This is the second volume of TESOL’s Classroom Practice Series dedicated to authenticity. The first volume (Rilling & Dantas-Whitney, 2009a) describes adult learning environments, and the current volume showcases English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) practices designed for children and adolescent learners. As with the first volume, the notion of authenticity is conceptualized not only in terms of the materials and tasks used in the classroom, but authenticity also is “framed in broader terms to include learner cognition, engagement, collaboration, problem solving, critical analysis, and the development of language for specific, and often localized, communication purposes” (Rilling & Dantas-Whitney, 2009b, p. 1).

**AUTHENTICITY WITHIN THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

While visiting an indigenous outdoor market in Oaxaca, Mexico, a friend bought a beautiful handmade shawl usually used by the native women as headpieces or as shoulder harnesses to carry infant children. Happy with her purchase, our friend decided to use it as a scarf around her neck to match a business suit of the same color. Was her adapted use of the shawl considered authentic? Some may argue that it was not, because it did not exactly replicate the native norms—our friend was unlikely to wear the scarf as a headpiece or use it to carry a child. We would argue that our friend’s adaptation of the shawl was authentic. Her use reflected an authentic process of appropriation and agency, shaped according to the needs of her social context and situation.
The definition of authenticity in ESOL embraced by the authors in this volume is not static or externally imposed by native uses and customs. Rather, authenticity is a dynamic concept that is constantly defined and redefined through interactions among learners, teachers, community members, our languages in contact, and our larger societal contexts. We draw on Zamel’s (1997) “transculturation model” (p. 341), which recognizes that learning another language does not simply entail imitating and reproducing the norms of the dominant culture. Instead, language learning and use requires complex processes of adaptation that are “dynamic, involving active engagement and resistance” (p. 350).

We espouse a sociocultural orientation as we explore how socially constructed elements, such as interaction with others and socialization within a community, can affect learning processes. From a sociocultural perspective, language is not a collection of forms or an object of analysis that exists apart from its context and its speakers. Rather, language is a resource used to realize and enact social life (Hall, 2002). We advocate a model of language learning that is “firmly rooted in contingent, situated, and interactional experiences of the individual as a social being” (Firth & Wagner, 1998, p. 93) and therefore involves “two coexisting domains: the social and cognitive dynamics of language learning, and the overall social and cultural context of that learning” (Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 3).

According to Hall (2002), one of the goals of language learning is “to enable learners to broaden their communicative experiences, their worldviews, and their understandings of the active, creative roles they as individuals play in constructing [their] worlds” (p. 110). Likewise, this volume showcases how teachers and learners take on similar active roles in determining what counts as authentic in their worlds.

**CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Many myths exist about the process of learning languages. Some people believe that young children learn a second language quickly and effortlessly, that adolescents are often unmotivated to learn, or that adults are seldom successful in their attempts to learn a second language because of inhibition and a fear of making mistakes. These beliefs are, of course, based on stereotypes and generalizations. They disregard the unique differences among individuals and the complexities of the contexts in which learning takes place. Nevertheless, age is an important variable in language learning.

Scholars today agree that there are some key differences in the way that young children, adolescents, and adults learn additional languages. Adults are more likely to have clear purposes and goals and to control their own learning through self-imposed activities (Rogers & Uddin, 2005). This usually is not the case for younger learners. Children tend to be more holistic learners and to focus more on meaning than correctness. Their shorter attention span requires
a more active learning environment, and they often derive understanding from interactive activities that use movement, the senses, objects, and pictures (Peck, 2002). Adolescents are more able than children to use language in abstract ways. They become more engaged in the language learning process when the material is relevant to their everyday lives, interests, and talents. In fact, high drop-out rates among immigrant teenagers in high schools in English-speaking countries have been linked to disengagement, frustration, and failure (Duff, 2001). Factors related to self-esteem and self-image are also particularly important for teenage learners (Brown, 2007).

The chapters in Authenticity in the Language Classroom and Beyond: Children and Adolescent Learners describe instructional practices that have been found to be particularly successful with children and adolescent language learners, taking into account the unique needs and characteristics of these age groups. They reflect a wide range of educational contexts, goals, and challenges from classrooms in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. All chapters use the theme of authenticity as a unifying force that connects language learning experiences to the everyday lives of young learners.

