overview of the categories that have emerged during initial data collection and analysis. I used these factors to guide my coding and thematic analysis to examine the narratives of my participants. Figure 2 includes the steps I followed in my data analysis procedures.

I followed Saldaña's (2013) recommended two-cycle method. I utilized NVivo software to assist with the analysis of interviews conducted in both Arabic and English. This software permitted me to efficiently organize and analyze the data. Creating codes for the data was the initial step in my analysis process. I diligently reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and created in-vivo codes to represent the major topics and themes discussed by the participants. These codes aided me to recognize patterns and trends within the data and served as a basis for further analysis. I revisited and revised the

initial codes to ensure that they accurately reflected the content of the interviews. I also made sure to include at least two quotes per code to illustrate the identified themes. This allowed me to provide concrete evidence for the data-identified themes and patterns. To refine my analysis further, I set the codes aside for a week and then reorganized them into three major themes. This step enabled me to view the data from a new angle and identify previously hidden connections and patterns. I also sent my advisor an NVivo document containing my codes for an audit trail. This process supported an independent validation of the themes and patterns identified in the data, thereby enhancing the study's reliability and validity. My advisory asked questions, and we discussed the definitions of a few codes as well as why certain quotes were coded under them. I revised the codes and created a new subfolder in NVivo after discussing this feedback with my advisor. This allowed me to keep the data organized and readily accessible for further examination, analysis, and writing. Finally, I began developing each primary theme and its subthemes. After completing my analysis, I was left with three major themes, and I wrote the findings, subthemes, and quotations for each. I also discovered that information sometimes circulates between participants, enabling me to triangulate the data and highlighting the complexity of the investigated topic. Overall, the use of NVivo software and the various steps of the data analysis process allowed me to analyze the interview data thoroughly and methodically. Triangulation of the data helped me confirm the validity of the themes that emerged, which were consistent with the data and the participants' experiences. In short, I used NVivo to apply the codes to the data. Then, I organized the codes into larger themes. Next, I established each theme, generated groups

of codes within each theme, explained the relationships between themes, and organized the data accordingly. Lastly, I created an audit trail with at least two codes for each theme and two quotes for each code

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I provide background information on the participants involved in the study, then I present the findings of the study on the factors and behaviors that facilitated and impeded the formation of a partnership between a focal Iraqi refugee family and the SPs who worked with them. The study also examined the key language pragmatics that affected advocacy-related behaviors.

Table 1

Participants

Person	Who is this person	Interview1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Zahra	Mother	11/2017	7/2018	7/2022
Sarah	Daughter	11/2017	7/2018	10/2022
Amira	Daughter	11/2017	7/2018	
Sumaiah	Daughter	11/2017	7/2018	
Karmen	Main Teacher	12/2017		
Marisa	Supervisor	8/2023		

Background Information on the Participants

The mother, Zahra is the head of the family, a middle-aged woman who migrated from Iraq to Turkey before being resettled in the United States. Zahra was born in Iraq. She earned her bachelor's degree and got married. After 2003, her life changed dramatically when her husband passed away.

She and her family lived in Iraq until 2007, when she fled to Turkey following an attempted kidnapping of her immediate family. The family was resettled in the United States after a four-year wait. In March 2016, Zahra and her family were finally resettled in a north-eastern state where she had no relatives. Her older children worked during the

school year, and Zahra supplemented the family's income by working in a catering business. She had been enrolled in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) beginner classes at two local adult education programs for several years. She had studied English in Iraq as a subject in school and college. Arabic is her native language.

Zahra is a well-educated woman and a devout mother. Her children had a very high appreciation for her and her role in the family. The family was eager to become assimilated into American culture, and all family members were keen to learn English and graduate from high school. Three children were in the same high school. Their education was disrupted in Turkey, but they were able to attend school in the United States. Zahra immediately began looking for work after arriving in the United States. However, her background did not prepare her for a career that matched her education, as the majority of employment in her field required a strong command of spoken and written English. Based on the placement test, she was assigned to the upper beginner level for English class. This level means that students are capable of carrying on a basic conversation in English. Employment, as is the case with many refugees, is a prerequisite for self-sufficiency. Therefore, she had to accept an entry-level position that may not be in her field of study paired with limited proficiency in English.

In general, her level of English assisted her to initiate brief conversations. However, students at this level have difficulty with some pronunciation and may miss words that indicate verb tenses, adjectives, or auxiliary verbs. Students can convey their basic intended meaning at this level, but their sentences may be devoid of auxiliaries and adjectives. Thus, the subject, a verb, and a few adjectives convey the essence of the

sentence. For instance, the student can construct the sentence "I want to see the teacher." The language may appear to be judgmental and may lack a polite request. This, however, reflects English proficiency, not educational attainment or a desire to be rude. At this level, the instructor emphasizes survival skills such as transportation, shopping, medical procedures, and medication.

Sarah (daughter) is a remarkable individual who serves as an example of determination and self-advocacy. Despite the difficulties she faced as a refugee, she was able to not only finish high school but also pursue higher education. Her dedication to helping other refugees through her involvement in various activities highlights her compassion and drive to make a positive impact. Additionally, Sarah's outgoing personality and self-advocacy serve as a testament to her resilience.

Amira, like her sister Sarah, is a refugee who has had to face several barriers and hardships. Amira's journey, on the other hand, has taken a somewhat different path since she experienced bullying in high school. Amira has shown resolve and tenacity in the face of hardship despite this. She has shown exemplary moral fortitude and exerted much effort to conquer this challenge; she also graduated high school and pursued higher education.

Sumaiah, Sarah and Amira's younger sister, was in middle school when we conducted the interviews, she is proficient in Turkish, Arabic, and English.

Huda is the elder sister of Sarah, Amira, and Sumaiah. Huda was a college student when her family was forced to flee Iraq, which had a profound effect on her studies and professional goals. She has been a tremendous support to her mother, assisting her in

Turkey and the United States. She has a full-time job, and she supports the family financially and emotionally. There are also three other children one boy, Mountasier, and two girls.

Karmen is a middle school professional who was Sumaiah's primary teacher. She met Zahra, the mother of Sarah, Amira, Sumaiah, and Huda, during teacher-parent conferences.

Marisa was a school professional who worked closely with refugee students and their families. She was devoted to providing the necessary assistance and tools for these students to flourish in their new surroundings. One of her key roles was to teach English to adult parents as part of one of the outreach projects.

Although two of the participants were college educated abroad and had studied English before arriving in the United States, they might share the same challenges with English learners who had not had these opportunities

Background Information about the Bullying Incidents

As briefly mentioned previously, the family experienced a bullying incident that deeply affected their experience with high school. This situation was not only traumatic for the bullied girl, but it also caused concern and frustration for the entire family. Zahra said:

> My daughter was going back to her seat after giving a presentation, and the other girl was going to talk to the teacher in class. Their shoulders touched, and the girl got aggressive toward my daughter even her ear was hurt in front of everyone: teacher and students.

The situation became more complicated as the family was not aware of the incidents until later. They felt that the school was not taking the situation seriously enough and had to visit the school multiple times to address their concerns. This lack of attention from the school was causing frustration for the family. Additionally, the girl's brother, Montasiar, has also faced bullying in the same high school, making the family even more concerned about the safety and well-being of their children. The family feels that the school needs to take the situation more seriously and provide a safe and secure environment for all students.

Factors that Impeded Partnership

The formation of a partnership between the focal family and SPs who worked with them was impeded by various factors. In this section, I discuss how the family's expression of anger and frustration, SP's discriminatory behavior, the family's lack of information about the school system and expectations for parents, and reliance on youths as interpreters impeded the partnership between this family and SPs who worked with them.

Expression of Anger and Frustration

The family was frustrated and angry when they realized that their advocacy efforts were not heard and when they perceived that their children were the victims of discrimination. The family's low English level did not match their high level of education. The family felt frustrated when SPs did not seek out or value their input, and they were angry when they felt they were not heard. This mismatch is not specific to the focal family of this study; SPs commented on the anger in assuming there is a

relationship between one's cognitive aptitude, previous education, and the breadth of one's life experience, Marisa, explained:

> Prior education and English level might not match; we need to educate school professionals about the fact that a parent's language skill has nothing to do with their ability. American parents have a really complicated, almost twisted way of expressing themselves; you can be unbelievably polite but very angry.

In a separate interview, Marisa noted: 'Three big ways I can think of to make you mad.one is to assume a connection between cognitive ability, prior education, and the depth of life, experience, and present proficiency in English." Such assumptions can limit the opportunities for the family like the family in the study, and these presumptions can result in the devaluation of the family who SP may perceive as lacking specific credentials or educational qualifications and other valuable skills or knowledge.

The experiences of the family in the country were overwhelming, particularly when it came to navigating the educational system. Zahra explained:

> The refugees' experience in the country has just started, and there is a lot to learn about advocacy in the education system as a refugee, especially at the beginning, when you don't just have the school, there are different priorities you need to learn about.

The family expressed anger about the treatment and the system when the family was feeling frustrated and angry and used an emotionally charged advocacy style, as is often the case in a situation like the one described Zahra raised her voice to express her dissatisfaction with the treatment and system in place. Zahra and her family were feeling

emotionally charged, believing that the school district should have done more to intervene and protect their child.

Zahra, as someone who has grown up in a culture where teachers are highly respected and students are not allowed to speak to them in a loud voice or call them by their first name, was surprised to find the same expectations do not apply in the family's new educational experience. Zahra said:

> At the first meeting I had with the teachers, I was wondering about a friendly relationship between the students and the teachers. how the students can speak, even in a louder voice, with the teacher, and it's ok with the teacher. And things are okay. It's like a friendship between the teacher and the students. I've found it's something strange for me because, where I grew up and studied, when you saw the teacher, you were afraid to look. We would be scared. [Zahra narrated to me one line of a poem in Arabic, but the meaning is: when you see your teacher stand up and praise them they are almost like a prophet.]

The occurrence of the bullying incident in front of teachers, who did not take any action, proved to be a challenging experience for Zahra. This is due to the fact that Zahra held a strong perception of teachers as highly respected figures, and students were expected to show them respect. The contrast between her expectations and the reality of the situation proved to be a difficult experience for Zahra.

