Teaching Politics: Practices and Ideologies of Citizenship in English as a Second Language Classes

Lucy Pei
Global Studies Capstone
Spring 2016
Professor E. Grama
Introduction

Globalization and technology have brought about changes in the performance of citizenship. However, naturalization process and policy produced by the United States government still portray an ideology of citizenship rooted in territory, national loyalty, and civic participation. I argue that citizenship requirements and processes should be altered to align with reality in society, where economic participation is valued over civic participation. To provide background, the paper first traces the history of citizenship in the United States through legislation. Next, the Naturalization Test and the Naturalization oath of allegiance are analyzed, revealing embedded citizenship ideologies rooted in territory, national loyalty, and civic participation. After showing the citizenship ideologies portrayed in the naturalization process, I review citizenship theories that discuss the change in citizenship to various denationalized forms. In particular I will discuss the idea of citizenship through economic participation. Using ethnographic data I collected at an adult education center that teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and citizenship classes, I provide evidence for my claim that citizenship practices are in fact defined through economic participation on the ground. Finally, I address some potential counterarguments to economic grounds for citizenship.

Historical conceptions of citizenship

Originally, citizenship was not directly addressed in the Constitution. It was, apparently, widely read as making national citizenship derivative of state citizenship in the antebellum era (Amar 2005, 381).

The Naturalization Act of 1790, fourteen years after the Declaration of Independence, began the regulations for immigration and citizenship in the United States passed by Congress.
“Any alien, being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen thereof, on application to any common law court of record, in any one of the States wherein he shall have resided for the term of one year at least, and making proof to the satisfaction of such court, that he is a person of good character, and taking the oath or affirmation prescribed by law, to support the Constitution of the United States.” (1 Stat. 103).

The racialized definition denied citizenship to Blacks and Indigenous people living in the United States, and restricted immigration to be of “white” people. The 1795 version of the act increased the residence requirement to five years, and required a declaration of intention to apply for citizenship three years before naturalization. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 made it even more difficult for immigrants to be naturalized (Kunnan, 39).

In the early 19th century, acts were passed to exclude “criminals and prostitutes” from admission. The infamous supreme court ruling Dred Scott v. Sandford of 1857 declared that people of African descent could not be citizens, even if they were not slaves. The fourteenth Amendment overturned this ruling in 1868 by granting citizenship to the newly emancipated slaves. However, citizenship was still denied based on race afterwards, through laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Fourteenth Amendment finally defined citizenship in the Constitution in 1868.

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or
property without due process of law; or deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law” (U.S. Constitution, Amend. XIV).

Citizens are considered “naturally born” if they can claim jus soli, place of birth, or jus sanguinis, descent. This birthright citizenship includes children born to aliens on American soil, and children born to American citizens abroad. In the case of the 14th Amendment, the purpose was to give rights and citizenship to newly freed slaves and prevent states from usurping those rights, as had been done through Jim Crow laws in the South to prevent people of african descent from voting and otherwise exercising their rights (Sobel, 4). Four additional amendments regarding voting rights were added as notions of citizenship in the United States expanded. The 15th Amendment specifically prohibited states from denying the right to vote based on race or “previous condition of servitude”; the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote, the 24th Amendment banned the poll tax, thus ensuring that voting rights were not tied to financial status, and the 26th Amendment ensured that citizen 18 years of age or older could vote. These increasingly inclusive definitions of citizens added to the Constitution through Amendments were tied to the civic right of voting.

Congress passed additional legislation in the late 1800s and early 1900s, adding requirements for immigrants to be naturalized. In 1893, immigrants were required to be able to read and write (in no specific language), and in 1906, “Congress required applicants to sign their petitions in their own handwriting and speak English.” In 1917, a literacy test was given to determine the eligibility of immigrants and citizens to enter the United States. An example, cited by Kunnan, stated that the immigration inspector asked a 23-year-old Yiddish-speaking woman from Poland to read a printed slip in Yiddish, which in English said, “‘Blessed in the man who walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.’ Although she was able to read a large majority of the words, she could not explain the meaning of them. Ms. Friedman was denied admission.” (Kunnan, 40). Through the difficult
and arbitrary nature of the literacy tests, undesirable groups were able to be restricted, which at
the time consisted of Italians, Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Greeks, Asiatics, and Irish Catholics.
These groups were also directly restricted with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1924,
including the Chinese Exclusion Act and the National Origins Act, which set quotas for
immigrants from certain countries. This restriction lasted until 1965.