Most of the chapters in this volume describe kindergarten through 12th-grade settings. In these academic settings, learners often have to cope with added pressures related to mandated standards and tests, strict grading policies, rigid schedules, and limited resources. Particularly in English-speaking countries, young learners have a special challenge: They are required to learn the new language as well as other content matter (e.g., math and science) in English within a limited timeframe (Gibbons, 2002). In addition, these learners must become socialized in the discourse of schooling. For these reasons, a number of the chapters in this volume emphasize language learning across the curriculum through project work, content-based instruction, technology use, or the innovative design of materials, tasks, and curricula. Other sociocultural factors related to education also play a crucial role in the language development of young learners. In the United States and in other English-speaking countries, a large number of English language learners come from families with limited home-country education and first language literacy skills, and they also may live in poverty (Duff, 2001; García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Several of the chapters in this volume address these challenges by incorporating culturally responsive practices in the curriculum that utilize multiple modes of learning; honor home cultures and languages; and involve peers, families, and the community as active participants in the education process. So although most of the chapters focus on a school context, the educational practices they describe extend beyond the classroom into families, peer groups, and communities.
ORGANIZATION OF THIS VOLUME

Authenticity Through Design: Content, Tasks, and Materials

The first section of Authenticity in the Language Classroom and Beyond: Children and Adolescent Learners describes how authors from diverse contexts create and adapt activities and materials to bring authenticity into the world of the classroom through the exploration of academic content, traditional stories, and signs from everyday life, as well as through a careful consideration of task design principles.

Chapter 2, “Once Upon a Time . . . Happily Ever After: Teaching English Through Literature,” by Patti Lucas and Claudia Thorndike, demonstrates carefully designed activities to teach the genre of folktales and English-language skills to students from a broad range of ages, English proficiency levels, and educational backgrounds. It includes standards-based lesson plans, ideas for interactive activities, and suggestions for differentiating lessons.

Chapter 3, “Is It Trash or Curriculum? Using Environmental Print to Teach Literacy Skills,” by F. J. “Harvey” Oaxaca, describes multiple activities that use environmental print (e.g., common symbols and signs found in labels, advertisements, and Web sites) to teach literacy skills for middle school students. These activities help students develop skills in reading, writing, and math while building bridges between their homes, communities, and school.

Chapter 4, “Adding Up Language With Math Fairytales,” by Ann McCallum, describes the use of math fairytales—stories that combine traditional tales and the exploration of mathematics—to integrate instruction in academic English with math in a high school classroom. Fairytales provide an effective vehicle for content-based instruction because of their rich cultural subject matter and contextualized presentation of math concepts.

Chapter 5, “Teaching Science to ESL Students: Enhance—Not Simplify—the Science” by Phillip Markley and Marilyn Lawson, presents guidelines for modifying materials and creating activities to teach science to language learners in K–8 classrooms. Through an example activity, the authors demonstrate how they enhance the science materials (e.g., by adding extended definitions to difficult terms) to make them more accessible without simplifying or watering down the content.

Chapter 6, “Authentic Tasks for Effective Learning: When Is an Apple Not an Apple?” by Lilia Savova, presents a discussion of task authenticity related to the effectiveness of the communication it generates. The author offers guidelines for evaluating a task according to three communication criteria: shared context, communicative intention, and communicative message.

Authenticity Through Technology: Digital Media and the Internet

The second part of the volume focuses on innovative uses of digital media and the Internet to teach English to young learners. The authors explain how they utilize
blogs and other Web-based communication tools, as well as digital images, sound, and video, to teach academic language and cultural content. Their descriptions reveal the potential of these new technologies to engage learners of different backgrounds, needs, and abilities.

Chapter 7, “Authenticity in Word, Image, Voice: Digital Storytelling With Adolescent English Language Learners” by Judith Rance-Roney and Martha Young, showcases a digital storytelling project carried out by immigrant students in an urban high school in the United States. In addition to textual information, digital stories integrate multimedia support in the form of drawings, photography, and audio. The authors describe how digital stories allow their students to develop academic literacy skills while exploring complex issues of identity and culture.

Chapter 8, “DVD in the EFL Classroom Stands for Dynamic, Vibrant, and Didactic,” by Silvia Laborde, describes the use of digital video disc (DVD) technology to teach linguistic and cultural content in an EFL classroom in Uruguay. Using examples from popular commercial movies, the author presents carefully designed tasks that utilize DVD features (e.g., scene selection, frame-by-frame play, backward play, zooming) to challenge and motivate young learners.

Chapter 9, “Weblogs and Academic Literacy Development: Expanding Audiences and Linguistic Repertoires,” by Dong-shin Shin, Meg Gebhard, and Wendy Seger, discusses implementing a blog-mediated approach to teaching writing to English language learners in a second-grade classroom. In addition to fostering language awareness and developing literacy skills, the students’ blog interactions served to build connections among school, home, and community.