The family felt that this egregious incident was written off by the SPs and their advocacy voice was not heard. When the family engaged in advocacy, they believed there is an issue affecting learning and the SPs were not acting, necessitating the family

involvement since they valued education. The family thought that SP did not form an emotional connection with the family and truly empathize with their situation. When Amira went to tell the SP about a bullying situation, he was skeptical and dismissed the matter. "He said no! What if it was all a lie? I told him that I had no reason to lie to him; the teacher and entire class were there when it happened. He told me he had two students tell him that she didn't do anything to me. I said, "That's because they were her friends. "Despite the fact that there was evidence to support her claim, the SP chose to believe the other students' accounts of the incident due to cultural norms that prioritize the SP's authority and potentially due to the family's limited experience advocating for themselves in an American context. They did not understand the expectations of the process and how to effectively present their case, and that led to frustration and anger.

On the other hand, Zahra shared that there is an urgent need for SPs to take bullying seriously and to take proactive steps to address these issues. She felt that was important to create an environment where students feel safe to speak up about bullying and where those who are victimized are supported and protected. Her suggestion was to hold the bully's parents responsible for their child's behavior. Zahra said " When students mess up, if they're younger than 18, their parents must be informed; if they're older than 18, they should get some sort of legal warning. just to let them know they must respect the place they are in. Am I not right or what?"

She has explained that even when she received the call from the school, she was feeling a bit overwhelmed as she was being told many things all at once. She was left feeling confused and uncertain, not sure why the interpreter had called her., She said:

> The interpreter seemed to be trying to explain something to me, but I couldn't quite make out the details. I did understand that something was wrong. But I did not know if it was with Amira or with Monastir. In the end, I was no closer to understanding why she had called, only further confused.
>
> (A) Did she say it was a fight or not?
>
> (Zahra): I was being told many things all at once.
>
> (A) So, you didn't know the reason she called?
>
> (Zahra): I had no idea what was going on. I was told about Amira, then Montasair.

The family experienced a lack of understanding or awareness of the school system and its policies. This led to frustration and confusion because the family did not feel that their concerns or desires were being heard and addressed. Additionally, they feel disrespected or overlooked, and their experience and hopes had not been considered. Furthermore, a lack of support from SPs for their children was a source of deep frustration, especially since the school was not willing to provide the necessary sympathy or justice treatment for the bullied child. Finally, the family was angry because they felt that their children were not receiving a quality education due to the emotional effect of bullying and not being trusted.

The family was also frustrated and angry when their desires for further education were not heard by SPs. Sarah explained how she felt angry because she was not given the option of taking classes with her peers and had to advocate for herself with rage as she told the advisor that she wanted to go to college. She had to gather support by speaking with advocates from the school and the community and explaining why the situation was

not fair for her and how her opinion and experience had been neglected. Even when she was narrating the incident to me many years after it happened, it triggered her to speak emotionally about that situation.

Sarah showed her anger toward the education system that she felt was trying to fail her. Even in the interview with me years later, she expressed frustration and disappointment with her past and current experiences in education. She felt that their high school teacher and college advisers did not believe in her capabilities and did not provide the necessary support and guidance. She felt that her teacher did not understand her and her goals, and did not give their best effort in helping her succeed. Sarah explained:

> He didn't think I was capable enough of doing schooling or early college or college classes or anything so he just uses that on me. I felt that he didn't give his best. He did not really understand me and did not understand why I want to do that. In collage, I feel the same way that a lot of my advisers are not doing their best in helping me. I guess when you go to college and have so many professors. I'm still struggling, you know, in the things I want to do in my life. I need to make sure that I have everything I need to graduate on time and I have to email my advisor and meet with her and talk about my classes, internship, and all of that and be in touch with her about everything. I am disappointed in the way they do their job. When you work with a student, you can't do minimum, you have to do more. In the end of the day you have to help them with their struggle and to achieve their dreams. You set them to succeed in general and in their whole life. After college they will meet life and find a job. If they are not prepared by school

or their college they will struggle. School and college should prepare students for their future jobs. They are not set by the school or the college.

When the family engaged in advocacy, they believed there was an issue affecting learning and the SPs were not addressing it, necessitating their involvement since they value education. Additionally, the family have limited experience advocating for themselves in an American context, causing them to struggle to understand the expectations of the process and how to effectively present their case. Furthermore, as Sarah expressed, lack of resources and support for her family was a source of deep frustration, especially if the school is not willing to provide the necessary support to them. This led to the family feeling disrespected or overlooked and their experience not considered, resulting in them becoming angry because they felt that their children were not receiving a quality education due to a lack of resources or inadequate support from the school, and that led the family to feel that they are treated with discrimination.

Discrimination

The family indicated a sense of discrimination or unequal treatment and faced a number of obstacles, such as being denied from advanced classes, a lack of understanding of their specific needs, and a dearth of community support. Sarah described her advisor's harsh comments and the sensation of being rejected without a chance. When she was not invited to participate in the Early College Program, Sarah was quite furious with her SP and felt she was not treated fairly.

Sarah decided to advocate on her own behalf. Her mentor assisted her in re-meeting with the school counselor, who appeared more interested in discussing the issue

than when she met him on her own. Her mentor arranged for Sarah to take the exam during her lunch break at school, but she was so preoccupied that she was unable to concentrate and performed poorly. Due to the school counselor's refusal to provide her a second chance, she was unable to participate in early college.

> I want to ask my academic advisor about early college and whether it is a good fit for me. Before I even finished my question, he said that it is hard, and I don't think it's good for you. You're not a good fit for early college, and he was about to kick me out of his office. I was still interested, but I didn't like anything here. At that time, I had a mentor who was helping me, so I went to her and asked her to help me meet with another again so I could learn more about early college. She came with me, we sat in his office, and we talked about early college.

As discussed previously, Sarah tried to get help from her mentor. At this stage, the family sought allies from outside the school who were familiar with the system in order to intervene. These allies could help identify any potential issues that may be impacting her performance. As Sarah described, when she went with her mentor the situation improved:

> He seemed very interest in telling me about early college unlike when I met him by myself he did not show me any interest in telling me what is early college. He told me that early college is for senior high school students college class by the school you can earn college credits dealing with all of that and I said no I want to do it and he said it's very hard to close the class is not like high school and I know

that and I think there's also like I kind of an exam that you've got to take before you go.

This idea is echoed by Marisa, an SP. She explained that the school system is built on family advocacy, and the American school system can give an advantage to parents who are proactive and take the initiative to advocate for their children's education. By actively communicating and engaging with school professionals, families can make sure their children's needs are being addressed and their voices are being heard. This can provide Iraqi parents with a better chance of having their children's educational needs met. Marisa said: "Parents who are the squeaky wheel, so to speak, get attention, and as long as that is the case, I would like Iraqi parents to be forthright and honest in demanding their rights."

The family also asked the research team, including myself, to help and connect with the school in regard to the bullying incident. One of the PIs asked: "Would you like for us to talk to someone from the school personnel? a teacher, or I would like to know what they would like for us to do?"

In addition to expressing confusion and frustration regarding the incident involving her daughter Amira at school, Zahra also mentioned an incident that occurred the day before involving her son Mountasir. Zahra was questioning the school's response to these incidents and the determination of fault and responsibility. She was concerned that her children were being falsely accused or were not receiving adequate school support. Zahra said:

> I was told: your daughter had a problem today, but the principal said it wasn't her fault [Amira's]. But yesterday, there was a kind of fight that involved my son, Mountasir, and his friends, but they don't know whose fault that is.

It was not the first country in which the SPs discriminated against the family. In Turkey, before arriving in the U.S., Zahra faced discrimination at the school. Zahra said, "In Turkey, the children faced different treatment from their Turkish peers. I am not sure if it is discrimination or different treatment."

Unfortunately, the family felt unheard and discriminated against, and they found that it was necessary to recruit community advocates from outside the school who were experienced with educational law to investigate the case. This circumstance may have been alleviated differently if the family had information from the school and was aware of what to expect from the SP and what the SPs expected from them.

Lack of Information about the School and Expectations of Families

At first, the family did not understand that their children were enrolled in classes that were substantially below their ability. Sarah expressed her discontent for not being enrolled in in more challenging classes, where her concerns were often disregarded by SPs. She had previously studied the same courses in her previous education, in Arabic, and the classes she was enrolled in in the U.S. were not at her level. She revealed:

> The schooling is not the same as in the U.S. So, what might be hard for you could be easy for students who came from other countries because they took it in elementary school. Unlike in the Middle East or Nepal, they place a greater emphasis on the hands-on areas [subjects] such as music and art. So, students

from these countries might not have experience with art or poetry because they did not take it before.

The family reported that teacher-parent conferences provided information that their children were performing well and progressing. Karmen, an SP, said:

> There was communication about the habits of mind of the student [Sumaiah] who joined in March, and it was difficult for teachers to assess her academic growth since she joined in March, but it was impressive to see the quality of work she was producing.

When Zahra heard that the students were performing well, she assumed that her younger daughter, Sumaiah, was achieving well in class. Zahra stated: "teachers usually responded that the children were doing well"; however, the teacher did not present a score at the fall and spring conferences since she lacked a reference point to discuss improvement or lack thereof. Due to the lack of a score, both of the discussed level-related issues presented to the family with the absence of a score.

Karmen continued:

> Typically, we present a score, like I will present a score at conferences, at both the fall and spring conferences. And that did not come up. We did not present the score. I didn't have a baseline to talk about growth or non-growth because there wasn't one. As a teacher, [I express] appreciation, most likely as a result of the student's rapid advancement despite a short time at the school. But that doesn't mean the students is the same level with her peers…And I think that we met—I think we were communicating a lot of habits of mind, right? So, based on the fact

> that she just came here in March... Sometimes I'll check in with Mr. Matt (an EL teacher), like when she just came here in March, and I'm like, Okay. But then it's confusing a little bit as a teacher because she works so hard. This March would've been her first full year here, which is astounding when you look at some of what she's producing.

Even after receiving a score, the family was unable to identify whether their child performed well or poorly in school because they did not understand the meaning of the score. This lack of information made it difficult for the family to assure their children's academic achievement or to understand what they could do to support their children. As a result, the family made a concerted effort to maintain frequent communication with the school and to remain involved in their children's education. However, the grading system used in the school system differed greatly from the grading system used in Iraq, making a grade interpretation particularly difficult for the family. In addition, the family had limited access to educational resources that explain grade standards, making it difficult for them to comprehend what a specific grade implies for their child's academic achievement.