The most recent law regarding nationalization was the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act,
which requires immigrants to demonstrate knowledge of the English language and US history
and government, through various iterations of standardized tests.

“(1) an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write,
and speak words in the English language: provided, that the requirements of this
paragraph relating to ability to read and write shall be met if the applicant can read or
write simple words and phrases to the end that a reasonable test of his literacy shall be
made and that no extraordinary or unreasonable condition shall be imposed upon the
applicant; and (2) a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history,
and of the principles and form of government, of the U.S.” (Immigration and Nationality
Act).

The language requirement was enforced informally by immigration officers. Immigrants and
naturalized citizens engaged in “subversive activities” could be deported, and could be barred
from entering the country. During the time of McCarthyism, this was used to bar and deport
people suspected of affiliation with the Communist party (Kunnan, 41).

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act strengthened the literacy and US history
requirements for citizenship, and thus a standardized test was developed. At first it was
outsourced, but after fraud, was returned to the Immigration and Naturalization Services of the
government. Tests were given with speaking, reading, and writing in English, along with 10 to 12
randomly selected open-ended questions out of 100 potential questions on US history and civics. However, the exams were inconsistent and unverified and caused many denials of citizenship, with a study in 1998 finding that at least 34% of denials were due to failing the test (Kunnan, 42).

The Naturalization Test was redesigned in 2007 an effort to address the concerns raised with the old test. Test items were analysed for “cognitive and linguistic characteristics” with the criteria of: “Does the item involve critical thinking about government or history? Does the item offer an inferred or implicit concept of government, history, or other areas? Does the item provide a geographical context for a historical or current event? Does the item help the applicant better understand and relate to our shared history?” However, the success of the test in achieving these ends is dubious (Kunnan, 44). In the following section, I will analyze the current Naturalization Test for the citizenship ideologies it presents, as well as some of the criteria that are listed.

Citizenship ideologies in current naturalization process

Two key documents in the naturalization process are analyzed, showing the embedded citizenship ideologies around territorialized national loyalty and civic participation.

Analysis of citizenship test

The content of the questions in the Naturalization test illustrates the territorialized and national-loyalty based ideology of citizenship that the government holds. The style of the questions and answers also illustrate the lack of commitment to actionable knowledge, skills, and dispositions on the part of the new citizens.
The naturalization test consists of four parts: assessment of speaking and listening comprehension of English, assessment of reading English, assessment of writing English, and assessment of knowledge of civics and history. The speaking and listening comprehension portion is done through an oral interview with the Immigrations examiner, who could ask any question on the Naturalization form. The applicant must answer properly, as judged by the examiner based on comprehension and pronunciation. The writing assessments consists of a dictation of sentences that are strung together from a bank of words provided in the test preparation materials. The applicant has three chances to correctly write down the sentence, with small errors being tolerated. For reading, the applicant is presented with three sentences that are comprised of words from a word bank, and then is required to read one of the sentences aloud correctly. The civics and history portion is called the “naturalization interview”, where applicants must answer correctly answer six out of ten questions presented. The ten questions are chosen at random from 100 possible questions.

The 100 questions are available online, via mp3, in flash cards made in conjunction with the Smithsonian, through a web-based learning tool of videos and self-quizzes built in conjunction with the Smithsonian, on CDs, and in booklets that provide extra explanations. The questions are broken down into the following categories: American Government, American History, and Integrated Civics. Each of those categories is further divided into three sections. Within American Government, sub-topics are Principles of American Democracy, System of Government, and Rights and Responsibilities. Within American History, the sections are Colonial Period and Independence, the 1800s, and Recent American history and Other Important Historical Information. Within Integrated Civics, the sections are Geography, Symbols, and Holidays.
The many of the questions throughout the test ask for people’s names and numbers of things. Thirteen questions ask for a specific person’s name in a particular role, or a specific historical figure’s name (e.g. name one of the writers of the Federalist Papers, name your state’s governor), Eight questions were asked about numbers of things (e.g. how many amendments does the Constitution have, how many years is a U.S. senator elected for). Another eleven questions asked for a specific role or body in government with a particular responsibility (e.g. who vetoes bills, who makes federal law). This style of question-asking is only able to reflect a very shallow amount of knowledge, without probing to deeper understandings, actionable skills, or lasting dispositions. Such shallow questions only test a potential citizen’s ability to pay lip service to certain ideals rather than testing their actual likelihood to participate as ideal citizens.