Chapter 10, “Can Blogs and Other Web-Based Communication Tools Bring Authenticity to the Foreign Language Classroom?” by Teresa Almeida d’Eça, describes the use of Web-based communication tools with fifth and sixth graders in a public middle school in Portugal. The author carefully describes rich language lessons that utilize a variety of social networking tools (e.g., blogs, voice boards, chats, video mail, animated films, interactive maps) to connect learners with the global English-speaking community outside the classroom.

Chapter 11, “They Write the Songs: How Students Compose, Record, and Podcast Their Own Songs to the World,” by Kevin McCaughey, discusses an innovative music lesson for young language learners. After listening to popular songs and analyzing their lyrics, students learn how to use multimedia technology to compose, record, and publish their own songs on the Internet.

**Authenticity Through Action: Service Learning**

The third section of the volume contains two chapters that illustrate the potential of service learning to involve students in their communities and develop empathy and cultural understanding while building linguistic and academic skills. Both chapters demonstrate how service projects can move learning beyond the classroom and build meaningful connections between schools and local organizations.
Chapter 12, “Connect to Success: The New Kids on the Block Meet Their College Counterparts,” by Barbara J. Hall and Cheryl M. Benz, describes a project involving college students visiting a seventh-grade English as a second language (ESL) classroom for weekly tutoring sessions. The project combines the benefits of service learning and cross-age peer tutoring. It also brings additional benefits for both student groups, fostering the development of leadership skills for the college students and providing a vehicle for college counseling and support for the seventh graders.

Chapter 13, “Connecting Students to Global Issues Through Local Action,” by David White-Espin and Kim Rakow Bernier, describes a service-learning program for high school ESL students. Learners explore their own pasts, learn about immigration and refugee issues, prepare classroom materials, produce a film, and go out on speaking engagements. The program has been instrumental in increasing student achievement, confidence, and pride.

**Authenticity in Context: Diverse Realities and Local Practices**

The fourth part of the book provides accounts from schools and programs in Mexico, Uganda, and China. The authors discuss the use of different resources to engage students in authentic language learning experiences, such as incorporating local knowledge (e.g., traditional games and drama) and creating an immersion language experience.

Chapter 14, “Authenticity in Marginalized EFL Contexts,” by Peter Sayer, describes an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in a small indigenous community in southern Mexico. These students live in marginalized conditions and lack opportunities to use English in meaningful ways outside the classroom. The teacher utilizes resources such as local knowledge and imagined communities to make language learning authentic.

Chapter 15, “Using Drawing, Photography, and Drama to Enhance English Language Learning in Uganda,” by Maureen Kendrick, Shelley Jones, Harriet Mutonyi, and Bonny Norton, discusses the use of alternative modes of communication, in particular drawing, photography and drama, to enhance English language learning in Ugandan classrooms. Multimodal projects encourage students to explore the world around them using English to communicate. The projects help students to significantly develop their spoken, written, reading, and aural English-language skills.

Chapter 16, “Beyond the Classroom: Summer Language Camp in China,” by Evie R. Tindall, Mervyn J. Wighting, and Deanna L. Nisbet, describes a summer English-language camp on the coast of China, where native English speakers interact with young Chinese students. Camp activities include formal and informal sessions for language instruction along with sports, games, and field trips. These activities provide a fresh context for participants from two linguistic backgrounds to meet, build relationships, and use English for authentic purposes.
Authenticity Beyond the Classroom: Parental Involvement and Peer Relations
The fifth and final section of the book discusses students’ language use in their world beyond the classroom: in the playground, at home, and in the community. The authors discuss important psychological, social, and academic benefits derived from building strong home–school connections and addressing the issue of bullying by peers.

Chapter 17, “Bilingual Family Literacy Nights: A First-Grade Story,” by Shannon Gabriel and Karie Mize, presents an innovative family literacy program in a bilingual first-grade classroom. The teacher organized three bilingual literacy nights during the year to help parents become familiar with the types of literacy activities that they can replicate at home to help develop reading and writing skills.

Chapter 18, “Sticks and Stones: Preventing Bullying in the Elementary School,” by Joann Frechette and Judie Haynes, discusses a comprehensive anti-bullying program developed for fourth-grade ESL learners. The program is comprised of staff training, curriculum development, and classroom activities that help learners develop strategies to deal with bullying, such as performing role plays, creating comic strips, and producing posters.

A COMMON THREAD

The common thread that runs through the chapters in this collection is the theme of authenticity. However, authenticity is conceived differently by the various authors in this book and defined locally according to the sociocultural realities of teachers and students. Through their descriptions and reflections, the authors are able to establish what counts as authentic language in their particular settings. We hope that our readers will likewise be inspired to formulate their own definitions of the term authenticity, taking into account their own contexts and situations.

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