Zahra explained:

> I went to the high school once; I missed the middle school. With the high school, I asked [where to go] there was a big conference room or lobby, and then there was a table with a teacher and a computer. So, the teacher opened the computer and told me about the grades through the computer.

Karmen, SP, describing a grade in a class in which Zahra believed her daughter was doing well, explained that she had received a "BR" for "below grade level" in a reading assessment. However, she did not talk to the mother about this even though it was flagged by the assessment system. When a PI asked specifically about the mark of BR and how Karmen or others handled conveying this information to the student or her family, Karmen stated:

> I have to look. BR is below grade level, but even Lexile scores that are below grade level will still pop up if they are registered and I can't speak to the algorithms of the program—but I can say that if a scholar has, say, a 600 for their Lexile, where we know that 850 is the Lexile that we expect for grade level, the 600 will show up.

Karmen described the difficulty with conveying results such as these to the family due to the format of the parent-teacher conference. The student-led conference is often misleading for the family. Without the necessary reference points and understanding of the American educational system, grades and scores from the student-led conference were difficult for the family to interpret and gave them a false sense of academic achievement because they sought to be positive and motivating for students. They also did not understand their role at these conferences. Karmen added:

> The format in which we hold our conferences...I'm like, she's awesome! I'll bring up some of her work. Student-led conferences are the format in which we hold our conferences.

Emails and newsletters were the primary means of communication between the school and the family, but Zahra did not access them. Instead, she relied on communication from her children about what happened at school and what she needed to know. Sarah expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which the SP interacted with her mother, as most of the time she did not receive information directly from the school and communication did not include what the school may have expected from them:

> When my brother used to get into a little bit of trouble, or get a bad grade, or need to send any kind of paper, they used to skip my mom and go straight to me to tell my mom what was going on, if it was a good or bad thing.

Zahra was astonished when she learned from the research team that she can volunteer in the school as a parent. She said: "No one asked me to volunteer; I had no idea I could volunteer in the school; this is the first time I've heard of it."

In summary, the family discussed at parent-teacher conferences that their children were performing well, but they did not recognize that the children were taking classes below their skill level and also performing below grade level in certain skills. The lack of a score at the conferences made it difficult for the teachers to assess the academic growth of the student, and they were instead focusing on the student's strengths in habits of mind. The family was communicated with through unfamiliar tools and insufficient information was received about school activities. The school relying on the child as interpreter also impacted communication.

Using Children as Interpreters

Zahra said that if older siblings were at the school, they could help translate the advocacy to the SP as they know more about the school system and had advocated for themselves. Zahra shared that her daughter usually helped her to connect with the school and understand the need for her children and their rights, and Sarah can translate with linguistic features and pragmatics that utilized the educational culture in the U.S. as Zahra might not be able to translate herself. Zahra said: "If one of the older children knows English, they can help parents and SP understand the issue."

However, Sarah warned about the risks associated with using children as translators in a school setting, and she believed schools should develop effective strategies to support and advocate for her family. Partnership with the family and providing opportunities for dialogue could help to foster a sense of trust between the school and family, as well as ensure that her mom had access to the resources and support she needed to ensure her children received a quality education. Sarah said:

> For my whole four years of high school, my mom was never involved in anything. She did not know what I was doing, but the good thing is that I was doing well. or whatever my mom would like a teacher to translate for her, so when I was done, my little selves started high school... They knew that my mom doesn't speak the language, so I don't mind translating for her, but at some point, this is not the right way to do that because what my brother does in school has nothing to do with me… [And] How do you know if I am telling her the truth? This kept going on for a while, and I was like, you don't need to send this to me; you have to send it

to my mom. You have to find someone to help her. There were not a lot of translators at school, but you have to find someone who speaks Arabic to speak to her directly without you coming to me.

Sarah believed there was a lack of support for non-English-speaking parents, such as her mother, to actively participate in their children's education. This resulted in a rift between the school and the family. This situation also raised concerns about the accuracy of the information conveyed, as placing the student in charge of relaying vital information to their parents was neither appropriate nor fair.

Zahra sought an interpreter if one was available. She mentioned: "They are of great assistance because they are also school employees who are familiar with the laws, the school's requirements, and the language used by the school." As Zahra explained, an Arabic interpreter who was also working at the school had thorough knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to employ unique linguistic elements for cultural translation. Zahra said “Actually, it is through the interpreter. The interpreter was taking the information and [asking questions]. Most of the questions were from the interpreter.”

Zahara added: “if there is a translator the translator needs to be trustworthy.” It was essential for the translator to comprehend the cultural and linguistic aspects of both Arabic and English. The translator had to understand the cultural and historical backdrop of the refugee family and their background in order to successfully express the full meaning of the dialogues in both directions to the family and the SP. The interpreter also had to be discreet and respect the privacy of the family's sensitive information.

Advocacy That Supported Partnerships

Advocacy played a key role in supporting partnerships between the family and the SPs. Advocacy was understood through the lens of family-school professional partnerships, with the family being offered support for their children's education and positive changes being seen after they advocated for themselves. Additionally, the findings suggested that language level played a role in advocacy, as there were differences in aspects of pragmatics between Arabic and English.

Advocacy Needs to be Understood through Family-School Professional Partnership

To guarantee effective advocacy between the family-SP partnership, it was necessary to establish a relationship based on trust and teamwork. Through this partnership, SPs could provide the family with essential resources and support for success. Marisa stressed the role of the teacher in understanding the advocacy of families from Iraqi refugee backgrounds and, if possible, having the SP meet with the family to understand their needs and learn more about their culture, style of advocacy, and educational levels. “As a contemporary educator, and in an increasingly diverse community in [New England] , it's the educator's responsibility to learn [about] and reach out to the family."

The family also appreciated when their SP reached out to them. One teacher came to their house to meet with them after they advocated for themselves during the bullying incident, and the family felt supported by this action. Amira said: “Mrs. Matti came to the house. we told her what happened and showed her the text messages.” By doing so, the school encouraged advocacy to be proactive in its engagement of family by organizing

meetings and providing the necessary role by demonstrating to the family that they were heard and respected.

It was essential that teachers comprehended the various cultures and backgrounds of their students to understand and attune to how they might advocate for themselves. As Zahra explained, she expected the SP to know about the student's culture. "The teacher should know about the different cultures of the students in the class. It is not a requirement, but it is recommended, so they can teach them better by knowing their background." That same idea was suggested by Marisa:

> I think if someone becomes a teacher, they take on a responsibility to maintain continuous learning for themselves, and if they have never run into an Iraqi family before, it is their responsibility to learn more about the family.

This information could assist teachers in better comprehending the needs and viewpoints of their students and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Iraqi Family's Continuous Support for their Children's Education

Zahra expressed that advocating for her children did not start in the US, As Zahra added, "In Arabic culture, we advocate for children for a long time, but in the United States, parents leave their children to advocate for themselves when they reach the age of 16."Zahra was comparing the ways in which children were advocated for in Arabic culture and American culture. It was common in Arabic culture for parents to continue advocating for their children even after they reached the age of 16. However, it was more common in the United States for parents to allow their children to advocate for themselves after a certain age. She further demonstrated her value of education by

establishing a learning circle with her family in Turkey. Zahra described how "we make a kind of educational group within the family, so the older children teach the younger ones. We started with Arabic, math, and English." This situation affirmed her commitment to her children's educational success. What the family experienced in Turkey was a passion for education, but education was not a choice for refugees there. Sarah explained, describing her experience in Turkey:

> In Turkey…you don't have the right to work or attend school, and the only way to get schooling is in my home and get schooling like homeschooling basically from English to Arabic and writing and reading.

Marisa expressed her observation for Iraqi parents who are participating on an English program to learn English: "I am very hesitant to generalize but by and large the adults [Iraqis] I've encountered are extremely passionate about their children's education, very eager to seize opportunities for themselves and for their children." Those commitments and advocacy efforts usually led to positive outcomes for their children with SPs.

Positive Experience with Advocacy Efforts

By taking a stand and speaking up for her children in both Turkey and the US, Zahra was able to make a positive difference in her children's life and in the school environment. She also provided a valuable lesson to her children about the importance of advocating for oneself. By demonstrating the impact of effective advocacy, Zahra was able to empower her children to become their own advocates. Zahra stated: "After my advocacy, the school's approach to my other children changed, and there were some

positive outcomes." Even in a different country, Zahra was describing her advocacy for her children in Turkey when one of her children get bullied at the school Zahra explained:

> In Turkey, there was an incident with my youngest girl, another girl hit her. I went to the school and explained to the teacher what happened, and that I'm not angry at the girl because they are just children. I noticed the bullying stopped at school after my advocacy.

Those incidents demonstrate the power of family advocacy. Zahra's presence, coupled with her understanding and non-confrontational yet firm approach, sent a clear message to the school that she was serious about the well-being of her child. The result was a change in the school's approach to children and the positive results that followed. This speaks to the importance of her being involved and active in advocating for her children's rights and safety in school.

Zahra said, " I think that when children know that their family is standing behind them, they feel safe. We also advocate from a distance because I also want my children to advocate for themselves and not depend on me all the time." Zahra shared that, even if the advocacy is not completely successful, "they (SP) listen and there was slightly positive change". This implies that the Zahra appreciated the development of independence and autonomy in her children, but she also realized the need for the family's support. It was evident that her advocacy had improved the lives of her children.

Sarah also stressed that if she did not advocate for herself she might not have a chance to go to college because the classes suggested to her were not preparing her to college:

> I knew that was going to happen, so it was almost devastating, but knowing that he doesn't want me to go to college or thinks I'm not smart enough for early college classes at college classes, I went to another advisor who found it for me, I went to early college, I finished, and I am almost done with college, and that is always a time that I do remember me navigating and advocating for myself because without my advocacy, I would have looked in there and found I know they are going to agree with me and what I want. I was able to finish two years of college and I was able to graduate high school at the same time.