On the other hand, there are questions that are extremely open ended and could be answered in a variety of ways, but are given short concrete answers as if they are the final and only answer possible. For example, the test asks, “What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do? // Fought for civil rights, Worked for equality for all Americans.” The legacy of what Martin Luther King Jr. did was reduced to a very general and decontextualized statement. Additionally, there is no room to disagree with the idea of Martin Luther King Jr. as a heroic figure in history. Another contentious question asks, “During the Cold War, what was the main concern of the United States? Communism.” This is certainly a debatable statement. The proliferation of this type of question implies that in order to gain citizenship, immigrants are required to buy into a specific narrative of history.

Despite the civically engaged ideology, the test does not measure actionable skills that might translate to citizenship practices. Students are required to know the first three words of the Constitution, and the name of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, and the number of amendments to the Constitution, but are not required to know how to register to vote and how
to gain information about legislation and candidates, which are arguably the most relevant pieces of information for a new citizen to know in order to engage in civic participation. This is not to say that the students had no means of civic engagement or political participation, but it does point to the extent to which civic engagement is not emphasized as a means of incorporating immigrants into American society in ESL classes and in the citizenship test.

The Integrated Civics sections of the naturalization test are direct articulations of the territorialized and national-loyalty based definitions of citizenship. Eight out of the 100 questions on the naturalization test are in the geography section, showing the importance still placed on land and territory by the government. The Symbols and Holidays sections are both completely dedicated to the idea of patriotism and national loyalty, in addition to many of the questions in the American History and American Government sections. “What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance? The United States, the flag.” This question exemplifies the direct demands for national loyalty made in the naturalization test.

Analysis of citizenship oath

The text of the Naturalization Oath of allegiance to the United States of America is as follows:

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

The text of the oath shows a clear demand for loyalty to the nation, including the willingness to “bear arms on behalf of the United States.”

Changing definitions of citizenship

According to theoretical literature on citizenship, conceptions and enactments of citizenship are changing as globalization and technology have altered the role of the nation-state in the lives of people (Sassen). For the past two centuries, citizenship has been strongly tied to territory and national loyalty, as made sense with the global conditions of the time. The industrial revolution led to the scale of benefits and claims tied to citizenship to be at the national level, as the state produced legislation and regulations to negotiate the rights of working-class citizens and employers. Additionally, states tended to fight wars based on territory and requiring the loyalty of citizens to be soldiers.

With the advent of globalization and technology, “wars” over domination are increasingly fought with technology and economic means (Sassen, 2002, p 8). The economy has become globalized, and thus nationally legislated protections are less favorable as countries attempt to compete in the global economy. As neoliberal values have been adopted around the world, and as human rights has become a universal grounds for making claims, people are beginning to be categorized according to degrees of economic, biopolitical, and moral worthiness rather than according to a territory or nation-state of birth (Ong, 2006, p504). For example, in the United States, special rights and benefits are given to non-citizen entrepreneurs, while native-born children to poor
migrant workers of dubious documentation are denied many benefits and debates even exist to revoke their citizenship (Sobel).

As national scale becomes less crucial, people are using new areas in which to make their claims for rights and benefits. Postnational, flexible, technological, cyber-based, and biological claims are some of the new grounds for entitlements and benefits typically tied to citizenship include postnational, flexible, technological, cyber-based, and biological claims (Ong). Postnational claims describe partial citizenship for migrant workers, who have limited benefits and civil rights. The example is in the case of the European Union, where migrant workers of non-European descent do not have full citizenship in any country yet have some limited claims to benefits in a country that they are working in. Flexible citizenship describes mobile citizens who “respond fluidly and opportunistically to dynamic borderless market conditions.” These people strive to be mobile rather than stable, and their movement is not coerced or based upon desperation. Technological and cyber-based arenas for claim-making have appeared in places such as China, where the internet has become a platform for open conversation and criticism about state policies, allowing Chinese people to participate in a form of democratic citizenship that is otherwise not allowed in the authoritarian state. Biological claims are based on a universal "human right" to survive, and include health-based claims. An example is of how HIV infected migrants in France used health as a ground for claiming asylum.