Sarah exemplified the importance of advocacy, not only for families but also for Sarah and her siblings advocating for themselves. Positive results can be obtained by assertive advocacy, as illustrated by Sarah's experience. It also highlights how self-advocacy can open avenues for individuals to accomplish their goals. The narratives of Marisa, Amira, Zahra, and Sarah illustrated the significance of family-school-professional partnerships in promoting the advocacy that supported educational success for the family.

Pragmatics Affected Advocacy for the Family

The family and Marisa expressed that Arabic language pragmatics and advocacy are distinct from English. When advocating for their children in school contexts, the family faced distinctive barriers.

The Impact of Pragmatics on Family Advocacy

Marisa mentioned that "American parents have a really complicated, almost twisted way of expressing themselves: they can be unbelievably polite but very angry." This way of expressing yourself stems from the nature of knowing the culture and language pragmatically, so they are direct and know the rules: they may be angry, but the language they use is mostly professional.

On the other hand, Zahra said that she did not know fully the differences in pragmatics between the two languages, because her Arabic was better than her English. She said that while advocating for your child in English, you use shorter words; however, in Arabic, it is more courteous and direct in order to avoid any initial disagreement with the SP. She emphasized that she is driven by the common good, not only for her own child but for other children as well. Zahra said:" In Arabic it's more direct, but in English…we need to shorten the conversation, but in Arabic we use more cues and direct speech."

Sarah explained her experience in advocacy behaviors using different language norms and pragmatics

> When I advocate in Arabic, I know the culture, I know what I am expecting. We share the same culture, and language. Someone here in the United States or someone who speaks English. I could say what I want to, but I don't know if they are going to take my message with same way I wanted it to be delivered. They don't know what I'm trying to say because they have never been in my shoes and they don't know what struggle I have been through and I want to be able to go to

> school because I have not been able to go school for a long time in Turkey. And why I want to advocate for myself to have that schools or investing in what I want to be and wanting to be in the same level as someone who is here in the US. You can advocate as best as you can but the thing is you never assume that people look at your points right away or fully because not a lot of people have been in your shoes or went in the same struggle as you. They might not know your point of view as much as you do not know their point of view.

The language and pragmatic differences between the student and the SP created a barrier to communication and understanding, hindering the student's ability to convey their message, which resulted in the student feeling isolated or marginalized.

I noticed that the family often used lexical features that were totally acceptable in Arabic but not when translated literally to English, such as assertive language, to support their point of view, through the use of words such as "will," "must," and "should," they created an authoritative tone that registered with their audience as demanding. In addition, they often incorporated emotional terms to express their feelings, such as “sad,” “angry,” and “disappointed.” That language, if translated literally, might affect the message for the English-speaking receiver.

Language Proficiency and Advocacy

Learning a language is important, but understanding the cultural nuances is also key. For the family, understanding the indirect communication styles and pragmatics used in the new culture can be just as important as learning the language itself. Marisa agreed that Iraqi refugee families are not learning the language that helps them advocate

for their children at school. She said, "But also, when you learn basic communication in English, I don't think you learn as much about indirect versus direct styles of communication. “At the time of the first interview, both Zahra and Huda were still going to English classes, but Zahra indicated that she was going to a more advanced class. They both, recognized that being able to effectively communicate in English is important. However, they also acknowledged the challenges that come with learning a new language, especially for adults. [Sarah, Huda, and Zahra] said, describing their English classes in Iraq, that "there is a very small opportunity to speak English. A maximum of 5 minutes in 1 hour and 45 minutes. It was more directed from the teacher to the students."

As Zahra shared, in Iraq they do not have adequate opportunities to practice their English skills, which could lead to a lack of confidence in their language skills. Learning English can be difficult for the adult in the family who did not grow up in the U.S. While they may be able to comprehend some of the language, they may not be able to fully understand and use it in order to advocate for their children.

Conclusion

The factors and behaviors that facilitated and impeded the formation of a partnership between a focal Iraqi refugee family and SPs were examined in this chapter. According to the research findings, expressions of anger and frustration, discrimination, a lack of information about the school and the expectations of families, and the risks and challenges of using children as translators in advocacy among Iraqi parents in U.S. schools were significant barriers to forming a successful partnership. However, support from school professionals and effective advocacy behaviors were critical in overcoming

these obstacles and establishing a successful partnership. In addition, the findings revealed that understanding language pragmatics could play an important role in fostering trust and effective communication between the family and school professionals.

Chapter Five: Implications and Recommendations

In this chapter, I discussed the implications of the findings presented in the previous chapter. Advocacy plays a crucial role in the formation of partnerships between families and SPs. There are two distinct types of advocacy: those that hinder partnerships and those that facilitate them. Furthermore, I will discuss the effect of pragmatics on the advocacy between the families and SPs.

Advocacy that Impeded Partnerships

Several factors, according to the findings, stymied the advocacy that fosters strong partnerships between Iraqi families and school professionals. Those factors are expression of anger, discrimination, a lack of understanding of the school system and family expectations, and a lack of appropriate family engagement.

Expression of Anger and Frustration

The implications of this study's findings extend to both school professionals and families from refugee backgrounds. There is a need for a deeper understanding of family-school professional partnerships and an awareness of the importance of advocating for children's academic success (Miller, 2019). In addition, SPs must recognize that language proficiency, life experience, and prior education are unrelated and ensure that families are respected. The family may have a high level of education, but they may not be able to communicate their message and advocacy efforts in English in a way that is deemed to be culturally acceptable. Assumptions about language proficiency and education level should not be made as they can result in devaluation and limited opportunities for families. Furthermore, the difficulty in understanding the family's advocacy style based

on their language proficiency and the expectation that family members assert themselves similarly to American parents can create a communication barrier and lead to a misinterpretation of the family's position (Berry, 2003; Haines et al., 2021; Miller, 2019; Roy & Roxas, 2011). Instead of emphasizing their limited English proficiency, which can lead to less contact with families, SPs should recognize the experiences and strengths of families (Berry, 2003). Moreover, in the United States, family partnerships, as systemized activities implied by institutional norms, can be challenging for refugee families lacking the insider knowledge assumed in local contexts (Christenson et al., 2010; Haines et al., 2017; Haines et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2021). This can result in the exclusion of refugee families from the visible "core" parental group in schools (Antony-Newman, 2019; Doucet, 2011).

It is easier for an English-speaking family to advocate for their child in the school system (Eisenbruch, 1988), but Families from refugee background (FFRB) do not have the same opportunities as their American counterparts (Doucet, 2011). Many FFRP come from cultures where the education system is quite different than that of the United States. Therefore, a family's experiences in the country can be overwhelming, especially when navigating the educational system (Doucet, 2011). It can be also difficult for SPs who are unfamiliar with the family's language proficiency and advocacy norms to work effectively with FFRB; they must understand the diversity of FFRB educational systems and the significance of family partnerships.

SPs must create a space for FFRBs to advocate for their children at school. If the SP fails to comprehend the family's advocacy behaviors, they may be unable to correctly

interpret the family's underlying message and intentions. This could result in miscommunication and misunderstandings, which can further complicate the situation and make it more difficult to reach a satisfactory resolution.

When their concerns about their child's education are ignored, families may experience frustration and anger with their advocacy efforts. The family in the study was accustomed to schools in which teachers are highly respected and students are not permitted to speak to them in a loud voice or call them by their first name, so it was extraordinarily difficult for the family to express anger and frustration in a confrontational manner and voice their displeasure with the SP. The family became involved because they believed that SP should have done more to intervene and protect their child from mistreatment. Therefore, the family expressed their advocacy through anger and frustration, when they believed there was an issue affecting learning and the SP was not acting in their child's best interest (which breached their trust), necessitating their participation, because Iraqi families place a high value on education (Kolif, 2018). Moreover, a lack of support from school professionals for the children was a major source of frustration, particularly if the school was unwilling to provide the necessary compassion or justice treatment for the child (Haines et al., 2021).

The family's experience demonstrates the significance of cultural sensitivity and understanding in advocacy and communication within the educational system. In order to effectively communicate and partner with families from diverse backgrounds, SPs must be aware of and respectful of the source of family frustration (Kolif, 2018). In addition, the family's experience emphasizes the significance of effective communication and

attentive listening when addressing concerns and issues within the educational system. The SP's dismissal of the refugee family's concerns about bullying and different treatment for selecting advanced classes may have been due to a lack of comprehension or empathy for the situation (Haines et al., 2021). It is essential for SPs to actively listen to and comprehend the concerns of families and to take appropriate action to address and resolve any issues that may be affecting the students' education and well-being. As soon as possible, the school should notify the family of a bullying situation and explain what it plans to do to address the problem and what resources are available to the family. The family's experience in this circumstance highlights the significance of cultural sensitivity and effective communication in the educational system. In order to effectively address and resolve any issues that may be affecting the education and well-being of their students, SPs must be aware of and respectful of cultural differences, as well as actively listen to and comprehend the concerns of families (Kolif, 2018; Haines et al., 2021). Empathizing with the family allows for internalizing experiences and bridging differences. It can change attitudes, dissolve alienation, and provide emotional understanding across differences (Comerford, 2005).

Discrimination

Refugees may experience a variety of forms of discrimination. They experienced discrimination when they were denied access to advanced classes, and they lacked community support (Kolif, 2018; Martin, 2016). This hidden type of discrimination makes it more difficult for refugees to enter higher education and gives them the

impression that their previous education in their home countries or other countries is not valued in the American school system.

It is essential that schools address discrimination and the unfair treatment of families. when a refugee family is denied access to advanced classes without considering the students' prior experience in their home countries with similar courses and without explaining the procedure to the family. When students are required to enroll in English Language (EL) courses that do not help them adapt to the main curriculum, they are prevented from enrolling in classes that adequately prepare them for higher education.

Furthermore, when incidents of bullying were not communicated effectively (Roy & Roxas, 2011), it may greatly affect students' academic progress. It is imperative that school personnel are aware of these issues and work to create a more inclusive and equitable school environment in which all families feel supported and valued (Doucet, 2011; Reyes et al., 2021). Additionally, discrimination can hinder family-professional partnerships. FFRB may be subject to discrimination based on their language skills. This discrimination can hinder communication and leave families feeling disrespected or neglected. Additionally, it can cause a loss of trust between families and SPs and have a negative effect on the partnership (Haines et al., 2018).