Benefits of citizenship

Benefits and responsibilities of citizenship, according to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, center around civic and political benefits and responsibilities. The benefits highlighted consist of voting, bringing family members to the United States, obtaining citizenship for children born abroad, traveling with a US passport, becoming eligible for federal
jobs, becoming an elected official, and showing your patriotism. However, when immigrants are polled, the key benefit to citizenship is being authorized to live and work in the US without fear of deportation. 52% of the 1500 Hispanic and Asian Americans polled thought that “being able to live and work in the US without the threat of being deported” was more important than “having a pathway to citizenship for those who meet certain requirements,” with 39.5% thinking the opposite. (Pew Research Center, 2013). The most important benefit is thus the economic opportunity and economic flexibility, while having full benefits and formal citizenship is viewed as significantly less important. This further shows how the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship are becoming disassociated from one another, as immigrants have a strong preference for partial benefits over full citizenship.

Economic basis of citizenship

As Sassen points out, modern warfare is not so tied to territory and is driven not by citizens whose national loyalty leads them to lay their lives on the battlefields but rather by technology and financial investments in technology. Thus, national security and the perpetuation of the state depends most on economic contributions of citizens. It would follow that immigrants who are contributing to national security through their economic contributions would deserve at least some of the benefits of citizenship. Additionally, the naturalization process ought to reflect the existing citizenship practices surrounding economic participation rather than civic participation that are taught, adopted, and reinforced by ESL teachers, immigrants, and states, respectively.
Citizenship practices in ESL classes

I sought to gather some ethnographic data to answer the question of how negotiations of contested and changing definitions of citizenship discussed in the literature would play out in the context of English as Second Language classes in Pittsburgh. The Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) provided me the opportunity to observe classes at their downtown office. GPLC is a nonprofit that offers classes and tutoring to improve literacy for adults, and provides both courses targeted towards adult English language learners as well as General Education Diploma (high school graduation equivalent) courses. The courses for English language learners include English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at various levels, conversation classes, and citizenship classes. Teachers are both full-time hires and Americorp volunteers who work for about one year, and local college students in an Education degree program run the conversation classes. The classes are free and offered on the basis of open enrollment. Immigrant and refugee adult English language learners come from around the city, typically by bus, to take the ESL classes. Funding for GPLC comes from foundations as well as state government sources. I observed three ESL classes and one citizenship class, and participated in two conversation classes.

GPLC’s downtown office comprises half of a floor in a high rise building, with hospital-esque beige walls and student art on the walls. Each classroom I visited varied in degree and content of decoration. The space also contains a section of cubicles for teachers, a computer lab, a kitchen, and various offices and conference rooms. Throughout the day, students could be found in the kitchen chatting at the tables and waiting for each other or for the bus. Students would also often hang around at the reception area to be registered for classes or to ask questions of teachers and administrators. I met five of the teachers, administrators, and Americorp volunteers during my time there. They are all white females who were born in the United States,
of a variety of ages. Most of them are bilingual. Students come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are resettled refugees from regions in conflict in Africa, the Middle East, and from Nepal and Bhutan. There are also immigrants from Iraq, China, Japan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Haiti, Iran, and other countries.

State funding and standards

My observations at GPLC led me to conclude that the citizenship practice presented to the students is one based in economic participation rather than civic participation. The importance of the immigrants’ economic contribution is evident from the very system of funding set up by the state. To continue receiving state funding for the ESL classes, GPLC must demonstrate not only that there is progress in the English proficiency of the students, but also that their students find jobs or transition into secondary or higher education as post-ESL class outcomes. Notably, there is no accountability that must be demonstrated for whether eligible students have registered to vote and participated in elections, or whether students have participated in community volunteering events, or whether students understand legal and political procedures. The English proficiency test also fails to measure civic knowledge, skills, or dispositions. The diagnostic test used is the Best Plus and Best Literacy test, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics, and one of two state-approved tests to measure adult English proficiency. After attending 30-60 hours of class, the students are tested again for progress. This setup aligns with the norm described in the overview of adult ESL in the nation (Schaetzel and Young, 2010). The incorporation of employment post-ESL classes as a benchmark of success demonstrates the state’s articulation of citizenship and assimilation through economic participation.