SP must provide equal access to educational opportunities and actively engage families and community members in discussions and activities regarding bullying and discrimination in order to combat discrimination against refugees in educational settings. In addition, schools should provide counseling and other resources to ensure that refugees receive the necessary assistance and have their voices heard (Haines et al., 2021). This

ensures that all students have equal access to education and feel safe and respected in the classroom. It is also critical that the family find allies outside of the school who can provide them with accurate information and advocate on their behalf if they believe their concerns are not being attended to. Finally, it will be helpful to educate SPs about the various educational systems from which students come and the courses they have previously completed (Kolif, 2018).

Lack of Information about the School and Expectations of Families

The absence of information regarding school and family expectations can have a number of consequences. Communication must be bidirectional, and it is not enough for the SP to provide the family with the information the SP believes the family needs (Ishimaru, 2019; Park & Holloway, 2017), To successfully convey the full meaning of the dialogues in both directions to the family and the SP, schools must use professional interpreters who comprehend the cultural and historical context of the refugee family and their background. The interpreter must also be discreet and protect the confidentiality of sensitive family information.

Misconceptions about the student's academic performance result from a lack of information and an inappropriate partnership between FFRBs and SPs. The family believed their children were performing well in school but later discovered that they were enrolled in classes below their skill level. This can result in confusion and uncertainty for both the family and the student. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers frequently report that the children were performing well, but parents later discovered that their child was not performing as expected. Moreover, teachers may find it challenging to evaluate a

student's academic growth if they lack a benchmark against which to discuss improvement or a lack thereof. These factors may have a negative impact on or delay the educational objectives of children.

The lack of information can make it difficult for the family to guarantee the academic success of their children. In this case, the family made a concerted effort to maintain frequent communication with the school and to remain involved in their children's education; however, the grading system used in the school system is vastly different from the grading system used in Iraq, making it difficult for them to understand what a particular grade means for their child's academic achievement.

It can also cause a lack of family's partnership in their child's education. If the family does not comprehend their child's academic performance, they may not know how to support their child's education and, as a result, may not partner as they could be with SP in their child's education. These previous factors hinder the family's ability to specifically advocate for their children's academic needs.

Family and school professional partnership (FSPP) must also prioritize effective communication. This includes clear and timely communication between families and SPs, as well as making information about their child's education accessible and understandable to families (Kolif, 2018). This can be accomplished via a variety of communication channels, including the telephone, in-person meetings, and inviting the family to participate in school activities that the family designs with SPs. Families should also be given the chance to provide feedback and voice concerns regarding the communication methods.

Using children as translators to advocate for Iraqi parents in U.S. schools presents a number of risks and difficulties. Studies such as Rizkallah's (2020) have demonstrated that Iraqi students view their families as crucial to their school affiliation and advocacy. Using children as translators places a significant burden on the student, which may have a negative effect on their academic performance and well-being. Children may not fully comprehend the situation's context or gravity, which can place them in a difficult position and cause emotional strain. To address these risks and difficulties, schools should develop strategies to improve their support and communication with families from diverse backgrounds. As suggested by Koyama and Bakuza (2017) and Abdul-Razaq (2017), this can be accomplished by partnering with families in the school redesign process, providing experienced and educated interpreters, and addressing the challenges refugee families face with the school system.

Advocacy that Supports Partnerships

This study showed that advocacy plays a crucial role in promoting partnerships between Iraqi families and SPs which is also confirmed by Rizkallah (2020). Advocacy must be viewed through the lens of family-school professional partnerships. As the findings revealed, the student who received support through advocacy resulted in positive changes in their academic achievement. Furthermore, the findings indicated that language proficiency played a primary role in advocacy (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

To ensure that the family-school-professional partnership's advocacy is effective, a trusting and collaborative relationship must be established (Haines et al., 2021). This would allow school officials to partner with the family to better understand the needs of

Iraqi refugee parents and develop a plan that is beneficial to all parties (Abdul-Razaq, 2017). To foster a positive and healthy family-school-professional dynamic, it is also important to consider the various cultures of the students in the class (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

The majority of families with functional English proficiency can advocate for their children. However, the absence of bilingual support personnel makes it challenging for other families to advocate for their children (Rizkallah, 2020). Families must be proactive in advocating for the educational rights and opportunities of their children to ensure that they are heard, respected, and valued. This proactive strategy not only improves the lives of students but also enables families to advocate for themselves and their children (Abdul-Razaq, 2017).

It is essential to note that the overall objective is for FFRB to partner with SPs to ensure an educational system that supports the academic success and well-being of their children. FFRB acknowledge that education is a means to upward mobility and a better standard of living, as well as a means for children to positively contribute to society (Abdul-Razaq, 2017).

The Impact of Pragmatics on Family Advocacy

Pragmatic competence is important in the context of advocacy among FFRB in U.S. schools. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. One difference between Arabic and English is the way in which language is used for advocacy. Arabic rhetoric is characterized by its use of passionate and emotional language, whereas English advocacy language is characterized by its

reliance on reasonable arguments and evidence-based reasoning. Additionally, Arabic rhetoric uses poetic language and imagery, but English argumentation does not. When advocating for their children in school contexts, the family faces distinctive barriers. American parents tend to be more comfortable with shorter comments and specific queries, whereas Arab parents may prefer longer phrases and general questions. This difference in pragmatics can create a barrier for FFRB when trying to advocate for their children in American schools (Kerkam, 2015). One of the main challenges faced by many FFRB is the lack of explicit instruction in pragmatics, which can lead to difficulties in understanding and using idiomatic expressions and speech acts. This is a problem that is not unique to Iraqi parents but is shared by a broad spectrum of refugees and EFL learners around the world (Soler, 2006; Cohen, 2008). To address this issue, it is essential for teachers to provide explicit instruction in pragmatics, as it has been shown to be effective in improving communication (Soler, 2006). Another challenge faced by Iraqi families is the difficulty in finding the appropriate pragmatics for different contexts and situations, particularly in formal settings such as schools (Umar, 2004). This can be further complicated by a lack of communication in the target language, which can make it difficult for Iraqi parents to find the appropriate pragmatics for the conversation when they advocate with SPs. To address this issue, refugee resettlement programs and schools should provide instruction for FFRB to understand and navigate the school system in the United States. Additionally, FFRB may also face difficulties in using the different pragmatics to express the cooperative principle in their interactions with school officials (Grice, 1975; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Hurley, 1992; Nelson et al., 1996). This can

be due to the transfer of the native language pragmatics to English, which can lead to communication barriers and misunderstandings. It can also be complicated by the use of different cultural norms, such as the use of direct language, poetic language, or a general approach that might not funnel what the parents want to convey to SP. According to the data, American parents tend to come to the school and focus on the issue they need to discuss, which stems from the nature of pragmatics in English communications and knowing the culture, so they are direct and know the rules. However, American parents have a complicated way of expressing themselves, which can be polite and indirect, but also angry; in Arabic, it is more courteous to be direct in order to avoid any initial disagreement with the SPs. The pragmatics used in advocacy in Arabic is driven by the common good, not only for the child but for other children as well. This generation of advocacy is different from the individualistic advocacy of American families (Gawi,1993; Kerkam, 2015).

The researcher noticed that the family often used lexical features that were totally acceptable in Arabic but not when translated literally to English, such as assertive language, to support their point of view. Through the use of words such as "will," "must," and "should," they create an authoritative tone. In addition, they often incorporate emotional terms to express their feelings, such as "sad," "angry," and "disappointed" (Ghawi,1993).

In the case of an Iraqi family, they may struggle to understand the pragmatic conventions of American schools and how to communicate effectively with SPs. This can lead to misunderstandings and difficulties in advocating for their children. The

differences between pragmatic norms of advocacy in Arabic and English can also create barriers for Iraqi parents when trying to advocate for their children. The impact of directness appears to be accomplished similarly in Arabic and English in similar situations, but in different ways due to the different ideologies and social norms of each pragmatic (Kerkam, 2015). When translating the advocacy from Arabic to English and vice versa, the translated language of the advocacy is not completely adhered to English pragmatics.

Using idioms or colloquialisms in Arabic, like "school is the second home for the students" or "the teacher is like a parent," may confuse the receiver of the advocacy, whereas in Arabic those idioms are utilized to soften the impact of directness (Kerkam, 2015). It does not have the same meaning as in English, and it may confuse the translation if it is translated literally. This implication of the pragmatic nature of the differences between Arabic and English might interfere with the advocacy language. It is difficult to find cultural equivalents, as some colloquialisms lack a direct translation in English. In addition, there are problems with translating religious terms, as they may have different connotations and meanings in various cultures (Bani-Younes, 2015). One example that I have noticed when interpreting for the family is the way a word like "Inshalah" is used in Arabic by different speakers. Although the original meaning is "if God wills," many Arabic speakers use it to indicate future tenses, but translating the word in its religious meaning might confuse SPs if they do not know the culture.

Conclusion

There are a number of advocacy aspects that impede the formation of effective partnerships between Iraqi families and school professionals, including anger, discrimination, a lack of knowledge about the school system and family expectations, and the absence of an appropriate partnership with the family. However, the study also revealed that advocacy plays an essential role in fostering partnerships and that language proficiency and cultural differences must be considered. Families must be proactive and establish a relationship of trust and partnership with SPs in order to effectively advocate for their children, and SPs should invite this relationship. The overall goal is to establish an educational system in which families from refugee backgrounds can partner with school professionals to ensure that their children have access to an education system that promotes their academic success and well-being. The study also highlights the significance of pragmatic competence in advocacy by Iraqi parents in U.S. schools. Pragmatic competence can be enhanced through explicit instruction in the adult English classes and at schools.

Chapter Six: Uncovering the Researcher's Identity: Navigating Translation within the Community

In this chapter, I discuss my observations and the implications of my interpreter and participant roles in the research. One of my primary observations was the complexity of English-Arabic translation and interpretation. Translation was not merely a one-way transfer of meaning, but rather a complex process involving the transfer of pragmatic patterns and cultural nuances, as I have learned. This highlighted the significance of cultural sensitivity and rapport-building when conducting research with refugees, as well as the necessity of adapting questions that are clear and do not trigger any past experience trauma. While conducting this research with Iraqis from refugee backgrounds, I observed the difficulties inherent in adhering to literal interpretation. After I re-listened to the interviews in both Arabic and English, I found that the translations were accurate, but the communication strategies employed in Arabic and English were profoundly different. This emphasized the significance of considering the participants' context and culture when interpreting and translating their words. My role as an interpreter and insider in the research had significant implications. As an interpreter, my ability to comprehend and convey the cultural and pragmatics features of the two languages was essential for conducting accurate and meaningful research. As an insider, my understanding of the participants' culture and background enabled me to establish rapport and trust with them, thereby facilitating more in-depth and meaningful conversations. These observations also led me to suggest that researchers consider their background and identity when conducting research. On the other hand, I suggested that the development of EL programs

in schools be approached from a social justice perspective, as well as that pragmatics be taught in ESL classes for adults.

The literature has suggested that learners may transfer their native language's pragmatics to the target language, which can lead to communication barriers or misunderstandings. Arab learners of English may use more words than native English speakers in an attempt to sound sincere, which can be perceived as a lack of appropriateness (Hurley, 1992; Nelson et al., 1996; Soler, 2008). Additionally, Arab learners may struggle to find the appropriate register for different contexts due to a lack of communication in the target language (Ghawi, 1993; Kerkam, 2015).

In terms of directness and indirectness, the studies revealed that Arab learners may be more direct in their requests than native English speakers, which may be due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary or a lack of an appropriate pragmatic medium of request (Umar, 2004;). Collocation patterns can lead to confusion and errors in translation, as the Arab learner may translate the phrase literally instead of choosing the most appropriate collocation in English (Bani-Younes, 2015). Interpreters may explain cultural and linguistic elements to researchers or participants that are unclear to either researchers or participants, in addition to interpreting the words exchanged during an interview or other event (Reyes et al., 2021). Interpreters need to be aware of the trauma that the families have experienced and be prepared to provide emotional support and referrals to resources when necessary, as families who were interviewed spoke about the difficulties they faced during their journey of forced migration. These challenges included issues related to mental and emotional well-being, prolonged waiting periods for work, complicated

procedures for obtaining health insurance and social security, navigating medical appointments, and dealing with the complex Green Card application process, all of which contributed to their feelings of insecurity about the future (Mzayek, 2019). Additionally, being forced to leave their homes and communities for unfamiliar surroundings often resulted in a loss of their social standing, including careers, education, professional connections, and community networks (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014),

Unlocking Communication: My Role in Translating Interview Questions from English to Arabic

I assisted with the interpretation of questions and interviews with Arabic-speaking refugees. My interpretation experience extended beyond literal translation, establishing me as a leader and, on occasion, a person consulted regarding various aspects of life and immigration status in the United States. My new role of interviewing was initially perplexing. I was sufficiently familiar with the family I worked with from my previous career. However, I no longer had a job-related relationship with them because they had completed the program and my connection with them had ended. Nevertheless, I endeavored to convey to them that their involvement in the research would be to their advantage and future refugees' advantage. Furthermore, I would be available to respond to any inquiries. To help participants understand the complexities of my work, I introduced myself as a researcher primarily at the start of each interview, typically explaining to participants that this was a confidential interview. Given the experience of many refugees with interviews in camps and their country of asylum, they may have shared numerous details about their private lives with strangers, such as immigration

officers. When we asked about their experience coming to the U.S., this might have triggered a memory for the participants in the refugee or asylum interviews; when they had to highlight their suffering to be accepted as refugees in those interviews. Those were the types of interviews our participants had to go through with immigration officers. Hence, it was my role to explain to them that our interviews were different, and information we were gathering was for research benefits for the family and future refugee families. I had to clarify also that they were also not required to answer questions if they did not feel comfortable with that. As a result, it was critical to distinguish my function as a liaison, interpreter, and researcher from an immigration officer they met in a camp or a foreign country and assure them that the information we were using was being retained only for research purposes

Decoding the Consequences of Linguistic Miscommunication: An Exploration of the Phenomenon of 'Lost in Translation'

In my previous literature review, I highlighted the fact that Arabic was originally an archaic language primarily used for poetic purposes. In general, the speaker takes a broad view approach and provides hints about the information to be covered. When conducting interviews in Arabic, I adopted a more direct questioning style but attempted to make the questions more polite in nature while retaining the core message. In English, the use of auxiliary verbs and a respectful tone was deemed appropriate, whereas in Arabic, direct and polite questioning was sometimes utilized. However, there were concerns that a direct translation of English questions into Arabic could result in misinterpretation by the participants and skew the results of the research. To address this,

I sometimes had to modify the questions to better reflect the intended inquiry in Arabic pragmatics. Indirect translation also proved helpful in understanding and eliciting more meaningful responses from the participants. My aim was to create a comfortable environment where participants could freely share their opinions without any pressure.

To maintain ethical standards, I disclosed my involvement in the research to my employer but did not reveal the names of the participants to protect their privacy. Our research team considered this necessary to ensure that families felt secure in their privacy and understood their rights.

Examining the Role of Translators as Community Members

There were times when I believe families require advocates within the school system, and they have specifically requested that we serve in this capacity. It was crucial to understand the distinction between advocacy and observation and the various ways in which we may connect with the school system. At one time, there was a severe conflict with a school, and we listened to a dire situation that required advocacy. However, it was difficult for us as researchers to do so without appearing to question the school's judgment in that circumstance. I was caught in the crossfire between two people. My first identity was as a social justice advocate for students. My second identity was as a researcher who witnessed but did not become involved in the school's issues until absolutely necessary. It was fascinating when I chose to attend school on behalf of the student and put on my first hat, that of an advocate. In order to protect the participants' privacy, I was unable to provide my additional identification as a researcher. Furthermore, the school has taken my professional affiliation seriously. I was unsure if

they would receive me differently if I announced myself as a member of the research team interviewing this family. Moreover, it is essential to note that those families maintain contact with me outside of my research.

Exploring the Paradox of the Translator as a Stranger Within a Community

When the opportunity to interview participants in a different state presented itself through the generous arrangement of one of the leading researchers, I had little or no familiarity with the new families. While the Middle East war raged, the population there was divided by allegiances to their religious and political beliefs. These divisions were significant enough that they influenced how they interacted with people from other regions. As a Syrian from a minority group, I was unsure how the families would react. Are they willing to sit down for an interview with me, or are they unsure? Was it receptive to the prospects of the position? I was concerned about this. As a result, I reasoned that the entire dynamic might be altered slightly. I thought that if a different person was not of the same nationality as the family, they might feel more comfortable sharing. However, in the end, I felt comfortable asking questions and receiving responses. Occasionally, I shared my own experience with families to demonstrate that I am an insider and I understand their concerns.

Refugee families typically hold Americans in high esteem and view them as the key decision makers. This is evidenced by instances where a participant referred to primary researcher as a "true American" when informing her son over the phone. While I, who served as a translator, may have been overlooked in this context, it is common for

refugees to believe that Americans possess significant influence and hold the power to determine their fate.

The Role of Translation in Mediating Relationality Check

As university-affiliated researchers, we received inquiries from multiple families about educational policy reform. It became evident that the participants lacked opportunities to interact with community representatives, causing them to hold erroneous beliefs about the research team's ability to modify policies, particularly EL educational policies and standards. To rectify this misunderstanding, I felt it necessary to educate the participants on the research process, the individuals involved in decision-making, and the typical decision-making process. Although we cannot directly alter the policy, we can present our findings to policymakers who can do so. On occasion, participants asked questions outside the scope of the study, and I politely redirected them and offered to follow up with them later. The interviewing process presented its own set of challenges, such as balancing unrelated questions and maintaining focus on the research objectives. Nonetheless, my cultural awareness enabled me to make culturally sensitive requests, such as adjusting the television volume. Being from the same culture as the participants made it easy for me to switch between advocate and researcher, ensuring that the conversation remained productive and polite. I was appreciative of the families' faith in me, which fostered an environment conducive to communication. This trust ultimately permitted a more meaningful and productive exchange of information.

My Personal Journey: Navigating the Challenges of Immigrant, Refugee, and Asylee Status

I conducted this research while juggling a full-time job, an ambiguous immigration status, and an uncertain future. As a result, I felt compassion for those families, and I can comprehend why they might feel anxious if a government document has not yet arrived or if they have received a message that they may not fully comprehend. I am extremely fortunate to have worked with these families and learned about their journeys to the United States. My personal experience with the program has been arduous. I hold two master's degrees in English language teaching and English for speakers of other languages, as stated previously. The methods for teaching English were crucial to my comprehension of the procedure. Moreover, I am an insider when it comes to EL programs, and I believe that these programs have significantly benefited both children and their teachers. Historically, ESL programs were considered a subset of special education. However, children who are multilingual and enrolled in academic programs have different requirements than those enrolled in special education programs.

My own experience with the EL program with my children as a father was quite baffling. When I filled out an application for my children's school and indicated that they speak Arabic at home, they were automatically classified as EL students. My son was consequently placed in a lower class. Nevertheless, he is a native English speaker who performed better in reading and writing than his grade level compared to his native English-speaking peers. However, that was not enough for him to leave the program. The system appeared to require students classified as "EL" to perform even better in English

than native English speakers. Thus, after a lengthy discussion with administration, I was able to remove my sons from the EL program. This useful program, which I believe has evolved into a means of restricting children's options rather than assisting them, surprised me. Consequently, the EL program itself will limit their options for college-preparatory programs, preventing them from enrolling in advanced classes alongside their peers and severely impeding their chances of pursuing higher education.

The EL program should be redesigned to provide refugee students with a variety of options that meet their needs at various developmental stages. This is a fantastic program that should be distributed equitably based on need, as opposed to as a catch-all phrase. Working in higher education from a social justice perspective, I discovered that due to EL program constraints, some EL children face greater academic challenges than their peers. This is another important topic. I hope that I will occasionally be able to contribute to the development or simply be in a position to inform educators about the numerous opportunities for growth, especially in New England, where the population is becoming more diverse and distinct than in the past.

The majority of interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, where we observed a cultural divide between parents and their young children. We met with parents, but the children did not feel the need to be present. Parents typically have had the authority to invite their children. However, I believe the children were more interested in activities typical of American youth, such as playing video games and using their cell phones. Therefore, I was grateful for the opportunity to speak with and question the children. Although they can communicate in Arabic, they typically initiated

conversations in English. I fully comprehend their need to define themselves through the group's language and their conviction that they could speak English. Although their Arabic may be more assertive, they wanted to demonstrate their ability to communicate in English and, if my assumption was correct, demonstrated their identity by demonstrating that they were capable and a part of the dominant culture.