Another expression of the state’s emphasis on economic citizenship over civic citizenship can be found in the ESL content standards published by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The document contains levels of
English proficiency defined by four categories: Test Benchmark (i.e. score), Speaking and Listening, Basic Reading and Writing, and Functional and Workplace Skills. Through every level, “functional and workplace skills” are an integral measure of proficiency. However, the first mention of citizenship, defined as “rights and responsibilities, naturalization, voting”, is not until the Intermediate-High level, at level six out of nine. Perhaps this suggests that civic participation is to be earned after economic independence and English fluency have already been achieved. The mention is also under “suggested Daily Living Themes and Topics”, rather than the criteria under which the proficiency is measured. The prominence of the workplace skills and the de-emphasis of the political and civic engagement in this document reflect the state’s priorities in terms of citizenship aspects.

This analysis of the standards aligns with the criticism presented in Fleming’s analysis of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, an important federal assessment of ESL in Canada. Fleming illustrates the ways in which the wording of the standards show the state conflating good citizenship with high English proficiency and whiteness, and with “giving polite and respectful feedback to one’s employer” (Fleming, 47). Fleming’s point of view is that the standards should address issues of social justice and safety such as employment standards, procedures for recognizing and reporting dangerous work conditions, and trade unions. Fleming believes that voting and citizenship competencies should be a part of the standards early on. This example from Canada adds legitimacy to the analysis of state produced English language standards to glean citizenship ideologies of the state.

ESL Classes

In order to meet the benchmarks set by the state for both post-ESL outcomes and the standards of English proficiency, GPLC provides a variety of resources to help students get a job. A staff member is dedicated to employment, and job fairs are held at the office. The job fairs are heavily
advertised with posters throughout the office. I observed students approach teachers after class to ask for advice and recommendation letters for employment. Teachers told me that they work with students both inside and outside of class to make resumes and practice interview skills. GPLC, as the primary interface that many immigrants have with Americans and American society, thus portrays a great emphasis on economic participation as a way to incorporate oneself into American society through the support and resources they provide towards those ends.

The importance of economic participation is not only from the state, but also comes from the students themselves. A fairly senior teacher I spoke with told me that the curriculum is designed around what the students are most interested in knowing about, and students expressed interest in topics such as shopping, money, employment, and health. During the weeks I was observing, students at all levels were learning about shopping and money. Students worked with paper money and coins to learn about the currency. At the lower levels, students were simply struggling through understanding and remembering the values of coins. At higher levels, students not only worked with counting and reviewing currency values, but also learned vocabulary about payment methods and shopping locations, leading up to a story that they would read together. At the conversation class, we discussed the places people liked to shop, and the conversion rates of currencies from their countries of origin to dollars. From their requested topics of learning, it appears that students also perceive economic participation and economic independence and self-reliance as a key means of incorporation into American society and becoming American.

In addition to emphasis on economic participation, there was an emphasis on politeness in the way the ESL and Citizenship classes were taught. Students would be stopped and asked to repeat any request with a “please”, and any time a student asked for clarification, he/she would be
corrected to “Excuse me, could you please say that again?”. One student I observed would shorten the phrase to “Excuse me, please”, and this seemed to be satisfactory to the teacher, despite not being a phrase that would be uttered by a native speaker. In the class for students with the least prior knowledge in English, the students would practice dialogues and the teacher spent a great deal of time distinguishing between “nice to meet you” and “nice to see you.” The first dialogue consisted of the phrases, “Excuse me, what is your name?” “My name is __. What is your name?” “My name is __. Nice to see you.” “Nice to see you too.” When the students missed the “too” at the end of the dialogue, they were made to repeat it correctly, despite the sentence still making sense without the word. The second dialogue consisted of the phrases, “Good morning.” “Good morning, how are you today?” “I’m fine, how are you?” “I’m fine, thank you.” This emphasis on polite small talk points to the aspect of assimilation that involves adopting social mores of a society.