Exploring the Concept of Identity Reformation

The majority of refugee and asylee parents typically lose their status in their home country. Certain highly educated participants are typically well respected in their home communities. Therefore, when they meet with Americans or educated Americans, they want to demonstrate their professional background, but their language skills cannot reflect their education. As a result, they frequently attempt to express how their lives were in their native countries. On the other hand, educated professionals in New England frequently use language in a humble rather than a boastful manner. They frequently use phrases such as "I believe" and "I think," demonstrating their humble opinion rather than stating the fact. However, some of the family members have not yet learned those phrases, and their statements might appear overly strong. One of the participants told me that when he arrived here with his family, he was greeted very nicely by professional family friends or those who were educated and had international experience. However, when he began working in a factory, he encountered an environment that was quite different from what they had encountered with the first family friends they met in New England. The participant also mentioned that he missed the cultural and social activities

that were part of his life back home. This sense of loss and disconnection added to his feelings of nostalgia for his previous life.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Understanding the complexities of pragmatics transfer in both English and Arabic and the challenges associated with research for the translator if they adhere to literal interpretation is crucial. The implications emphasize the uniqueness of conducting research with refugees who may have had negative experiences with interviews in camps and their country of asylum, as well as the necessity of explicitly differentiating the researcher's role from that of an immigration officer. Arabic questions are typically direct and polite, whereas English questions are typically indirect (Ghawi, 1993; Hurley, Kerkam, 2015; 1992; Nelson et al., 1996; Umar, 2004;). The interpreter is responsible for accurately translating questions and maintaining the original purpose of the study. In addition to accurate and cultural translation, rapport and trust must be established with the participants. It is essential to emphasize to participants that the interviews were confidential and that they were not required to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable. This helped to create a safe and comfortable environment for the participants and ensured that they engaged out of their own volition and not out of respect for the researcher from the community member alone (Reyes et al., 2021).

In addition, I emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity when conducting research with refugees. Many refugees may have endured traumatic experiences and may not feel comfortable discussing certain aspects of their lives with the researcher. Therefore, if possible, the researcher should avoid asking questions that may have

triggered traumatic memories or made participants feel uneasy (Mzayek, 2019). The implications emphasize the importance of establishing trust and rapport with participants, recognizing pragmatics differences, and adapting questions to reflect the participants experience (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Mzayek, 2019; Reyes et al., 2021).

The implications of the researcher's role as an advocate, as a community member, and as an interpreter can result in conflicts between those roles. The researcher's background and identity may influence how participants perceive and interact with them. The researcher may need to effectively communicate their role and limitations to participants.

I suggested continuing to develop the EL programs at schools from a social justice perspective and contributing to the development of the EL program in a way that benefits children and does not limit their educational options. The final recommendation is to explicitly or implicitly (Soler, 2008) teach pragmatics in ESL classes for adults.

Chapter Seven: Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine which linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors facilitate or impede the formation of a partnership between Iraqi refugee families and New England school professionals. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the research had several limitations. The study focused on a single family in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of their needs. Despite the fact that this provided insightful information, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other families. Furthermore, it is important to note that in states with a larger population of Iraqi and Arabic speakers, advocacy for their needs may vary. Therefore, additional research is required in other regions to generalize the results to the larger population. This is essential in order to comprehend the needs of Iraqi families throughout the country.

In addition, the study did not account for the religious and cultural differences amongst Iraqi families, which may have affected the findings. It is essential to recognize that the needs of each family may vary according to their religious and cultural background.

In conclusion, despite the fact that this study provided valuable insights into identifying the linguistic elements and advocacy actions that either support or hinder the creation of a partnerships between Iraqi refugee families and school professionals in New England, a number of limitations must be acknowledged. It is necessary to conduct additional research in other regions with larger sample sizes and a focus on specific

subgroups of Iraqi families and students in order to comprehend the national needs of this population.

Future Research Recommendations

The research conducted in this study has highlighted several areas in which further research is needed to support the partnership between Iraqi families and SP in New England. The following recommendations are provided to guide future research efforts in understanding how advocacy can strengthen the partnership between Iraqi families and SP.

- Training for SPs: Providing training for school professionals to comprehend the various advocacy styles and educational systems from which their students come is another important area for future research. This training can help educators better understand their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how to support their learning.
- The teaching of pragmatics to Iraqi families is a subject that requires additional research. By providing pragmatics instruction, adult ESL educators can aid Iraqi families in comprehending the cultural and social norms of the English language, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate effectively with SPs.
- Family engagement: A third area of future research is reaching out to families to learn about their needs and how to become advocates for their children. By partnering with families in the educational process, SPs can gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and provide more individualized support for their children.

- EL program revision: An additional area of future research is revising the EL program to support student choice and to create a program that can evaluate the knowledge of a subject in the students' native language and then create an EL plan to support them where they are instead of assuming that their English level matches their education.
- Investigation of discrimination patterns: an additional crucial area of future research is the investigation of discrimination patterns in schools against students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. While discrimination was a theme in this study, it covered examples that one family faced. It is necessary to investigate the pattern of discrimination in schools with a larger sample of students.
- Prevention of bullying: Developing a plan for reporting and addressing bullying among students from refugee backgrounds is an additional area for future research. This may take different forms for students from refugee backgrounds; therefore, it is essential to investigate their specific needs.
- Diversifying School Professionals: Lastly, policy makers should facilitate a road map for professionals from immigrant or refugee backgrounds to acknowledge their teaching experience and eventually to work as school professionals. This will help reflect the diversity in the schools, and those SPs can help bridge the gap in understanding of advocacy in different cultures, while those teachers can help guide the students to fulfill their academic and employment goals and communicate that to the families.

Future research in the field of education for Iraqi families and students in New England should concentrate on providing pragmatics instruction, training for school professionals, family engagement, revising the EL program, investigating patterns of discrimination, developing a plan to combat bullying, and facilitating a road map for professionals from immigrant or refugee backgrounds to become SP. SPs and policymakers in New England can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Iraqi families and students by implementing these recommendations.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This dissertation has provided new insights into the linguistic factors and advocacy behaviors that facilitate or inhibit the formation of partnerships between Iraqi refugee families and New England school professionals. Through an in-depth examination of the experiences and perspectives of both Iraqi families and school professionals, this research has uncovered a number of obstacles and challenges that can impede the formation of effective partnerships. These include expressions of anger, discrimination, a lack of knowledge about the school system and family expectations, and the absence of an appropriate partnership with the family.

This research also revealed the significance of advocacy in fostering partnerships, as well as the need to consider language proficiency and pragmatics differences. Implications include fostering proactive family engagement, providing more training and support for school personnel, and revising the EL program to better meet the needs of Iraqi students.

In addition, this study highlighted the importance of addressing discrimination, combating bullying, and providing a roadmap for professionals from immigrant or refugee backgrounds to become SP. These findings and recommendations have the potential to improve educational outcomes for Iraqi students and their families and contribute to the establishment of a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for students from refugee backgrounds.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Family Interview #1 Protocol

Purpose: To clarify information gained in the previous interview as well as to document perceptions about the research experience from participating families (e.g., recruitment procedures, research methodologies, reciprocal benefits, confidentiality)

Part I: Clarify Information

The research team has prepared a summary of your interview to present to you. I would like to read it to you and provide a copy to you. [Multicultural liaisons will translate if needed/wanted].

Did this summary convey the data you wished to share?

Are there any parts of this summary that are inaccurate? Where should we clarify the data?

Part II: Research Experience

In addition to checking the data with you, we wanted to ask you about your experience so far in this research project. Please provide honest feedback so we can learn from you about how to best conduct this sort of research.

[Gaining Access] How did you feel about how we contacted you to participate in this research?

[Interview] How did you feel about the interview itself? Did you enjoy any aspects of the interview? Did you not enjoy any aspects of the interview?

[Compensation for Time] Was the small amount of gift card compensation we gave you enough? Is there anything we could've done to compensate you better for your time?

[Time] Was the interview itself an acceptable length? Would you have liked for us to follow up with you regarding our summaries sooner?

Appendix B

Child Interview Protocol #1

1) Background:

a) Tell me about yourself, your background and your family.

b) Probe for:

i) Family's migration

ii) Family members and extended family (a) Brother or sisters?

iii) School (if applicable), job. I

v) Live at home? Why or why not?

2) Academic Identity

a) Did you go to school in _____ before coming to the US?

b) How do you like school?

c) What do you like best about school?

d) Do you do well in school?

e) When and how did you learn to read?

f) Do you like to read?

g) Do you like to write?

3) Who are your teachers? Which classes are your favorite? Which teachers stand out as ones you have a strong bond with?

IF LANGUAGE BROKERS:

4) Language Brokering

a) Tell me about your experiences interpreting and translating for your family and community members.

b) Probe for:

i) When did it begin?

ii) How often did you do it?

iii) Where did you broker?

iv) What did you broker? v) For whom did you broker?

vi) Are there any experiences that stand out when you think about brokering?

vii)Are there any recent experiences?

Change over time: LANGUAGE BROKERING AS A DYNAMIC PHENOMENON

5) Feelings:

i) In general, how do you feel about language brokering?

ii) Probe for:

(a) Change

(b) How did you feel or do you feel when you broker?

(c) How did you feel as a child and adolescent?

(d) How do you feel now?

6) Practice:

a) So, you brokered as a child, adolescent, and now as a young adult. How do you think your language brokering has changed as you've grown up?

b) Probe for:

i) When did you notice this change?

(a) In high school? College (if applicable)? After high school?

ii) Why do you think it has changed?

iii) Has what, where, and for whom you brokered changed?

iv) How have the expectations of you changed?

v) Has the way you approach the work or handled tasks changed?

7) Family Dynamics:

i) In general, who is the primary language broker in your family or is there only one?

ii) Have you ever brokered for your parents when discussing your education with your teacher? Describe what that looked like?

iii) Did your siblings ever help you when brokering as a child/adolescent?

iv) Has who in the family brokered changed? Why or Why not?

v) Have the things you broker for your parents changed?

8) How do families in your community, in general, communicate with the schools their children attend?

a) Do you notice any trends?

b) When do families generally rely on their children to help them communicate with the schools? Why?

9) What are the most successful ways you have noticed schools communicating with families?

10) Many of the ways schools communicate involve writing. How does your family access written communication from schools?

a) What are some examples of written communication your family can access well?

b) What are some examples of written communication that is less accessible for your family?

c) How does your family respond to written communication from schools? Fro example, if your teacher writes a note to your family, how does your family read that note and respond to it?

11) Wrap Up LANGUAGE BROKERING AS A DYNAMIC PHENOMENON

a) Let me look at my notes and see if I've covered all that I wanted to talk about today.

b) Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Protocol

A. Understanding the Teacher –

1. Basic information about the teacher:
    a. How many children (ages) do you have in your class?
    b. How long have you worked as a teacher? Where have you taught, and for how long?
    c. How did you get into this work?
    d. What preparation did you receive for working with ELL students?
    e. Do you live nearby?
    f. Do you have a lot of family and friends in this community?
    g. Describe your own educational experiences.
    h. Do you have any children? If so, please tell me about them (ages, gender, occupation, things they like, what are they like?)
2. Expectations for child's development
    a. Who do you hope your students become when they grow up?
    b. What is your dream student now?
    c. What are the main goals you have for your [this specific child] right now? *
    d. You've said that your goals for your child are ____. What skills does your child need to learn in order to achieve those goals? *
3. Teacher Role in Child Development

a. How do you see your role in helping your student(s) develop those skills? *

b. What are some specific things that you do to help your student(s) develop these important skills? *

4. Teacher's perception of Family Role in Child Development

a. How does your student's family help your student's development?

B. Understanding Current Home-School Relationship

1. Communication: School to home

a. How do you and your students' family members communicate and work together especially as it pertains to your child's educational activities?

b. If you had a great story to communicate to the parent, how would you do it? Has this happened? Could you give an example?

c. How do you know what happens at home? Can you give an example?

d. How does the family know what happens at school?

e. For this specific family, what does communication look like? Can you tell me a story about it?

f. Literacy: Many of the ways schools communicate involve writing. How do the families you work with, generally speaking, access written communication from schools?

i. What are some examples of written communication that families can access well?

ii. What are some examples of written communication that is less accessible for families?

iii. How do families respond to written communication from schools?

g. How do think about your students' roles in their education?

2. Communication: Home to school

a. How do you know what is happening at your children's homes?

b. What if your child's (insert child's name) parent wants to share something about (child's name) day or progress?

c. What if your child's (insert child's name) parent wants to talk about a concern about (child's name)?

d. What are the most effective ways for families to inform you about what is happening in the home? Can you give me an example of that happening?

e. When do you ask for a multicultural liaison or translator?

f. What are some of the benefits and challenges of working with a multicultural liaison?

C. Wrap Up

g. Let me look at my notes and see if I've covered all that I wanted to talk about today.

h. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Appendix D

Family Interview #2Protocol

A. Describe a time when you had to advocate for your children at school, your background, or your family.

1. What happened?
2. How did you become aware of that?
3. How did you correspond with the school?
4. What was the response of school personnel?
5. What were the results?
6. Were you pleased with the result?

B. Did you have to advocate for the children in Iraq?

1. Can you please give me an example?
2. How did you discover that?
3. How did you correspond with the school?
4. What was the response of school personnel?
5. What were the results?
6. vi. Were you pleased with the results?

C. How do you think advocating for children differed between the United States and Iraq? Did the language aid or hinder your ability to advocate in the United States?

1. Was the instructor attentive?
2. Did they fully comprehend the issue?

3. In your opinion, were their actions sufficient, or did you anticipate more? For instance, to show greater compassion or to respond swiftly

D. What are the most successful ways for schools to communicate with families when there are issues with the children, such as bullying or class selection?

1.How does the school know your educational history? Did they query?

2. Did the school invite you to speak on your culture and Iraq's history?

3. What do you believe the school should know about your cultural background and you?

4. Do you believe that the translation from Arabic to English was adequate?

5. Do you believe that immigrant families should advocate for their children more than American families?

6. Now, do you believe that if you had not advocated for your children at school, things may have gone in the wrong direction?

7. In what manner do you believe a multicultural liaison or translator could communicate your concerns?

8. When advocating for your children, are written emails or letters required? If not, how will you write?

    i. Do you believe that having someone who works at the school as a teacher and who can comprehend your issues in Arabic will enable you to negotiate with the school more effectively?

    ii. How do you believe SPs can work more effectively with families like yours?

Appendix E

SP Interview #2 Protocol

A. How would you define the advocacy style of Iraqi families and how it differs from mainstream families or even other refugee parents, based on your observations?

1. If it is different, explain how the advocacy differs.
2. When questioned about the advocacy of Iraqi parents, a teacher stated that it is a robust, according to the instructor, it mimics Russian family advocacy style. Could you please elaborate on this observation?

B. Can you share with me, if possible, your observations regarding the partnership between Iraqi refugee parents and SP in your school district?

C. Do you believe that the linguistics or cultural norms of the native language, in my example Arabic, have affected the interpretation of Advocacy for School professionals?

1. Do you believe that the English proficiency of a family member affects how they are received and their advocacy style?
2 . According to your experience, do SP and families know each other's backgrounds? For instance, education (aside from English level).

D. What works in your experience to develop the partnership between Iraqi families and SPS, and how has advocacy affected this partnership?

1 How, in your opinion, can we deepen the advocacy partnership between Iraqi families and SP?

Tables

Table A

Data Sources and Timeline for Collection

Data Source	Timeline for collection
Family interview #1 audio, transcribed in English	11/2017
Field notes for interview 1	11/2017
Family interview #2 audio, transcribed in English	7/2018
Field notes from interview #2	7/2018
Youth interview, audio, transcribed in Arabic	11/2017
Field notes from Youth interview	11/2017
Email and Memo regarding situation (written by PI and Administrator #1)	11/2017
Teacher A interview	12/2017
Teacher B interview	12/2017
Teacher C interview	12/2017
Administrator interview #1	8/2017
Family interview #4, audio, transcribed in English and Arabic, including Sarah	10/2022

Field notes from family interview #4	10/2022
Field notes from interview with Salma	10/2022
Administrator interview #2	8/2022
Field notes from administrator interview #2	8/2022

Figures

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework

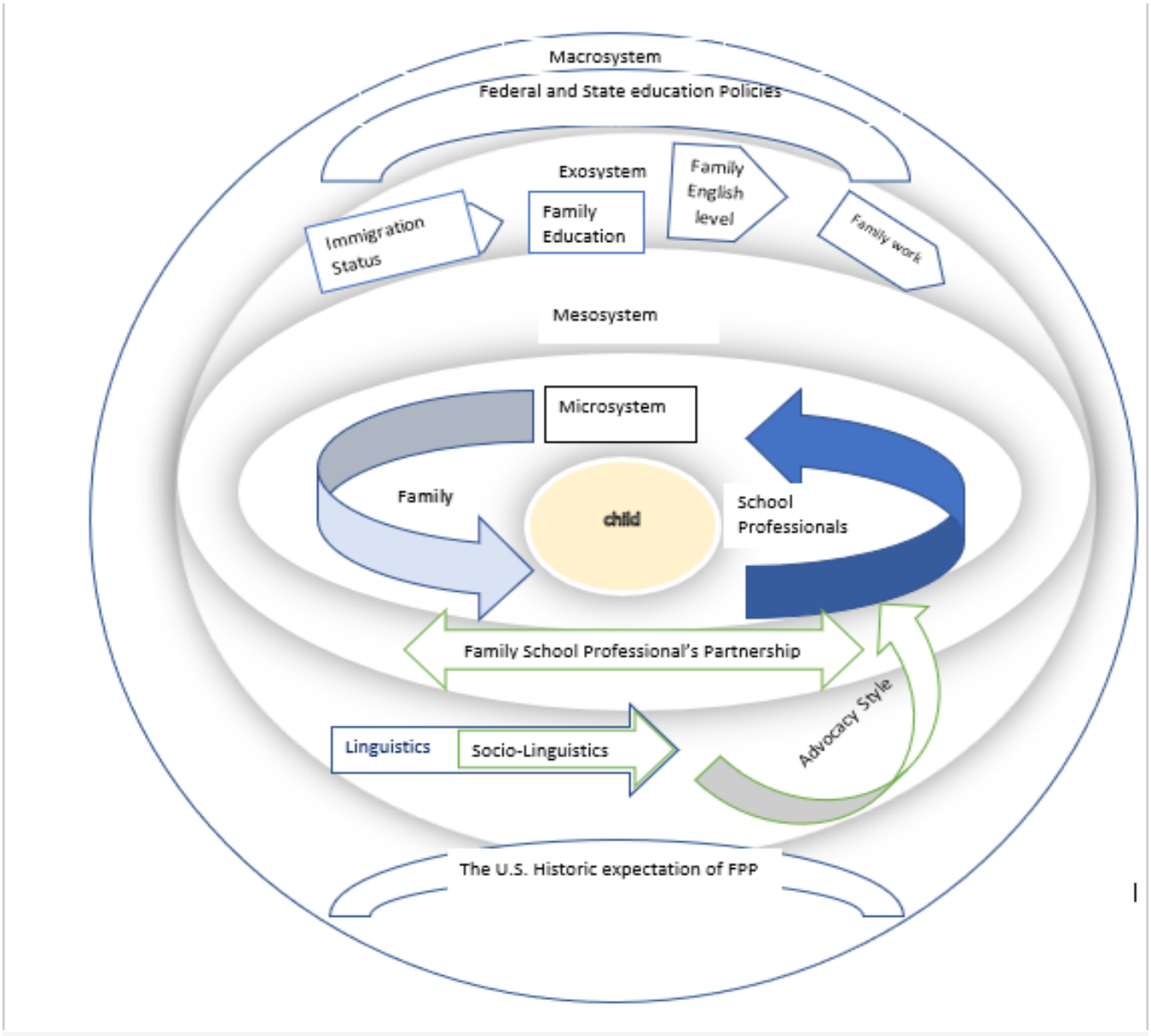

Figure 2

Data Analysis Procedural Steps