The emphasis on economic participation and politeness is in contrast to the de-emphasis on civic participation. While I was observing, there was a course labeled Foundations/Civics, where the students learned about basic conversations and money. When I asked the teacher about the name of the course and the lack of civics being taught, the teacher told me that their grant stream that was funding that particular course was earmarked to teach about civics, but that the students needed and wanted to learn basic conversational and economic topics instead. In contrast to the many times that I heard students talking to teachers about employment, I never heard students talking to teachers about voting or asking about the civic and political system. No one ever asked how to register to vote, or how a non-citizen could become politically active, or how to engage with the community through civic volunteer work.
Citizenship classes

In the citizenship class at GPLC, there were only two students enrolled and one student present the day I observed. This particular student was over 60 years old and was a resettled refugee from Bhutan. She had been attending citizenship classes for two semesters, and was soon going to take her test. Over the semesters, she had drilled the questions and knew their answers, and teacher seemed to have provided at least a basic explanation of how the political system works in the United States. Although they were past the point of doing lessons for questions, the teacher told me that the procedure they went through during each class was to teach a lesson on a particular topic that would cover anywhere from five to twelve of the questions, and then the students would make flashcards of the questions and answers. The student I observed had a vague theoretical understanding of how Congress passes bills and the president can veto or sign it into law. However, she confused what a veto was with singing a bill into law. Despite knowing the answers to all 100 of the questions that we quizzed her on during class, she did not seem to have any actionable understanding of politics that she could use to become civically engaged. In a poignant example, the teacher asked the student to explain to me why she wanted to become a citizen. She told me, “I can run for federal office.” It was a response that was correct, as a benefit provided by citizenship, and yet it seemed that she was just parroting a phrase that she did not truly understand and was not able to act upon. This student was an example of how many people memorize surface-level responses to surface-level questions, and may not even understand what they are saying at that surface-level.

Interviews with Teachers

Conversations with teachers at GPLC further clarified the importance of economic contribution in the citizenship practices taught. One teacher said, “Even if they are not citizens yet, if they are
green card holders and are working, they are paying taxes, so they are contributing.” She considered “contributing” to be paying income taxes, and considered working immigrants to thus be deserving of citizenship benefits that are funded by tax dollars. Another teacher had an even broader definition of “contributing” through taxes, saying, “Immigrants are citizens the moment they’re here. They begin paying taxes anytime they shop, they pay taxes for where they live, they pay taxes for their income.” The teacher believed that sustained contribution to taxes in a country would make one eligible to benefit from citizenship in that country. These economic contributions through paying taxes and being self-sufficient qualify an immigrant to make claims to certain citizenship benefits.

Regarding the downplaying of citizenship ideologies tied to national loyalty, a teacher said, “There’s a romantic view of citizenship and a pragmatic view of citizenship, I have the pragmatic view of citizenship, that you should get it if it benefits you... Some would say you need to know what this country is about and what a democracy is about and what it means, and I’m like, ok... understanding how to be a citizen of your local community is more important.” The scale at which she perceived citizenship was at a more local level, rather than a national level where a citizen would need to buy into a particular national narrative about democracy and history. Another teacher said, “Anybody who lives in an apartment or house and keeps it up well is a good citizen. Anybody who gives someone a hand in their neighborhood is a good citizen. Anybody who pays taxes is a good citizen.” She also had a very local view of citizenship, down to the neighborhood level. Such a view of citizenship is still very tied to place, however the scale has gone from national to local.
Conclusion

The practice of citizenship taught in ESL classes, enacted by immigrants, and reinforced through state funding of adult education and ESL standards, is centered around economic participation rather than civic participation. This aligns with the current state of the world, where globalization and technological advances have caused nation-states to have primarily economic needs and priorities for their citizens. However, the naturalization process in the United States remains tied to citizenship ideology of territorialized notions of national loyalty and emphasizes civic participation, as demonstrated in the Naturalization test and Naturalization Oath of Allegiance. The immigration process more broadly does incorporate economic contributions in certain cases, such as the Green Card through Investment option, where entrepreneurs who invest one million dollars can be granted a green card. The ability to not be deported and to work legally, as mentioned, is considered to be a huge priority among immigrants whose citizenship practices are mainly economic. Opponents to granting this citizenship benefit to immigrants who contribute financially typically argue that immigrants are “taking American jobs”. Outsourcing in a globalized economy means that non-Americans would get certain jobs anyhow, but if they are coming to America for the jobs, they are paying American taxes and thus contributing to American national security. What remains to be researched is how the naturalization process and naturalization test could be made to accurately measure and reflect the economic citizenship practices.
Bibliography


23. U.S. Constitution. amend. XIV


25. Interviews and observations at the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.